

BODYTALK

Selecting The Right Personal Trainer

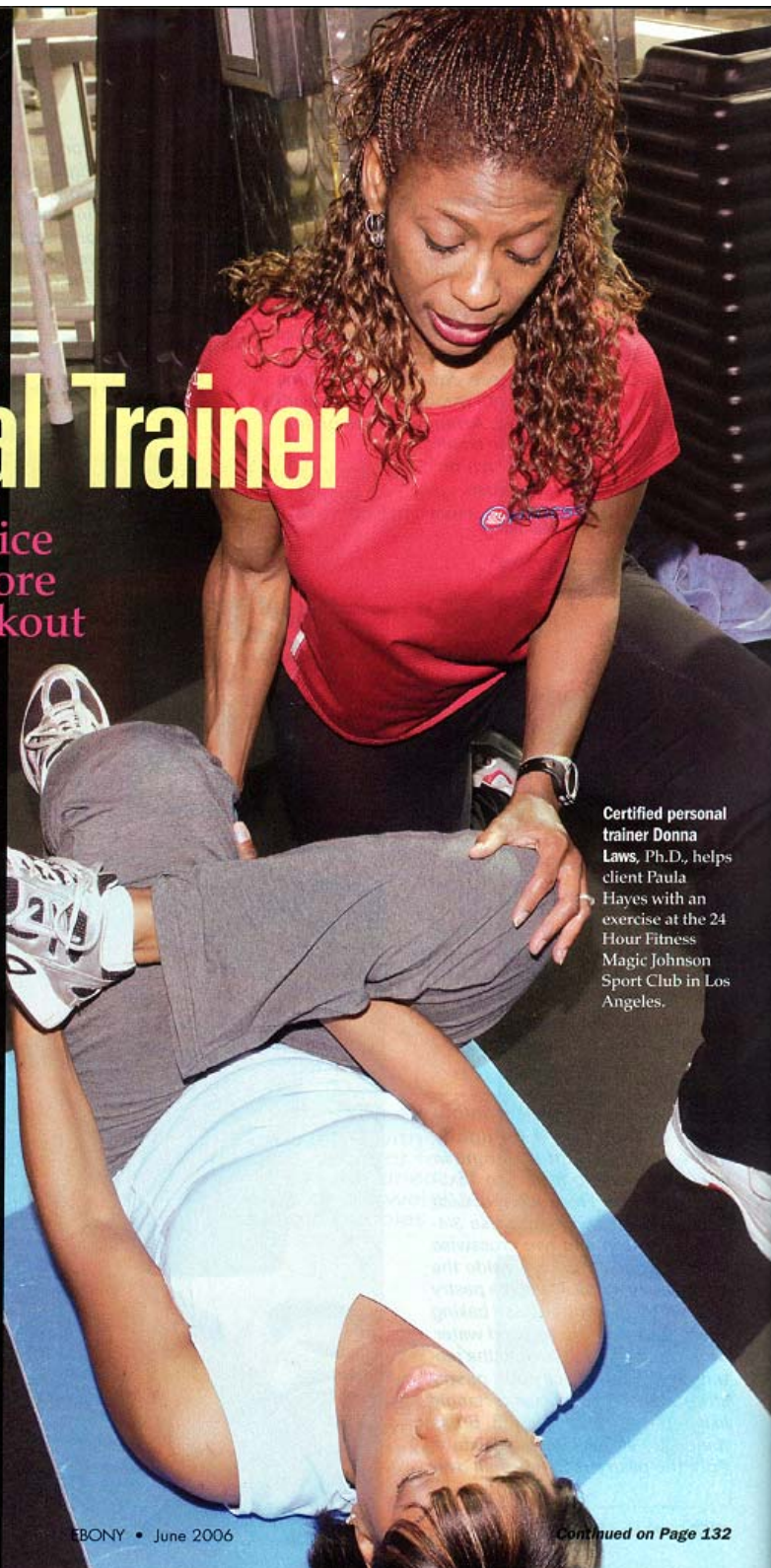
The correct choice
can lead to a more
productive workout

By Monica Jones

MOST Hollywood heartthrobs, pop princesses and world-class Olympic athletes have one so that they can maintain their chiseled six-packs, shapely figures and toned physiques. No, it's not just in the genes; many times it's a personal trainer who has helped them achieve the bodies that so many star-struck admirers long to have.

Once thought of as only for the rich and famous, nowadays personal trainers can be a part of your own workout plans.

"You are never above having someone who can give you guidance and support," says Eddie Carrington, fitness expert and certified personal trainer for Bally



Certified personal trainer Donna Laws, Ph.D., helps client Paula Hayes with an exercise at the 24 Hour Fitness Magic Johnson Sport Club in Los Angeles.

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Total Fitness. "I've gone to school for this [personal training], and I've been working at the gym for over 10 years. I can still work out with someone else who would challenge me and give me a workout that is different from my own."

Fitness experts agree that almost anyone can benefit from a personal trainer, and there are more affordable options available for those interested in taking advantage of the benefits of having one. Not there simply to count repetitions, a personal trainer can help you develop an exercise plan that is tailor-made for your body and personal fitness goals.

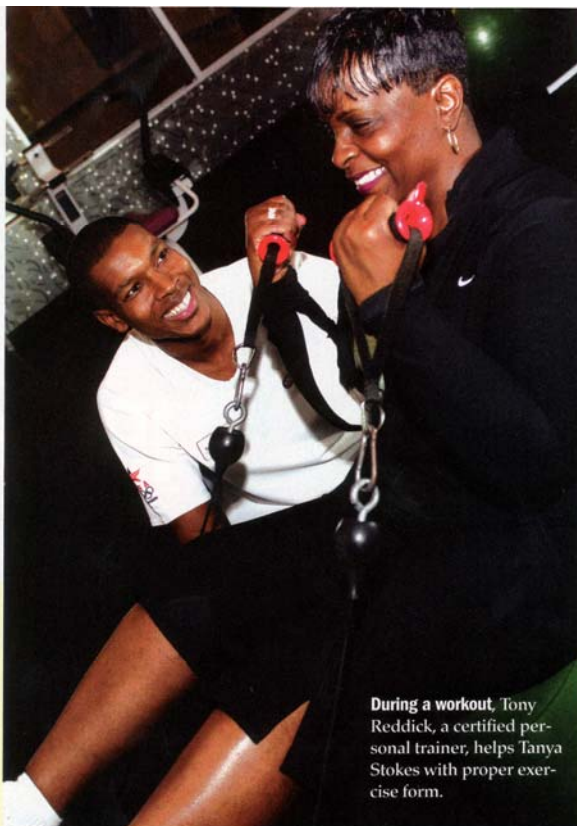
If you decide you want to give a trainer a shot, you should shop around and start interviewing prospective candidates. "If someone is looking for a babysitter to watch their children, they are not just going to let anyone watch their kids," says Douglas Sheppard, certified personal trainer and owner of Las Vegas-based J&D Fitness Group Inc. "Let's take that same priority with your body."

If you don't know where to begin your search, ask friends or relatives who may have worked with a trainer before. Most gyms and fitness clubs have personal trainers on staff and may even allow you one free session with a trainer during special promotions. Some of the major fitness organizations like the American Council on Exercise, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, American College of Sports Medicine and the Aerobics and Fitness Association offer a free search on their respective Web sites.

The following are some things to consider when you begin to look for a personal trainer:

- **BUDGET ACCORDINGLY.**

Most people don't think they can afford a personal trainer. The price for a trainer varies, depending on the region you live in, running anywhere from \$25 to \$100 an hour. According to fitness experts, you may get a better deal if you purchase long-term packages or prepaid sessions. "Someone may spend a little bit more money on their clothes, car or home, which is



During a workout, Tony Reddick, a certified personal trainer, helps Tanya Stokes with proper exercise form.

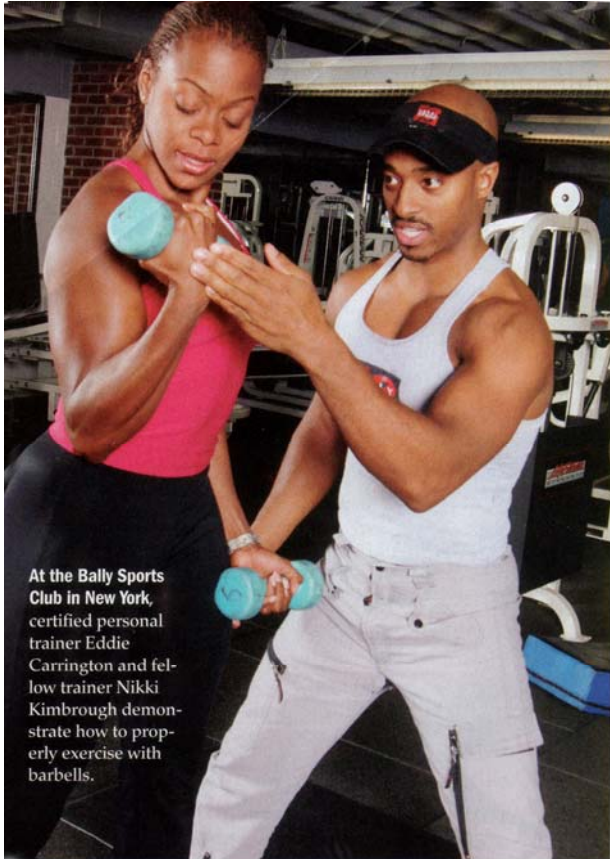
great; it's just what they prioritize," says Carrington. "But some people recognize the importance of health and say, 'Without my health, I won't be able to drive that new car; I won't be able to really enjoy my house.'"

- **MAKE SURE THE TRAINER IS CERTIFIED WITH A REPUTABLE ORGANIZATION.**

According to fitness experts, there are about 400 organizations that claim to certify personal fitness trainers, and nowadays just about anyone can claim to be a personal trainer. "One of the biggest problems in our industry," says Sheppard, "is there's no one who governs it, and pretty much all the certifications are purely by elective."

No matter the organization that a trainer says he or she is certified by, you should call the specific organization or go to their Web site to verify the trainer's certification to make sure it has not expired. You can also look up the requirements that particular organization requires of its trainers.

Your trainer should also be certified in CPR and



At the Bally Sports Club in New York, certified personal trainer Eddie Carrington and fellow trainer Nikki Kimbrough demonstrate how to properly exercise with barbells.

first-aid so that they know how to handle emergency situations. Some experts recommend that you also ask your trainer about his or her educational background. While there isn't a specific degree program for a personal trainer, some trainers may have studied in related fields like exercise physiology, exercise science, physical education, kinesiology or other related areas.

- **MAKE SURE THE TRAINER HAS LIABILITY INSURANCE AND THAT HE OR SHE PROVIDES YOU WITH A COPY OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.**

Some personal trainers work outside of gyms and are not employed by a specific fitness facility. If you work with such a trainer, make sure he or she has liability insurance. If you are working out with a personal trainer through a gym or fitness club, the trainer may be covered through the club, but you need to check. When dealing with an independent trainer, you need to make sure he or she obtained liability insurance personally. This protects both you and the trainer in case you are injured during a workout,

according to fitness experts.

When interviewing different trainers, make sure they provide you with a written copy of all their business policies. You should be provided with information about their rates, billing procedures, scheduling and cancellation policies. Experts suggest that this helps avoid any confusion because everything will be in writing.

- **FIND A TRAINER YOU CAN WORK WITH AND WHO CAN HELP YOU REACH PERSONAL FITNESS GOALS.**

Whatever your personal needs, you have to find what works best for you. Experts recommend that you find a personal trainer who will fit your personality because, depending on how often you see your trainer, you may be spending a lot of time with him or her. "You could have someone who is extremely knowledgeable and certified, but they work better with someone who doesn't like to talk," says Carrington. "Then you have certain clients who, while they are warming up, like to tell you everything that is going on in their life. So they need someone who is a good listener. So you have to find a great fit."

Prior to even starting your search, you also need to determine your personal fitness goals. While you may not want the bulging biceps of a bodybuilder, you may want to tone certain areas or just improve your overall physical fitness or strength.

"The title is *personal trainer*, and it's exactly that; it's not an exercise video where one size fits all," says Sheppard. "It should be a personalized program."

- **CONSIDER SMALL-GROUP PERSONAL TRAINING.**

If you still think a personal trainer is out of your price range, you may want to consider small-group personal training. In small-group training, there may be anywhere from three to five people with one trainer, but it is often less expensive than individual personal training. Experts say trainers who work with small groups may average anywhere from \$25 to \$40 an hour, depending on the rate offered by the trainer or club. "It's not as personalized, so you are sharing the time with a small group, but it affords you that opportunity to get questions answered," says Sheppard. "You still get that motivation, and you are still getting a quality workout."