**Keys to being a S.M.A.R.T. Training Partner**

**Spotting:**

If you have ever asked for a spot on any movement while at the gym, then you may be aware of the different types of spotters that exist. You may have had the type to lift the weight completely for you, making you feel like a superhero who just bench pressed 50lbs more than you could on your own. You may have the spotter who just stares at you while you are suffocating with a loaded bar crushing your chest. You may even have the spotter who yanks the weight up at first sight of struggle. Regardless of who you have had, you know there is a huge difference in having a spotter and having a good spotter.

A smart training partner communicates with the lifter on how they like to be spotted and adds assistance only when needed, allowing the tempo of each repetition to be smooth and given only when needed. Communicate with your partner on whether they want assistance getting the movement started and to what degree, have a clear understanding of the rep range you are setting up for, and know the perceived level of difficulty this will be for them. Knowing the answers to these questions will give the lifter the best chance in succeeding, pushing themselves, and preventing injury with minimal chance of miscommunication.

**Resistance**

While the inexperienced gym goer may think that the sole purpose of a working out partner may be to simply prevent the weight from crushing their companion, a training partner can add benefit by actually making exercises more challenging by adding their own resistance against their partner’s force. Now, you might be asking, “why doesn’t the person lifting simply add more weight to the movement?” Manual resistance, or the resistance applied by the partner, outweighs the benefits of simply loading more weight because you can intuitively read where your partner can be challenged more throughout the range of movement.

Take the dumbbell bench press for an example; if you were to attempt 20 extra pounds of weight, you may find that you could only get 6 reps before failing to get the dumbbells off your chest, even though you still could have done a few more reps on the second half of the movement. Instead, through the use of manual resistance you could utilize a lighter load, add resistance at different portions of the movement for the lifter, as well as utilize proper spotting for the lifter when they reach a sticking point. Adding tension against the lifter, especially against the lengthening of the muscle, is an excellent way to accumulate muscle damage, which will force recruitment of dormant muscle and be sure to make you sore for days to follow.

**Teamwork NOT Competition**

Even for the most competitive of us, viewing a training partner as a teammate and not as someone to “one-up” will take you further in attaining the physique and strength you desire. This is not to say you cannot have some fun with your partner and challenge each other when working out, but there are ways that will produce benefit and then there are ways that can produce injury. Going head to head for a desired weight is a sure fire way for someone to get hurt, or if nothing else prevent progress and waste energy that could have been better utilized. Unless strength levels are identical, challenging your partner to lift the same amount of weight is foolish. Instead, challenge each other to lift the same percent of your 1 rep max or level of intensity. This will allow you to both to be pushed equally, while maintaining the integrity of proper form and competitiveness. As mentioned, a smart training partner recognizes what’s best for both lifters and motivates each other to push harder and stick to their program, not veer course to feel superior.