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A Matter of Motivation

by Mark Wiseman

"Come on, Scott," Temlyn urged me. "One more set. You can do this."

But my lungs were bursting, sweat was dripping from every pore in my body, and my legs felt like rubber. I looked up into her upside-down face and shook my head. "Not today," I told her. My feet came unhooked from the bar at the top of the exercise machine and I slid down to the floor with a heavy sigh. "I'm through."

Temlyn sat quietly, waiting for my breathing to return to normal. Eventually I felt recovered enough to roll off the machine and sit across from her on the floor. I grabbed a towel and wiped off sweat, concentrating on the task so I wouldn't have to see the hint of disapproval in my personal trainer's face.

"We still have a little over ten minutes," she noted in a neutral voice. "Maybe we should spend that time talking about your goals."

Grunting heavily, I got up and headed for the kitchen. I poured two glasses of sugar-free lemonade and set them down on the table. Temlyn joined me and took a long pull from her drink. Her eyes said everything her mouth would not.

"I pretty much sucked on it today," I admitted, surprising neither of us.

Temlyn's expression was noncommittal. "You seemed distracted," she said. "Like there's something bothering you."

Oh, what the hell, I thought. "I'm getting frustrated, I guess."

"Oh?"

"I've been stuck at the same weight for over a month now," I complained. "I'm doing all the things I did to lose 50 pounds, but now that I'm down to that last ten it's like everything stopped working. I even gained a pound from last week to this week. It just seems hopeless."

"Everybody hits plateaus, Scott," she told me. "Those last few pounds are always the hardest ones to let go of. But if you let yourself get discouraged, if you start cutting back on your workout time, it gets even harder. Instead of thinking about how your program isn't working, try focusing on just getting through each set and doing as much as you can. Eventually, the rest will take care of itself."

Easy for you to say, I thought, glancing enviously at her lithe body. Temlyn was perfectly toned, slim and athletic. Her black leotard clung tightly enough to make that very clear. But what else would anyone expect of a personal trainer? I, on the other hand, was a desk jockey—a contracts manager for a government contractor. Aside from the smarmy insurance guy who'd taken my vital statistics with raised eyebrows, who really cared if I was a little soft around the middle?

I did, as it turned out. The question was did I have the resolve to finish what I'd started?

Temlyn was digging through her purse. "Here," she said, handing me a cream-colored business card. "I've given out a lot of these cards. If it's just a matter of needing extra motivation, she can help you."

I took the card. *Change is natural*, it read. *So is resistance to change. Hypnosis can help.* The therapist's name was followed by a series of initials, an address, phone number, and email address.

"Hypnosis?"

Temlyn nodded. "It can work wonders if you want it to."

And so it was that I found myself leaving work early on a Thursday afternoon to visit the office of Madison Palmer, Clinical Hypnotherapist. A pretty receptionist greeted me warmly and handed me an intake form that asked for my medical history and vital statistics. I finished that in short order, handed it back to the receptionist, and amused myself by studying the decorations in the waiting room.

The long wall was covered with movie posters. I noted a production still of Bela Lugosi from *Dracula*, his eyes glowing as he stared into the camera; Emma Thompson's mesmerized face, from *Dead Again*; Kevin Bacon staring into a massive blank movie screen, from *Stir of Echoes*; Woody Allen and Helen Hunt, from *Curse of the Jade Scorpion*; Boris Karloff and a young woman I didn't recognize, presumably from an old horror film. There were more that I didn't recognize, from older films by the look of them. On the wall behind the receptionist, a functional clock shaped like a giant pocket watch told the time. Next to her, a display case held at least two dozen real pocket watches, all hanging on short chains. On the high ledge of the receptionist's desk, next to a practical, low-maintenance potted plant, a metronome ticked away, its arm swinging slowly back and forth. Back and forth...

"Scott?"

A kindly-looking, 40-something woman was standing in the doorway looking at me. "This way, please."

I pulled my wits back together and stood up, following the woman into the next room. She closed the door behind us and extended her hand. "I'm Madison Palmer."

Her handshake was firm but gentle. "Have a seat," she said, leaving it to me to choose. The room had two overstuffed recliners, a wooden rocker and a large leather love seat arranged around a glass coffee table. I took one of the recliners. She sat in the rocking chair to my right.

"Interesting décor out there," I said, indicating the waiting room.

She smiled. "Everyone who comes here for the first time has those stereotypical images in mind anyway. My partner and I feel that putting them out on display gives people perspective and makes it easier to set them aside."

"It's a thought," I granted.

She was skimming over my intake form. "I see you've recently quit smoking. How is that going for you?"

"Fine. It's been months since I even thought about having a cigarette, which is amazing considering the number of co-workers I have who still gather at the loading dock four times a day."

"Good for you," she affirmed. "And how does it feel, knowing you're going to live a longer and healthier life because of what you've done for yourself?"

"Great." I hadn't really thought about it that way, but what she said made sense.

"I see you're working out with Temlyn," she continued. "Is that going fine, too?"

"Could be better," I admitted. "I've sort of hit a plateau, and I'm having a hard time finding the motivation to break through it."

"Plateaus can be tough to work through," she agreed. "One thing that helps is to remember why you started working out in the first place. Why was that?"

I thought about it. "It goes back to the cigarettes. I gained a lot of weight when I quit, especially after Pam and I broke up. My clothes were too tight and starting to give at the pressure points. I figured I had two choices: start shopping at the Big and Tall store, or get into shape."

"So you're doing it primarily for yourself? That's good. Oftentimes when we try to make a change to please someone else, we find that the motivation isn't really there. But when you decide to do it for yourself, because you want to and because it's important to you, then you have the ability to motivate yourself to make the change happen. And it feels so good to be able to make positive changes in your own life, does it not?"

I realized I had been nodding with her all along. "Of course," I agreed. And in that moment I did feel good. I'd achieved a lot already, I realized. I had a right to feel good about it.

Madison was watching me with a smile. "I know I can help you get past your plateau, Scott. Are you ready to go into hypnosis now, or would you like to discuss things a little more first?"

"I'm ready now."

"That's good. You may want to put your feet up and get yourself nice and comfortable in the chair. You can put your hands in your lap, or on the arms of the chair, whichever is more comfortable for you."

I pulled the lever on the side of the recliner, brought up the footrest, and arranged myself comfortably. "All set," I told her.

She nodded. "I'm not going to start waving a pocket watch or a sparkling crystal at you, or ask you to stare at the wall. The truth is, going into hypnosis is a perfectly natural thing and is something you can do all by yourself, whenever and wherever you want to. You may, Scott, recall a time when you were watching a movie, and you became so engrossed in the movie that you never noticed the things happening around you ... or reading a book, and being focused so intensely on your reading that you can almost see the characters and events in your mind."

Her voice was smooth and even. As she spoke, I found myself remembering times when I'd been lost in a movie or book, and wondered if that was a kind of hypnosis, as she seemed to imply.

"... or listening to a speaker," she continued, "and finding that as you listen, your mind begins to wander and your eyes just seem to close down now, allowing you to concentrate on your breathing. Breathing in... that's right... and breathing out. Letting each breath in bring calmness and relaxation, and letting each breath out take with it some of the tensions and anxieties that may be cluttering your mind. And as you continue to... relax deeply now ... noticing how your heart beats easily, becoming a little slower and easier as you... go deeper into hypnosis..."

Go deeper? Was I in hypnosis already? And when had my eyes closed? The questions formed and, just as quickly, seemed to fade away. Madison's voice also seemed to fade, becoming little more than a background noise, too hard to keep track of. Somewhere in the distance, I heard myself counting down from one hundred. I might have made it to 96 before the numbers became jumbled in my head and disappeared. I let them go. I let everything go.

I floated in that chair—not asleep yet not awake—for some time. It was very pleasant, almost as if I'd forgotten about having a body for a while. Then Madison's voice came back, counting upward. I knew what that meant, but I didn't want to leave the place I'd found.

"Scott, if you don't come back for me now I'll have to charge you for another session."

My eyes opened, and I saw Madison looking at me, chuckling softly. "That line always works," she said. "How do you feel?"

I took a quick inventory. "A little woozy, like I've seriously overslept."

She nodded. "You're a natural at this. Most people don't go that deep so easily."

As my head cleared, I checked my watch and got another surprise: it was 4:45 in the afternoon. My appointment had been for four o'clock and I was fairly sure we'd started on time, if not a few minutes early. "Where did the time go?"

"To productive use," Madison responded. "I think you'll find that you can easily block out the distractions now and focus on your goals. You'll be breaking through that plateau very soon now."

I found myself nodding, even as I searched my mind for any recollection at all of the previous half hour. "Why don't I remember anything?"

"It's okay," she assured me. "Spontaneous amnesia is common at the depth of trance you reached. You'll remember it all eventually, when you're ready to. Until then, you can just accept that your unconscious mind knows what it's doing and will be working for you."

It didn't seem as though I had much choice anyway, so I let it go. "When should I come back?"

She smiled. "When you need my help with something else."

It took me a moment to get the implication. "You mean I'm done in one session?"

"Absolutely. You'll see."

It hardly seemed credible to me, but I could see there was no shaking the woman's confidence. So I paid her, thanked her, and left.

I first noticed the change the next morning when I went to work. About three blocks from the office, my eye fell on an empty parking space ahead. Without even thinking, I pulled into it and killed the engine. I grabbed my briefcase and strolled toward the office. As I walked, I noticed how pleasant it felt to be outside strolling down the sidewalk. *Beats the parking garage*, I thought.

Soon I was entering the lobby of my building, waving to the security guards as I passed through the metal detector. I started to join the crowd in front of the elevators, but on an impulse I stepped around them and pushed open the door to the stairwell. It felt good to let my legs carry me up to my fourth floor office. And in the back of my head, I heard Madison Palmer's voice: "...you can park farther away from the office, so you can really enjoy walking to and from your car... you can use the stairs instead of the elevator..."

And my own voice, from a thousand miles away: "...Exercise is like making love to my body..."

As the day went on, I found myself getting up from my seat a lot. If I stayed in it for more than 15 minutes or so, I started getting antsy and thinking of things I needed to do elsewhere in the office. It didn't really bother me; on some level, I knew it was a result of my hypnosis session and would ultimately be good for me. I had the same thought when I got home. I'd stopped for groceries on the way, but instead of loading up all of the bags and carrying them in at once I made several trips, taking only one bag each time. "Exercise," I heard myself saying, "is like making love to my body."

On Saturday afternoon I finished scrubbing the kitchen floor—something I'd been putting off for weeks—just in time for Temlyn's scheduled arrival.

"Come on in," I called at her knock while I took my bucket to the slop sink in the garage.

Temlyn was in her usual appointment gear, a stretchy black leotard that put her excellent figure on full display. She wore minimal makeup and no jewelry, and her short blonde hair had that deliberately unkempt, bed-head look. "That's an unusual warm-up," she joked, indicating the bucket.

"Blame it on Madison Palmer," I complained. "Ever since I left her office the other day I seem to be going out of my way to find things to do." I told her about parking three blocks from the office, taking the stairs, and the other things I'd felt compelled to do.

Temlyn chuckled while she listened to the litany. "Is all that so bad?"

I sighed. "That's the thing—no, it isn't. I know this is all stuff I should be doing anyway, so it doesn't really bother me. It's just weird having this feeling that part of me isn't in on the new plan. I wonder if I'm going to wake up one morning craving tofu."

"Not likely," she giggled. "Even Madison has her limits."

We went downstairs to the corner of the basement I'd set up as my in-home gym. It was a twelve by twelve area delimited by cheap carpet set down over the best padding available, giving the floor a firm but soft feel to it. In that area I had three pieces of equipment: a treadmill, a multipurpose resistance training set, and a heavy punching bag suspended from the ceiling joists on a chain. The treadmill was for aerobic work when the weather outside wouldn't permit a good walk, the bag was for raw stress relief, and the resistance set was for working with Temlyn. It was basically a bench on a track, with a series of different pulleys and attachments that could be used to change the motions. There were no weights—like a lot of home gym sets, the system was designed to leverage the user's own body weight for resistance.

We started out, as usual, with stretches. I found myself focusing on the tendons as I stretched them out. I was hardly aware of Temlyn's gentle touch reminding me to hold form.

Before I knew it the stretching was over and Temlyn was setting up the resistance rig for my usual Saturday regimen. When I'd first bought it, I kept it at the lowest setting. Since working with Temlyn, we'd been slowly raising it until I was now working at nearly my full body weight. I watched eagerly as she set the bench now at full body weight. "Let's start with the butterflies," she said.

It was all the invitation I needed. I took a seat on the bench, facing forward, and pushed the sliding platform back with my feet. Temlyn gave me the handles, each of which was attached to a steel cable that ran through pulleys at the back of the machine. She put a foot on the track to hold the platform while I assumed the butterfly position: feet straight, toes

pointing upward, sitting upright with my arms stretched out and elbows bent. "Ready," I told her.

Temlyn moved her foot and I felt my weight on the handles. My vision focused on a point ahead of me. I took a deep breath and, as I exhaled, I pulled my arms forward until they were parallel to my legs. Temlyn counted out the reps, but her voice faded as I felt my mind sliding into its own place. *Exercise is like making love to my body*, it said.

As I continued, pulling forward on each exhale and slowly returning to starting position on each inhale, that phrase repeated itself in my head like a mantra. *Exercise is like making love to my body... Exercise is like making love to my body...*

"Okay, rest for a minute." Temlyn put her foot on the machine, locking the action for me, so I could rest my muscles for sixty seconds before the next set. I felt good—no, I felt damn good, as if a lover were caressing my muscles. The next set went just as well as the first, the mantra still running through my head.

The first two sets of each exercise are for a set number of reps. For the butterfly, I usually do 25 reps. The third set is unlimited—we work until my muscles fail which, of late, had been around 30 to 35 reps. As usual, Temlyn counted out the final set silently, so I wouldn't know how many I'd done. It didn't really matter because I was too focused on my mantra to pay attention to her. With each rep, that sensation of being caressed by a lover grew stronger and more pleasant. A strange sort of erotic charge started building in my gut and points south as I felt my arm and chest muscles strain to keep going. When they finally couldn't pull me up one more time, I dropped the handles and sighed as the endorphins kicked in all over.

Temlyn's voice poked through the clouds I was floating on. "Scott, do you have any idea how many reps you just did?"

"None whatsoever," I sighed, still riding the high.

"Forty-seven."

My eyes met hers. "Holy shit," I groaned. Part of that was motivated by the number, which was a personal high, and part by the realization that I had a tremendous hard-on.

"Great job," she said, punctuating it with a friendly slap on the thigh. "Now scoot down and we'll do some alternating arm pullovers."

I scooted my butt down on the bench, extremely conscious of the fact that my dick was pointing straight forward. By keeping my legs bent, feet at the edge of the platform, I was able to more or less hide it in the folds of my gym shorts.

The arm pullover uses different muscle groups than the butterfly. I alternated between my left and right arms, pulling my weight **up the track** and slowly letting it down again, as Temlyn counted the reps. And just as with the butterfly, as my muscles tired I felt that sensation of loving hands massaging them, and the mantra grew louder and more insistent in my brain. *Exercise is like making love to my body...*

"Scott, you're moving your hips. Try and keep them still."

We were in the third set, and the sensations were getting to me. I could feel my dick trying to tear a hole in my briefs. I was becoming so aroused my hips were flexing on their own, as if an invisible lover were riding me. And still I kept pulling. *Exercise is like making love to my body...*

Temlyn reached across my body and pressed down on my far hip with her hand, bringing her forearm directly into contact with my bulging member. My hips flexed anyway, making things that much worse, and Temlyn's arm pulled back with a gasp. Just then, my arm muscles decided to give out. I put my legs down and dropped the handles with a long moan, giving up all further attempts at hiding the tent pole in my shorts. I felt a mild urge to just grab on to it and pump myself to orgasm.

"What's going on, Scott?" Her face showed both concern and puzzlement.

"Exercise," I **sighed heavily**, "is like making love to my body."

Temlyn stared into my face, her mouth open. Then she stared at my crotch. Then, to my surprise, she blushed a deep red and burst out laughing.

"Hey," I objected. "You're messing with my fragile male ego here."

"I'm sorry," she said between fits of giggling. "I think I've heard that line a hundred times, from a bunch of different people. I even hear it in my own

head when I work out, thanks to Madison. But you, Scott, are the first person I've ever seen take it quite so literally."

I had to admit, it *was* kind of funny. Laughing with her even helped to take the edge off a little bit. "So now what do we do?"

She shrugged. "Just go with it, I guess. Hop off and think about baseball while I reconfigure."

"Cute. Want some lemonade?"

"Sure."

I trotted up the stairs and fixed two tall glasses. The cold liquid helped to get my libido back under control, at least temporarily.

When I got back downstairs, I almost dropped the glasses. Temlyn's leotard was gone. She had changed into a gray sports bra and running shorts. *Very short running shorts.*

"You... changed," I noted awkwardly.

Her eyes sparkled and she laughed at me. "You noticed! Relax, Scott; I'm just getting comfortable." She took a drink of lemonade and I watched her throat muscles move with each swallow, feeling the tingling coming back to my shorts already.

Finally she gave me a stern look. "Are you going to stare at me or get on the machine?"

I put my half-empty glass down and climbed back onto the resistance system, which Temlyn had configured for leg curls. This was where I'd given out last time. I lay on the sliding bench with my head near the floor, facing up. The position gave me an upside-down view of Temlyn as she approached me.

"Good," she said, while I tried not to notice how easy it was to look up her shorts as she stood over me. Then she squatted down and pushed the slide up a little bit, leaving me an even closer view to try and ignore. "Hook your feet on the bar, please."

I complied and felt my weight resting on the tops of my feet where they hooked the upper bar. Temlyn looked down at me. "Like the view?"

"Sure... I mean... umm..." I was at a loss. Then I saw the wicked grin on her face. "Cute," I said wryly. "Shall we start now?"

She nodded. "Two sets of twenty-five curls, then let's see how many you can do for the third set. Go!"

My legs squeezed and the bench rose, bring my rear end almost up to my ankles. I held it there for a heartbeat, then slowly returned myself to the lower position. My eyes were staring upward, and when I reached the end I found them looking straight up the leg of Temlyn's shorts again. Was that a patch of white cotton? After a few reps, it didn't matter any more—I was back in the zone, concentrating on the feelings in my muscles and hearing that mantra in my head again. *Exercise is like making love to my body.*

Leg curls have always been the hardest part of the routine for me, and the effects of whatever Madison Palmer had suggested to me seemed to increase with the amount of exertion my muscles endured. By the time I finished the first set I was sporting major wood. Midway through the second, I felt as if someone had a hand around my shaft and was rubbing it slowly with each rep.

Temlyn squatted down at the bottom of the incline as I began the third set, watching my body intently. The caressing sensations continued in my legs and groin, made worse by having my head inches from Temlyn's crotch at the end of each rep. After one rep I looked up and saw nipples pushing hard against the sports bra. And was it just me, or was I starting to smell her more? *Exercise is like making love...*

"You did it!" Temlyn's voice shouted as she jumped to her feet. "Three full sets!" And then she was standing by my feet, kneading my exhausted calves and hamstrings. It felt incredibly good. So good that for a moment I almost forgot a certain other muscle, which was standing up and begging for the same attention.

"Hooray, me," I replied, feeling myself getting harder and hotter. My feet slipped out from under the bar and I rolled off the machine. I looked over at Temlyn. "Crunches now?"

I usually do three sets of abdominal crunches at the end of each workout. But Temlyn shook her head and smiled lustily. "How about something a little more interesting?"

I shrugged. "Okay."

She grabbed my feet and dragged me away from the machine playfully, laughing as I grabbed at my shorts to stop them riding up my crack. She pulled my shoes off, removed her own, then lay down on her back opposite me and extended her legs, locking them together with mine. I got the idea quickly. "Sit-ups?"

"That's right," she confirmed. "Old fashioned, but still very effective. You don't have any back trouble, so we can do them safely. If you can give me three sets of twenty, I'll give you a reward." Her foot brushed my thigh in a way that suggested one hell of a good reward.

Temlyn didn't just anchor my legs—every time I sat up I saw her rising up to meet me. Our eyes met at the end of each rep at first, but as we made our way through the second set I started to catch her looking elsewhere. I became increasingly aware of my legs and the touch of her skin against mine. *Exercise is like making love...*

We were counting together at the close of the third set: "...Eighteen... Nineteen... *Twenty!*" At the top of the final rep, her arms whipped out from behind her head and encircled me, pulling our faces together. Her lips found mine and parted quickly. She tasted sweet and salty, a combination of the lemonade and a little bit of sweat from our exertions.

My hands went exploring and found the smooth, stretchy fabric of the sports bra. I ran my hands along the sides, then slipped my thumbs in and forward until they brushed her nipples. She moaned and broke the kiss, leaving us sitting together with legs entwined.

Temlyn looked across at me with the knowledge of my arousal showing in her face. Slowly, sensuously, she ran her hands across her chest and lifted off the sports bra to reveal an exquisite pair of breasts: round, plump, and just the right shape and size to hold one in each hand.

It was an invitation no hetero male could decline. I reached out, took a breast in each hand, and caressed them. Temlyn guided me, dropping her head back and moaning with pleasure. Somehow in the process we managed to get our legs separated. I got up on my knees and gently bore her down to the mat. There I kissed and suckled on each breast in turn, tasting the sweat and the skin and wanting more. I kissed my way down her belly, past her navel, and peeled off her remaining clothes before settling in for a light afternoon snack.

Temlyn was in great shape, of course. I felt nothing but muscle in the thighs that clamped down on my head and the hips that buckled as I ran my tongue around and through her every nook and cranny. I could have stayed there all day, but a pair of powerful hands grabbed me by the head and hauled me back upward. Her toes tugged at my shorts until they were down around my knees, freeing my cock at last. One of Temlyn's hands grabbed it, squeezed it once, and guided it home.

"How many reps?" I teased as I felt myself bottoming out inside her.

She looked up at me, her face betraying both urgency and amusement. "Work until failure," she advised. "It's the best way to build endurance."

"Yes, ma'am." Further frivolity quickly became impossible as our bodies found a common rhythm and moved to it. Our eyes locked together and our breathing synchronized. Temlyn's strong legs gripped me and held me, keeping me as close as possible. My calf and leg muscles, still tired from the leg pulls, strained to hold the position. Then, to my relief, Temlyn's hands clawed at the carpeting and her body trembled, signaling the start of her climax.

It was a ferocious one. Her entire body took part, clenching every muscle she had, including the ones locked around me. The intensity was contagious. All it took was a few seconds of watching her face to send me over the edge, too. Forgetting the impending mutiny threatened by my leg muscles, I held on with everything and let the pleasure engulf me.

A minute later, I found myself collapsing onto the carpet next to Temlyn. She opened her eyes, still panting heavily, and looked into mine. "Now that," she sighed, "was a workout."

A few days later, I phoned Madison Palmer and gave her a PG-13 version of the workout session. When I described the full effects of her suggestion, she laughed heartily. "I'm sorry," she offered after the first guffaws, still failing to suppress the others. "I realize it was no joke to you. Let's get you back in here and reword that a bit."

"Actually," I said, "it's okay. Temlyn and I talked, and we decided we like it this way. Not only are my workouts more interesting, but it looks like I'm breaking through the plateau as well—I've dropped two and a half pounds this week."

"That's wonderful," she replied. "And you know you can keep doing that for as long as you feel the need. You'll find it very easy to keep your activity level just high enough to maintain your goal weight."

"I suspect so," I agreed. After all, there's nothing like having the right kind of motivation.

-wg
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