



By: Jamie Gerardi

## How one of New York's top trainers is helping a Weight Watchers editor work out through medical issues



When Jason Carpenter underwent a stem cell transplant in early 2008 to treat bone marrow cancer, he thought he'd never work out again. Not only was he recovering from the transplant and surgery for a fractured vertebra, but he was also getting chemotherapy treatments and taking a myriad of pain medications that left him perpetually exhausted. Jason also happens to be the Men's Editor for WeightWatchers.com.

Thanks to trainers like Edward J. Jackowski, CEO / founder of Exude Fitness and author of *Escape Your Shape*, people like Jason can not only work out, but get fit despite physical issues and medications with weakening side effects. Jason's weight-loss goal is 40 lbs, which he wants to achieve both for medical reasons (to take stress off his weakened back) and for aesthetic reasons. Ed, who believes no one is ever "too old," "too injured" or "too unwell" to exercise, recently offered to help Jason shape up with a low-impact, high-result fitness regimen.

### Ed's Fitness Philosophy

Ed's client roster includes people with conditions as severe as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, spinal injuries and even replacement aortas. His ultimate goal is to make proper fitness part of their daily lives. "There's no such thing as 'too injured to work out,'" says Jackowski. "It's fear of further injury that carries over to lack of motivation, and we break that fear through tailoring the workout to the person's ability level."

While his business is centered around physical training, he says the mental training is equally important, especially for someone like Jason who has gone through a lot in both body and mind. Luckily for Jason, Ed regularly works all of his mental and physical conditioning into just a one-hour weekly session.

With a positive approach, Ed conditions his clients both physically and mentally. If someone is disheartened at being able to complete only five reps, when they had hoped to do 10, Ed will remind them of the previous week, when they weren't able to do one. "The journey from A-to-Z takes a lot of work," says Jackowski. "People think that if they don't reach Z, that going from A-to-C isn't beneficial, when it's actually tremendous. I can't get someone to Z unless I get them to C first."

The effort a client displays is equally important to the entire process as the end result. "I don't say, 'good job' just because someone does 20 reps," says Jackowski. "I say, 'good job' if I know they wanted to stop at ten but mentally pushed themselves through the next ten."

### The Perfect Prescription

In Jason's first meeting with Ed in the summer of 2009, Ed, who now trains out of H & D Dynamic Therapy in midtown, started off with three basic questions:

1. What time do you wake up?
2. What time do you go to sleep?

### 3. What do you do first thing in the morning?

Jason's answers allowed Ed to gauge what his typical day looks like, which was critical to building what Ed calls a "personalized exercise prescription." That's basically a workout schedule that fits into Jason's timeline and consists of moves that he's physically able to execute. Speaking of those moves, once Ed's assessment was over, it was time for Jason to break a sweat.

#### Easy Moves

Out of necessity, the moves Ed had Jason do were largely resistance based. Not only do Jason's medications cause him to put on weight through water retention, but they slow his heart rate by approximately 20 beats a minute. Therefore each of Ed's exercises would have to be conducted at a slow, manageable pace.

One of the initial stretches Ed asked Jason to perform was touching his toes, which Jason immediately said he wouldn't be able to, and shortly thereafter proved. "Midway through this session," said Ed, "you'll be touching your toes." Jason scoffed, but nonetheless agreed to carry out series of the following movements:

1. Waist twists (2 minutes)
2. Back twists (2 minutes)
3. Static stretches (3 minutes)
4. Leg lifts (3 minutes)
5. Jumping jacks (2 minutes)
6. Jump rope (4 minutes)
7. Feet-locked sit-ups (2 minutes)
8. Marching in place on toes (2 minutes)

In all, the above activity list represented about 20 minutes worth of warm-up / stretching and about five minutes of actual exercise. Sure enough, at the midpoint in their hour-long session, Jason was indeed able to touch his toes, much to his own amazement.

#### Ed's Theory of Relativity

Throughout the hour-long workout, Ed repeatedly stressed the value of using Jason's body weight to provide extra resistance. Ed refers to this as "relativity," meaning that, for an overweight person dealing with medical issues, doing five push-ups represents the same physical expenditure that it would take for a regular gym buff to do fifty.

The last base to cover was strength training, which posed a challenge to Jason, given how fragile the transplant had left his back. The endurance routine, which included mostly simple stuff—overhead presses, back twists, arm extensions using a 10 lb body bar—would be cumulative over time. "It's all about the amount of reps, rather than the amount of weight," says Jackowski. "If Jason does ten sets of thirty overhead presses with the body-bar, he's still lifting 300 pounds. He's just not killing his back by trying to do it all in one shot."

#### All about Accountability

Ed's training program is built on a foundation of accountability. He even establishes online or phone contact with his clients, just to "check up on them" and keep them honest. "The program is unique," says Jackowski, "We give you a routine to do in between sessions, so you're not as dependent as someone who sees a trainer four days a week. I work with my clients once or twice a week and give them homework to break their interdependency. Because eventually, they're going to have to do this without me."

With Jason, it would be no different. Only days later, the phone calls started coming, just to make sure Jason was adhering to his new routine. "I think Jason sees a light at the end of the tunnel now," continues Jackowski. "If he works hard, he's able to make great progress. Even on the days when he doesn't feel like working out, he realizes that the benefit is worth the effort. People need to see the result of their hard work. It doesn't matter if you're going in small steps. You will see results."