

A close-up profile of a woman's face on the left, looking towards the right. In the background, a person with curly hair is visible, slightly out of focus. The scene appears to be a gym or fitness studio. A semi-transparent white horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

PT and the changing faces  
of fitness

## Personal training is more than just focusing on the physical, says Susan Woodd

The sudden rise in demand for personal trainers (PTs) came as society moved out of 'the age of the therapist' (going to someone to be fixed and understood) to people wanting to take back their personal power, develop self-awareness, learn how to manage their vital energy, and be seen as unique individuals with rich diversities rather than as government statistics. In order meet this rising demand, PTs have to embrace and develop a multidisciplinary approach to their training.

### The energy concept

Knowing how to manage, balance and maximise your client's energy is crucial. Maintaining the vital energy-producing organs and systems by encouraging an integrated health system for body, mind and spirit, gives PTs a toolbox of ideas, techniques and exercises to restore and maintain health, using information dating back 5,000 years. The standard oriental writings on the causes of disease link health and wellbeing to diet, activities, attitude and environment. No individual item is separate; biological, psychological and spiritual factors all contribute to the whole. In order for PTs to have a meaningful background to health and wellbeing and be able to devise personal strategies for their clients, they need to understand the energy system of the body: its energy centres and pathways and how these relate to organ function, mental and emotional states, diet, injury and muscle strength. How pressure points can be used for mental focus and to improve posture and vitality, and how our organs and systems interrelate and support each other to preserve the integrity of the whole are also important areas to grasp. If energy is running low or is overactive in one organ or system, not only does it affect the entire energy system, it equally influences how people think, feel, behave and react to situations. Yet, you can learn how to test the strength of the different organs and the systems they govern, and see the importance of understanding and working in harmony with our circadian rhythm and seasonal body clock, to devise an individual programme for your clients.

### The yin and yang approach

Complementary opposites are a great way to both get things moving and create balance. Originating in ancient Chinese philosophy, the two terms, yin and yang, describe opposing yet primal principles. While yin is often characterised by earth or water, yang has fire or wind to represent it. Neither are absolute states; in other words, each contains a bit of the other and neither can live independently. The table below is an example of how yin and yang have their own characteristics yet need each other to achieve a balanced system. As one increases or decreases, the other often acts in the opposite way to counteract the change or take it on. However, imbalances can occur and this is where the PT should be able to step in to realign the inner energy system.

#### Yin

What they do in between sessions  
Tendency to be late  
Need motivation and be listened to  
Like repetition to build confidence and strength  
Interested in what's not moving/hidden  
High centre of gravity in the body  
Like getting the mind behind it  
Need rest  
Prefer cold conditions

#### Yang

The session  
Tendency to be early  
Impatience/rushing ahead  
Prefer constancy  
Interested in what's moving/obvious  
Low centre of gravity in the body  
Like the physical approach  
Need movement  
Prefer hot conditions



For further information on training days and workshops, email Susan Woodd at [www.suewoodd.com](http://www.suewoodd.com)

## The five element system

A PT is also regarded as someone who gives practical advice for changes of lifestyle. By understanding the client's basic character, nature, strengths and weaknesses, the best and most unique course of action can be taken. This includes issues such as basic constitution, parental influences, present condition/health, environment, foods and liquids consumed, activities undertaken, general lifestyle, personality type and preferred means of communication, which will all play a huge part in planning suitable programmes to motivate and enhance the lives and health of your clients. Using the pointers below, you can either:

1. Decide to work on the particular element that you think is appropriate for the client and to increase its effectiveness.
2. Work through each element one at a time.
3. Control excess of an element by using the opposing one.

## The types

**Fire** types like working as a team and tend to go for activities such as salsa, team games and martial arts such as kickboxing. Fans of fast moves, they often go for the energetic ashtanga form of yoga, intense focus training and hi/lo aerobics.

**Emotional cycle** — are prone to over-excitement. Balance this with calm, joy and rhythm.

**Wood** beings are of a competitive nature so activities involving opposition is appealing. Muscle flexibility, joint mobility and stretching are their focal points while they also enjoy planning and creating new programmes. Grounding techniques include the yoga warrior pose.

**Emotional cycle** — are prone to anger and impatience. Balance this with kindness and humour.

**Water** people are reflective and like to look ahead and plan future goals. They enjoy the fluidity and flexibility of t'ai chi and enjoy their 'me' time and incorporate time for relaxation and rejuvenation into their day. Poses for the spine, meditation and aquarobics all go down well.

**Emotional cycle** — are prone to feeling anxious, insecure and fearful. Balance this by promoting courage, determination and direction.

**Metal** types prefer the personal training approach as well as mind/body exercises. They adapt well to both taking lead and being led by others and enjoy a mix of the Alexander technique, the Feldenkrais method, yoga and t'ai chi.

**Emotional cycle** — are prone to holding onto things and the past. Balance this with the use

of strong breath and being positive, open and enthusiastic.

**Earth** people like to work on their muscle tone, abs and core stability. They enjoy partner work and group exercises. Developing their self-awareness is important to them and they like to fine-tune their techniques.

**Emotional cycle** — are prone to worry, guilt and low self-worth. Balance this by offering your support, encouraging them to voice their opinions and incorporating exercises which boost their self-esteem.

## Facing the facts

Face reading can be a great tool for building rapport with clients and gaining insight into their present condition, personality, strengths and challenges. As a guideline, cheeks indicate the health and condition of the lungs, the tip of the nose represents the heart and the mouth, the digestive system is linked to the nose, the spine to the ears and under eye area, and the kidneys and the white of the eyes reflect the liver. The following provide some useful examples of the different parts of the face and what they represent:

### The forehead

**The vertical forehead** (vertical from eyebrow to hairline) — be as detailed as possible as vertical foreheads often belong to detailed thinkers

who are very thorough and like to have detailed information to understand it fully.

**Stress factor** having to skim through information, without enough depth or detail.

**The sloping forehead** (slopes back from eyebrow to hairline) — keep your conversations to the point, give them broad outlines, keeping it brief as they reach decisions quickly.

**Stress factor** sidetracking, unnecessary small talk or giving details without the bottom line.

**Ridge above the eyebrows** — likes a system to work and doesn't like being told what to do.

**Stress factor** is a lack of order or structure and being forced into changes without consideration for their own way of doing things.

## Head shape

**Head narrows to front from between ears** — highly competitive.

**Wider frontal lobes** — points to sport played for pleasure.

**Width between the eyes** — narrow: likes detail, wide: likes the bigger picture.

**High eyebrow** — give them space to decide as they like strong boundaries.

**Low eyebrow (close to the eye lid)** — these people make great coaches or PTs, they have high expectation for others, gets involved with or try to help people they work with as best they can. In extreme cases, they can lack boundaries.

## Final word

By making these assessments an integral part of working with your clients, you can go a long way in helping protect their health, enhance their energy and improve their professional performance. More importantly, using some or all of the above techniques can also help to rectify any problems at source by uncovering ways they may be wasting or draining the energy within their body.