

CHAPTER 13

WHO'S LOOKING?

Throughout my career in the fitness business, I've become aware of one major obstacle that prevents people from really getting into their bodies: the fear of being looked at. It can stop people from putting some oomph into exercise.

Because we are taught to be hyper aware of our physical imperfections, we tend to exaggerate the degree to which everyone else notices them, too. Many times people have said to me, "Patch, I'm just so self-conscious about exercising. I see all those people who are such good shape, and I can't help but compare myself to them. I don't want people watching me!"

I understand this feeling since I had to come to terms with it myself. I'm a normal guy, but because of my tall height I used to worry that I would be readily noticeable and that everyone would know if I did something wrong during my exercise routine. I'd think, "Everyone's going to be watching me. After all, I'm the owner of this club! People are going to expect me to have perfect form when I strength train or do a stretch class." I'd feel particularly self-conscious when I'd have a rheumatoid arthritis flare-up, leaving me temporarily weak and feeble.

Well, it wasn't long before I realized the truth: *No one was looking at me!* Most people didn't even know I existed. And those who did usually glanced over, smiled, engaged me in a bit of conversation, but then got right back to their own workout. For the most part, people were absorbed in what *they* were doing—listening to their music or just enjoying being in the zone.

When you can exercise with the consciousness that no one is going to notice your less-than-perfect maneuvers (other than your fitness instructor or personal trainer, whose job it is to notice!), you give yourself the inner freedom to focus on how good you feel. You can relax and just be yourself.

This is true not just for exercising in fitness clubs or playing a sport. It can apply to being on the beach or at a party. As you get more comfortable in your own skin, you can relax into your own physical being. Then a paradoxical thing happens: People *do* start looking at you! They're being attracted to your energy. People who are comfortable with themselves make others feel at ease, and as a result, draw people to them.

You like *what* about me?

How often have you focused on one of your so-called flaws only to have someone compliment you on that very thing? Let's say you've got really curly hair but you've always wished you had straight hair. Then you meet someone who says, "I just love your curly hair!" Perhaps you're in a group fitness class and you don't think you've got the rhythm quite right, and the person next to you says, "You're so good at that! Can I stand next to you in the next class, too?"

Take a moment to ask yourself what you get complimented on. When I present a seminar or workshop at fitness organizations around the world, I ask people to get into small groups and talk about what they admire about each other. People often gain new insights into themselves. Sometimes people say, "I didn't think that I had that great a laugh, but she seems to really appreciate it." Or, "I've always seen myself as shy and reserved, but someone in the group just told me that I seem thoughtful and reflective."

It's impossible to predict exactly what about us draws other people in, so there's no point worrying about it! [END SIDEBAR]

DO THIS: The next time you want to compliment someone, don't keep it to yourself. Say it to them!