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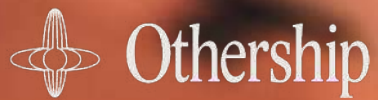
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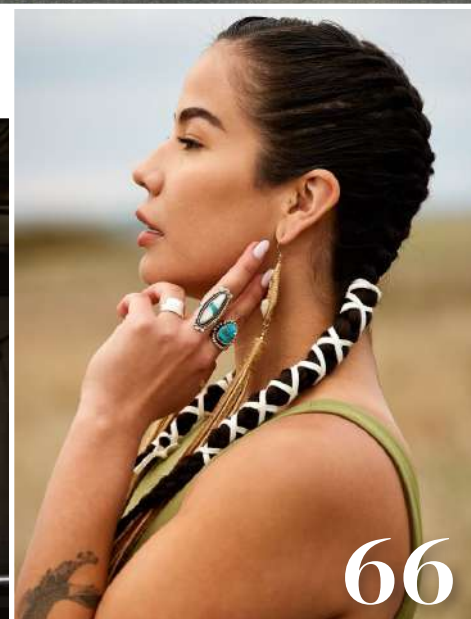
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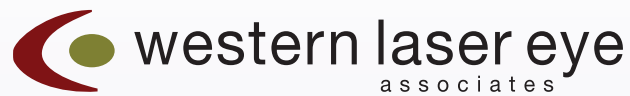
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2023 Inspiration Begins Here



**Elaine Kupser, Publisher
& Editor-In-Chief**
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There's no better way to kickstart your year than with our Inspiration Issue—featuring IMPACT Magazine's Canada's Top Fitness Instructors—Class of 2023!

Each year I have the great pleasure of contacting each of the 30 nominated instructors who rose to the top. After months of anticipation while our expert panelists scored and tallied up the results, it is truly one of the highlights of my year to deliver the great news to our deserving top nominees. The moment is also a bittersweet one, as every single nominated instructor, whether featured in this issue or not, has an inspiring story and career worth sharing. I wish we could feature each and every person who comes across the IMPACT desk. We recognize them at the beginning of this feature, and my heartfelt congratulations go out to all who make the lives of others healthier and happier. We salute you!

A new year is always a great time to reset, recharge, and refocus. This year, personally, I would like to focus on a broader change of perspective rather than any specific (perhaps unrealistic!) new year's resolution. I am conscious of there being more of an emphasis on building overall well-being in our world today, whether it be breathwork, creating a live-work balance, meditation, talk therapy, or leaning once again on our social circles which were so deeply missed during the pandemic. For myself, getting back into the gym has been more about being among others—feeling all the feels, syncing my


pace to the person next to me, listening to the now comforting sounds of people chatting, weights clanking, runners' feet pounding the treadmills. Camaraderie means a lot, even in solitary sport. I don't know that I saw it as clearly before....

So, where will you choose to place your focus in 2023? How could your perspective on your own health and fitness shift? This could be a great time to try a new running training program. Did you know we have dozens available for free online, tailored by the best running coaches in the industry? From novice programs to ultramarathon plans, we have something for every level of runner. Or perhaps this is the year you try yoga for more than just one class, even if you've never been the bendy-pretzel type. Stick with it—things can only get easier! Maybe you'll finally sign up for that community pickleball team you've seen the signs for in your local community center. Don't be nervous—they'll love you! The options are limitless, as is the potential for enjoyment, new friends, and a heightened state of well-being.

And if you're unsure, worry not, because this issue has plenty of inspiration for you. With ideas, plans, and workouts from the best experts in their fields, incredible personal stories of triumph, and delicious plant-based recipes and nutrition advice, there is something here for everyone. And as always, IMPACT's aim is to inspire and support you every step of the way on your health and fitness journey. Turn the page to a healthier new year! 



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KICK BUTT WORKOUT

FOR AN EFFECTIVE LEG DAY

A minimal-equipment circuit to specifically target your glutes and hamstrings

BY **JENNAMAYE MAXWELL** @JEREMY WONG &
AMANDA PALMER

Founder of JennaMaye Fitness, and one of IMPACT Magazine's Canada's Top Fitness Trainers 2022 in Vancouver, B.C.

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HAIR & MAKEUP: **LINDSAY MACLEAN**

There are many ways to target your lower body and at times it can feel overwhelming. To help with your next leg workout I thought I would walk you through mine and give you one of my favourite lower-body circuits to try towards the end of your workout. I like to start my workout with variations of glute-activation exercises. I then move into different circuit combinations of squats, reverse lunges and bridges. Once my legs are warmed up, and through the main part of my leg workout, I start to target my glutes and hamstrings with a circuit that works through three to four exercises first on one leg and then the other. I like to structure my circuit this way so that going through the exercises, each exercise (if placed in the right order) fatigues the muscles in a different way and progressively brings the focus to the back of your legs and glutes. Who doesn't want that? Besides the aesthetics, stronger hamstrings and glutes will help you become a better athlete no matter what your sport of choice is.

The key to success and results with a lower-body workout is to not overcomplicate the movements and keep your workout simple and consistent while providing yourself enough variety that you don't get bored. This workout will hopefully inspire you with four new exercises that you should consistently include in your lower body workouts.

THE WORKOUT

Directions

Perform each exercise back-to-back on the same leg with minimal rest between. When all exercises are completed, repeat this circuit on the other leg.

Have a dumbbell and a band, both of medium resistance, ready for the second and third exercises respectively.

Do two sets of the following exercises:

1

BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUATS

10-15 reps

The Bulgarian split squat is a squat variation in which one leg is elevated on a surface while the other leg performs a squat, bearing most of the load. Because of this split position, this single-leg unilateral exercise targets the quadriceps, glutes, and hamstrings like no other leg exercise.

- Stand roughly two feet in front of a sturdy bench or chair, core engaged, shoulders back, chest and eyes pointing straight ahead.
- Place your right foot on the bench behind you.
- Align your front leg directly in front of your hip and make sure it's placed forward enough so that when you bend into the exercise your front knee tracks over your ankle (hold onto the wall if you need help to stabilize).
- Your back foot is there to help you stay balanced—the engagement and movement of the exercise are focused on the front leg.
- Engage your core with your chest high and eyes looking straight ahead and bend your left knee. This allows your right knee and ankle to naturally bend as you move through the downward phase of the exercise without taking the load onto your back leg.
- Keep the load balanced evenly across your front foot as you lower. Lower until your left quadriceps is roughly parallel to the ground and focus on stabilizing.
- Press back to standing by pushing through your left foot using the power in your left quad and glute.
- Once all the reps are completed, keep this leg in front and move to the next exercise.



2

REAR FOOT ELEVATED SINGLE LEG REAR DEADLIFT

8-12 reps

The single-leg deadlift is a great exercise for improving your balance and stability while focusing on your glutes and hamstrings.

- Keeping the same leg in front, take the dumbbell into the opposite hand. Keep your core engaged, your shoulders back, and your chest up.
- Keep your front knee soft (do not lock it), engage your core and keep your eyes focused forward as you hinge at your hips until your torso is almost parallel to the ground.
- Briefly pause at the bottom, then squeeze your glutes, thrust your hips forward, and raise your torso back to the starting position.
- Repeat until you complete the prescribed number of repetitions and then move onto the next exercise. →

3

BANDED DONKEY KICKS

10-15 reps

Adding a resistance band to regular donkey kicks is a great way to make the exercise more challenging and increase the muscle tone in your glutes.

- Start on all fours on the bench or the floor.
- Stack your shoulders over your wrists and your hips over your knees.
- Place a resistance band around the arches of your feet and kneel on the floor or a bench.
* Be sure that the resistance is not so heavy that you cannot complete the full range of motion.
- While kneeling, keep your core tight, shoulders down your back, your gaze on the floor and your back still and stable.
- Start kicking up with the leg that was just in front for the first two exercises
- Keep your leg at 90 degrees as you push against the resistance with your heel.
- Pause at the top of the motion and make sure you feel your glute activating.
- Lower your leg back to the starting position.
- Complete all the repetitions and then move on to the fourth exercise.



4

RAINBOWS

10-15 reps

The rainbow is an incredible way to work your glutes from all angles. The bonus of this exercise is you have to stabilize a lot so it also works your core.

- Start on all fours on the bench or the floor.
- Stack your shoulders over your wrists and your hips over your knees.
- Keep your core tight, your shoulders down your back, and your gaze on the floor.
- Extend the same leg you were kicking up in the last exercise, straight behind you.
- Move that leg as far out to the side as you comfortably can and let it drop almost to the floor.
- Engaging the glutes, lead with your heel as you lift the leg up and over to the opposite side in an arch motion, squeezing your glute at the top.
- Repeat all the reps and then go back to exercise number one and repeat the circuit on the other leg. **IM**

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WINTER STRENGTH WORKOUT

Stay fit and strong this season

BY BRENT BISHOP & DAVE LAUS

One of Canada's Top Fitness Trainers, founder of Think Fitness Studios, celebrity trainer, author, adventurer and on-air fitness expert on Cityline in Toronto, ON.

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With shorter days and cooler temperatures upon us, it's an opportune time to change up your indoor workout regimen and continue to ramp up your winter fitness. Whether you're winter running, hitting the slopes, or snowshoeing in the backcountry this season, strength, stability and endurance can make the difference when it comes to fitness and injury prevention. With this strength focus now, you will also create the foundation for the spring activities you love. The following strength circuit uses a landmine (Olympic barbell secured to an anchor point) as the central exercise tool. This can also be achieved by placing the end of a barbell securely in a corner. Aim to use a weight that becomes challenging towards the last few reps, but still allows you to maintain good form. This circuit is geared to enhance joint stability, muscular balance, and co-ordination while improving strength and power. Complete each exercise in sequence then return to the start of the circuit. Complete three to four rounds in total.





1 CURTSY LUNGE

15 reps/side

- Brace the bar against your upper chest with your left shoulder leaning on the weight plate. Step back the left leg as far as you can into a curtsy-lunge position. Your left knee should almost touch the ground. Quickly push from your right heel back to standing position while driving your left knee up. Repeat on the right.



2 POWER THRUSTER

15 reps

- Brace the bar in both hands like a goblet and assume a sumo-squat position, feet wide and toes out. Quickly push out of the squat position while simultaneously pressing the bar forward and upward with both hands. Return slowly to the start position. →





3 SINGLE-LEG DEADLIFT

15 reps/side

- Start with the bar in your left hand and your left foot off the ground. Keep your weight through the mid-foot of your right foot. Slowly hinge forward from your hips, extending your left leg behind you while keeping your spine straight and shoulders back. Aim to reach parallel to the floor as long as you can maintain form throughout. Return to the starting position by pushing through your right heel then switch to right side.




4 ROLLOUT PUSH-UP

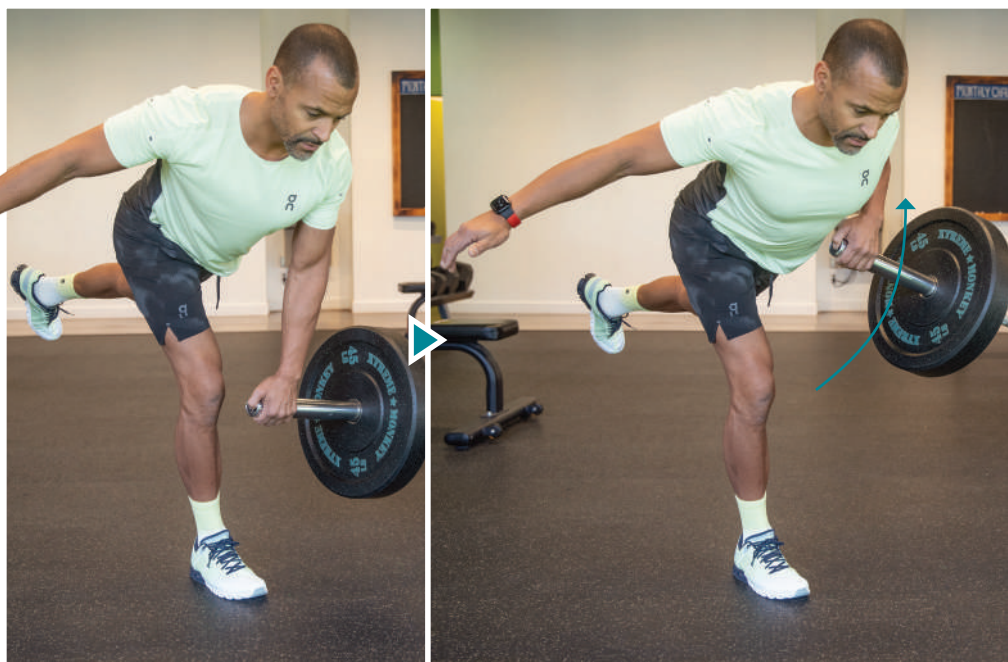
10 reps/side

- Start in a hand-plank position with your left hand on the bar, keeping your core engaged and feet wide. Slowly lower into a push-up while extending the left arm forward (the distance of this extension depends on your ability to maintain form). Push through your right palm and out of the push-up while rolling the bar back under your left shoulder to end in your starting position. Repeat on the right side.

5 SINGLE-ARM ROW

15 reps/side

- Start in a hinged position parallel to the ground with the bar in your left hand and left leg extended behind you. Keeping your spine straight and shoulders back pull the bar up to your ribcage while drawing your left shoulder blade towards the right shoulder blade. Return to extended arm position. Repeat on the right side. 





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Six Reasons Why You're Not Hitting Those Gym Goals

Sleep, diet and consistency all play a part in a successful workout

BY MICHAELA WHITWORTH 📷 DAVID DWORKIND

One of Canada's Top Fitness Trainers, personal trainer and founder of Love Your Bod, based in Edmonton, AB.

📸 MICHAELAFITNESS

It's a brand new year and you've been hitting the gym hard. You've improved your diet and even hired a personal trainer. Despite all your hard work, you've noticed that instead of losing weight as intended, you've gained weight.

So, what gives?

It's no doubt that you feel frustrated, and you can feel your motivation dwindling. But don't throw in the towel just yet. A lack of quantifiable results can happen for many reasons. First and foremost, you must remember that there are many factors that can affect your weight: exercise, how and what you eat, hormones, genetics, stress, metabolism, and inadequate sleep, to name a few.

Before you go blaming your genetics, it's important to review some of the most common reasons why people go wrong. It could be any combination of these factors that are making you feel like you're not getting the results that you've been working so hard for.

EXERCISE INCONSISTENCY

Often due to life's unpredictability, it can be difficult to maintain consistency with one's workouts.

If you've been unable to stay on track with your intended workouts, try to make some changes to your schedule so that you can prioritize exercise more. If making it to the gym itself is the issue, try planning to do some of your workouts from home instead. If that's not possible, be sure to adjust your caloric intake to match your decreased activity levels.

INACCURATE CALORIC TRACKING

Logging your food intake with an app can be an important tool for weight loss. However, it can be very easy to miscalculate. Don't assume your portion sizes by eyeballing things. Weigh your foods for best accuracy. That extra "tablespoonful" of peanut butter,

the cream in your coffee, packing a measuring cup too tightly with pasta or rice, the amount of oil you're cooking with—not tracking these things accurately can lead to hundreds of extra calories from what you intended. Always input your recipes and log the specific brands of foods that you eat. A slice of bread could be 50 calories, or it could be 150 calories—be specific and accurate.

TOO FOCUSED ON THE SCALE

The scale isn't always the best unit of measurement for fat loss, especially when it comes to individuals who already have a low body weight to begin with. Make sure you are also noting how your clothes fit as it could be that you've lost inches but not weight. It doesn't mean you're not making strides toward your goals, it just means that your body composition is changing: more muscle and less excess fat. Exercise also puts stress on your muscle fibres. This causes micro tears and mild inflammation which may also cause the scale to go up after you've started exercising.

“Before you go blaming your genetics, it's important to review some of the most common reasons why people go wrong.”



*Micaela Whitworth
helps us rethink how
we reach our goals.*

NOT BEING NEAT ENOUGH

NEAT stands for non-exercise activity thermogenesis. You burn these calories throughout the day from all the other physical activities you do outside of the gym. For many of us, we are seated so much throughout the day at our desks that we don't get enough NEAT. Simple things like taking the stairs at work, parking your car further away at the grocery store, and doing yard and housework can all help increase your NEAT. Find ways to move more throughout the day that don't involve exercise to help improve your overall calorie burn.

NOT MAXIMIZING YOUR GYM EFFORTS

Be honest with yourself. Is it possible that you have become a little too comfortable with your exercise routine? To get the most out of your workouts, it's important to find new ways to challenge yourself. This can be done by adding in a few more reps or sets, adding more weight, switching up your usual cardio routine to a different machine and increasing the intensity, or even switching up your workout

routine entirely. Challenging yourself to new forms of exercise can significantly increase your caloric expenditure, which will help you succeed in your weight loss goals.

YOUR BODY IS STRESSED

Both a lack of sleep and high cortisol levels from stress can lead to weight gain. Practice good sleep hygiene by beginning a bedtime routine about 30 minutes before you sleep without using any electronic devices to help you mentally prepare for bedtime. Use mindfulness and meditation techniques to help bring your nervous system back to a more relaxed state to help bring your stress levels down. Reducing your stress will also help with mindless nighttime eating which is often associated with feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

While we're all eager to see quick results on the scale, it's important to always maintain a basic level of physical activity for your physical and mental health. Don't ignore all the incredible invisible benefits that exercise has to offer. **IM**

How to Train Smarter in 2023

How to find the right personal trainer to suit your fitness needs

BY SARA HODSON 📷 JORDON HERDMAN

CEO of LIVE WELL Exercise Clinic, and president of the Fitness Industry Council of Canada.

f LIVEWELLEXERCISECLINIC in SARAHODSON

When we want to invest our money, we look to experts who understand the risks and opportunities, the potential windfalls and pitfalls, the ebbs and flows of the stock market, and most importantly the patience that is needed to see our investments grow.

The same is true of our health.

To improve our health, the smartest decision we can make is to seek the help of an expert. Whether you are a novice, coming back to fitness after some time away, or are training to shave two minutes off your marathon time, think about investing in a coach or a trainer this year.

Consider this an extravagant expense? Think again. Look no further than professional athletes—they don't fly solo. Whether at the World Cup, the Olympics or Wimbledon, they always arrive with their coach. This is universal: we achieve our goals smarter and faster when we have a partner in motivation, accountability and skill. Trainers are filled with knowledge that can help you—whether it is designing your lactate threshold workouts and Zone 2 cardio or showing you how to safely weight train with chronic pain.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GREAT TRAINER:

Compatibility

The trainer you hire is potentially going to be one of the most intimate relationships you have in your life. Make sure the connection is there and that your trainer is going to listen to you and create a SMART plan - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed. For example, you want

to cycle in Italy in July, but you haven't done a lot of cycling before. That's a specific goal and is both realistic and achievable, even if you aren't an expert rider. A good trainer will not only have you on an indoor bike but will design a program to strengthen your climbing muscles (quads, hamstrings and glutes) as well as your core.

Education

A great trainer must have certifications and qualifications. If you are someone with a health condition or injury, look for an expert in medical fitness or kinesiology background. At my company, LIVE WELL, our Clinical Exercise Physiologists know how to create safe programs for people with chronic health conditions, whether it is diabetes, heart disease or arthritis. You might not find the trainer you need on Yelp or in a Google search, but definitely look for reviews. A rule of thumb is that a good trainer will have extensive education and recent additional certifications in the fitness industry. Great trainers are always learning and increasing their knowledge, whether in nutrition, peak performance or working with special populations, like people with chronic health conditions.

Experience

Experience is fantastic, but do not use that as a benchmark. If you are a runner, you don't necessarily need a trainer who runs. There are incredible kinesiology-educated personal trainers who understand how to program speed and hill work to get you to your marathon time! Do your research and most importantly, see if this is the right fit

for you. If someone is new to the industry, do not dismiss them! They could be fresh out of school and incredibly knowledgeable and passionate.

Programming

The crazy things you see on social media are not building blocks of fitness. Great trainers will know how to design a program that is easy to follow and execute, but also has progressions sensibly built in so that you can be both consistent and stay engaged. This means that you will likely be doing simple, safe and functional movement patterns with progressions over time. If you are relatively new to fitness or you are coming back from a period of time away as many Canadians will be this January, a great trainer will know to take it slowly with you. Although we can expect a certain amount of Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS) when starting out again, a session with a trainer should never hurt.

Creativity

A great trainer is going to help you create a program that makes you excited about your fitness and your health, and for that I recommend you look for a trainer who is creative. Fitness should be fun, and if your goal is to do pull-ups, a great trainer will have you training in multiple planes of motion, and cross-training and working on your back in interesting ways—they won't just leave you hanging from the bar.

Cost Analysis

It goes without saying that cost is a factor many people will think about when

One of Canada's Top
Fitness Trainers 2022,
Paul Anthony.

QUESTIONS A GOOD TRAINER WILL ASK YOU

When you first meet the trainer, make sure they ask the right questions; it shouldn't simply be your PAR-Q. What are you hoping to achieve? What are your challenges? What is the best time of day for you to work out? How much time can you devote to your health? How do you plan on fitting in exercise with work and family? What are your short and long-term objectives?

You should also have a list of questions ready. What's their experience level? What certifications do they hold? Have they worked with your demographic? And life happens: what is their cancellation policy?

hiring a trainer. Is the person you are hiring worth the money? The answer, from within the fitness industry, is an unequivocal yes. If you are looking to climb Everest one day and need not only the strength and power but also a great cardiovascular program, a great trainer will get you there. If you just had a baby and want to lose the baby weight and get your core strong again, a great postpartum trainer will get you there.

Research has shown that one-on-one personal training is an effective method to increase physical activity and change our attitudes about fitness—whether you are new or need to switch up your routine. As you start 2023, start the year right.

A great trainer is worth the investment in you. **IM**



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Creating A Self-Care Routine Based on Four Pillars of Health

Nurturing physical, emotional, social and intellectual health can help you take charge of your life

BY DR. GENIEVE BURLEY 📷 JANIS HOFMARK

Internationally renowned chiropractor, fitness instructor, wellness expert and creator of Mobilization Nation in Vancouver, B.C.

📧 DRGENIEVEBURLEY 📺 MOBILIZATION NATION BY GENIEVE BURLEY

What is self-care? This term is often used as a push from the wellness industry. Brands dupe us into thinking that self-care is something that can be bought. Bath salts and tea may provide temporary relief but will not affect longer-term balanced health. Self-care is an emotional revolution of taking charge of your life in all areas. Only you have the power to know how to take care of yourself.

The areas of health we need to manage are physical, emotional (spiritual), social and intellectual. Each of these categories are not in isolation, so an enhancement or imbalance in one area will influence processes and possibilities. Through inquiry and attention, we can nurture them all.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

In taking responsibility for the body, we may be required to form a new relationship with ourselves. We have been trained from a young age to bypass the body's signals - even urgent ones such as when we are hungry, tired or requiring a bathroom. Over time, our bodies stop sending the signals and we fall into a disrupted state. A radical idea is to go deep into listening to how our bodies respond to food, movement and sleep.

We have been offered conflicting information about what, how and when we should eat. Every human has a unique gut biome and nutrient requirements. We learn what foods nourish us by eating slowly and checking in on how we feel after certain foods and taking a pause after a meal to determine satiety.

Movement is a daily necessity, especially in our sedentary culture. It does not have to be complicated or strenuous but don't overdo it. Overtraining can cause body dysfunction and disrupt or deplete the adrenals, throwing off our crucial hormonal balance, leading to a whole-body crisis.

Sleep provides the opportunity for our brain tissue and immune system to recover and repair. Seven hours is the standard amount for humans to sleep each night. There are gadgets on the market right now that can measure the length and quality of sleep, but simply tuning in to how you feel with different amounts of sleep is all the info you need to create a sleep hygiene routine.

A radical idea is to go deep into listening to how our bodies respond to food, movement and sleep.

The key message here is that before we can "dose" the physical body with self-care, be it movement, diet or rest, we must know with what we are working. Learning about our current state of physical health by listening deeply to our body's signals will enable us to create our own self-care program.

EMOTIONAL (SPIRITUAL) HEALTH

Emotional health is paramount to our overall health and well-being. Like the physical body, the gauge of how we are doing in the emotional body comes from getting quiet. We are fortunate to live in a time where we have access to meditation resources in person, in literature and online in many forms. Meditation can be accessed at any moment by being present in your body, environment and thoughts.

In a culture where we are driven to distraction by our phones, meditation is a form of resistance and revolution. When we check into our thoughts we can start to know what medicine is required. There is a lot of evidence that the necessary medicine can be found in nature, meditation and journaling. Professional therapy in all its forms is vital when we are stuck with thoughts; sometimes it takes an expert to challenge the rationality of our thoughts and to provide a lens other than our own.

SOCIAL HEALTH

Social health encompasses all our relationships, including our local community. Social health has been greatly affected by the pandemic, and this is one area of health I feel will take some time to recover from the impact of isolation. And while the pandemic did impact our social health by restricting our access to many people we love and need in our life, it also gave us a silver lining of a reset. Pre-pandemic, many of us just said yes to multiple social engagements during the



*Dr. Genieve Burley
discusses the
importance of taking
charge of our lives.*

week, despite being depleted and likely needing time for ourselves.

Social health awareness requires that we lean in and notice our habits. Everyone has a tendency towards being introverted or extroverted; it is important to find balance. It can be depleting to go out all the time, and lonely to always say no. It is healthy to have people in your life who are loving and supportive but who will also challenge your blind spots.

INTELLECTUAL HEALTH

This area of health is often overlooked in adulthood and can have a big impact on the other areas. As children, our intellectual

health was constantly challenged in many subjects; we were expected to be creative, innovative, think laterally and have great recall.

The brain operates on a “use it or lose it” principle. If we aren’t actively using a particular area of the cerebral cortex—the musical area for example—the brain connections are pruned to make room for the pathways we are using currently.

Interestingly, by increasing connections in one area of the brain, it affects the growth and plasticity of all areas of the brain. This phenomenon can be used to advance our cognitive health, vibrancy, and longevity. Engaging in something

novel lights up new connections in the brain. Not only will this increase cortical health, but it will also stimulate plasticity of the connections.

A new year is an opportunity to reframe our perspectives, and there is so much to do. We can be grateful that the challenging times experienced as a society have also opened the conversation of how we can be healthier in all ways. By developing a self-care routine with the pillars of physical, emotional, social and intellectual health we can start to take better care of ourselves. Health is wealth, and with inquiry and autonomy over our wellness, we create the opportunity for greatness. **M**

CANADA'S TOP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS



Meet the Class of 2023

BY ELAINE KUPSER, EMILY MEYER, AND MARISSA TIEL

Once again, after months of anticipation, we are proud to present to you Canada's Top Fitness Instructors 2023.

This is our sixth year recognizing some of the best in our industry from across Canada. Each summer nominations go live for you to nominate your favourite personal trainer, or group exercise instructor (alternating years) who has excelled in their profession, and contributed to the health and well-being of others. This year did not disappoint—every single nominee deserves recognition and we have highlighted them all below.

Nominees were scored by merit and equally across the board. This included areas such as education, certifications and accreditations, years in the industry, philanthropy and community service. Additional questions included 'their why' and personal fitness philosophies which were 'blind-scored' by our professional, expert panelists who spent many hours reading these inspirational stories. What has never been part of the scoring criteria is how many social media followers one has, or how many nominations one received.

Fitness instructors have a wealth of education and expertise to share, but above all they are genuinely passionate about helping others live their healthiest lives. Every instructor has an inspiring story to tell, and has given back to their community in a unique and positive way.

Congratulations, our deepest respect and recognition goes out to all nominees this year—we celebrate you! Thank you for your passion and dedication.

Roll out the red carpet.



Congratulations to All Nominees

Andrew Alcalde, Aileen Alfonso, Holly Allegro, Lauren Anderson, Kalan Anglos, Wendy Ashe, Lauren Atkinson, Marlon Azurdia, Justina Bailey, Jodi Barrett, Marcela Bayly, Denise Beatty, Sarah Bellwood, Jerome Bertrand, Tasneem Bhaiji, Nathan, Bodewitz, Chad Brandt, Rosalie Brown, Chad Budyk, Jose Bustamante, Claudia Lara Camacho, Liz Campbell, Melanie Carthew, Shannon Charles, Helen Cheung, Joshua Clark, Kyle Craik, Jessie Crossley, Amanda D'agostino, Ryan Davies, Heidi Davis, Andrea Dawe, Oscar Donor, Andy Drakopoulos, Zita Dube-Lockhart, Bryanne Edwards, Monica Espinosa, Taylor Evernden, Leah Hailey Fanning, Shannon Ferguson, Sheryl Fieldstone, Laura Flood, Cameron Francis, Hayley Fransen, Russel Galvizo, Heather Gardner, Lorissa Gilmore, Ryan Grant, Michael Grayer, Emily Green, Toni Harris, Jessica Hastings-Lesperance, Brett Hendriks, Brian Hill, Lisa Hinson, Julie Hodge, Morgan Hodge, Joe Hsiung, Anita Ivic, Mike Jones, Dawn Joseph, Jodi Jubinville, Suzy Kaitman, Donna Kanomata, Deanne Keller, Stephanie King, Lori Kirwin, Andrew Krushelniski, Carla Lalonde, Sharon Lamb, Alyssa Lamont-Labrosse, Noelle Leblanc, Natalia Lecours, Quinn Lee, Karen Leung, Michelle Logan, Monica Lopez, Jari Love, Mallory Love, Ellen Lu, Rabih Majzoub, Vita Marie, Shakera Martin, Rafal Matuszewski, Cory Maystrowich, Jenifer Mclaughlin, Diana Mcneill, Kathie Moore, Sabrina Moore, Sara Moore, Kris Moxness, Caroline Mundell, Jill Nadon, Gareth Nock, Kelsey Norman, Sandy Osler, Michael Panarella, Dani Parks, Jared Pearson, Kaye Peñaflo, Jonathan Phang, Erin Phelan, Travis "Shyafit" Philip, Alexandra Philips, Amanda Powers, Cassee Quantz, Mark Ramos, Jay Raymundo, Raymond Recto, Alissia Reijnen, Elissa Reilly Slater, Christina Relke, Paul Rescanski, Dana Rocket, Monique Rondeau, LaurieLee Rosser, Melissa Rowe, Johnny Rupani, Scott Salling, Adriana Sartori, Susan Scarlett, Melissa Schaffer, Carol Scott, Melissa Jane (MJ) Shaw, Christine Shudra, Karyn Silenzi, Adriano Silva, Kristen Simpson-Snead, Nathan Skoufis, Debra Sonogo, Kristi Stuart, Kalyn Swihart, Ali Syed, Naz Tabibi, Brendan Takata, Andrea Tam, Justin Tavernini, Daniela Tempesta, Kiana Tindall, Asther Treleaven, Mag Turple, Elise Ure, Samantha Ushedo, Shayan Vaghayenegar, Fyonna Vanderwerf, Deanna Vezina, Devin Vowles, Michelle Waddock, Brooke Wagner, Joe Ward, Dianna West, Trev Williams, Wesley Wood, Curtis Joseph Woodly, Catherine Woodward, Jea Sun (Kelly) Yoo, Joel Yorke, Shaiful Zakaria.

ANDREW ALCALDE

| 40

Group Fitness Instructor at
Fitness World Canada, Outdoors

VANCOUVER, B.C.

Instagram: ANDREWABRAHAMALCALDE

Facebook: ANDREW ABRAHAM ALCALDE

Photographer: JENNY RAE PHOTOGRAPHY

Andrew Alcalde is an enthusiastic fitness instructor known for his personable and vibrantly entertaining training style. “I am 100 per cent THAT crazy, energetic instructor who twerks for the participants, makes them scream, shout and let it all out while challenging their limits,” he says. “I want them to have fun and forget that they are doing burpees and push-ups. If I can get the laughter, smiles, cheering and dancing out of them, especially during a gruelling workout—I know that I have done my job.”

“I LOVE being a fitness instructor. I am always super satisfied when someone leaves my class, drenched in sweat, with a huge smile on their face—and then comes back for more! Becoming an instructor was one the best decisions I have ever made in my life.”





JUSTINA BAILEY | 50

Group Fitness Instructor at Studio Fitness Victoria and Community Centers: Panorama Rec, Monterey Rec, Saanich Commonwealth, Esquimalt Gorge

VICTORIA, B.C.

📷 STUDIOFITNESSVICTORIA f STUDIO FITNESS VICTORIA

📷 AENGUS MACINTOSH PHOTOGRAPHY

Justina Bailey was not always a fitness instructor. Before finding her way to a fitness career, she was a pastry chef. She regularly attended aerobics classes, and one of her instructors asked if she would consider becoming an instructor because she was always smiling and enjoying herself in classes. “As a shy and overweight girl, I was dumbfounded that someone would think that I could,” she says. “It was a difficult transition, and I’m not sure where I summoned up the courage, but I cannot imagine any other career choice for myself.”

“The classes are more than exercise to the participants, and I give to them like they are my friends, too. I think we are a safe place for all types of people to attend.”

SARAH BELLWOOD | 30

Group Fitness Instructor at Elite Performance

VANCOUVER, B.C.

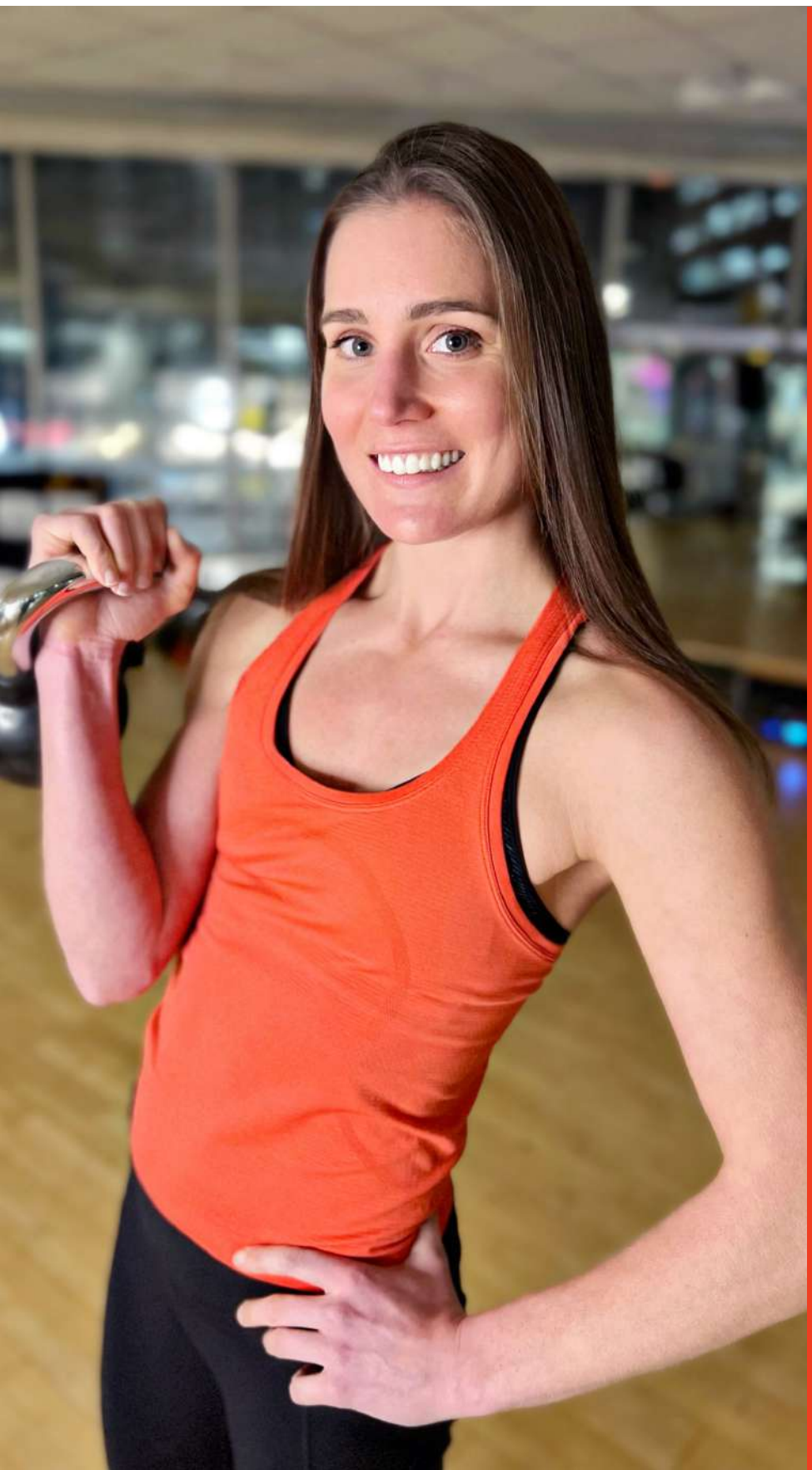
📷 WANDERFULSARAH 📺 SARAH-BELLWOOD

📸 CHRISTOPH LEON

For more than a decade, Sarah Bellwood has been teaching group exercise programs from step aerobics to high-performance strength and conditioning classes. “Over the past 10 years, I have grown as a coach and my practice has evolved, but my why has stayed consistent,” she says. “I will never stop wanting to encourage others to have a positive relationship with movement, body, food and fitness.”

“I became an instructor because I love the power of community and how it keeps people accountable. I’ll never get tired of watching friendships blossom in the studio and hearing the members say to each other ‘see you tomorrow’ or ‘can you save me my spot next week?’”





EMILY GREEN | 32

Group Fitness Instructor at
Fitness World Canada

VANCOUVER, B.C.

📷 EMGRREEN 📺 EMILY GREEN - GROUP FITNESS

📸 ANDREW ALCALDE

Originally from Toronto, Emily Green moved to Vancouver seven years ago, bringing along her lifelong love of movement, personal wellness and sports. “I love helping others reach their goals. I love being a leader of classes and being able to motivate, inspire, and educate,” she says. “As a fitness instructor, my motto is, ‘you will never regret a workout.’ Even the shortest workouts can make someone feel more confident, energized, and accomplished.”

“I feel very fortunate. I am doing something that I love and I get to share that love and passion with others. I have met some of the most amazing people in my life through my fitness journey.”



DAWN JOSEPH | 47

Group Fitness Instructor at Image One Training Studios

KELOWNA, B.C.

Instagram: SIMPLYCOREFIT Facebook: SIMPLY CORE FIT

by ELIZABETH TREMBLAY

For 30 years, Dawn Joseph has been in the fitness industry, bringing passion, energy and authenticity to her job. She began her career as a gymnastics coach in her early teens and fell in love with instructing. “Becoming a fitness instructor was such a natural progression that integrated choreography, music, movement and fun equipment,” she says.

“It was so fulfilling to put out energy and get 10 times more back from a room full of people. I love humans and I love that group fitness brings people together who would not normally attract. The next thing you know everyone is high-fiving everyone and there’s a room full of people rooting for each other!”



VANCOUVER, B.C.

 **BALLETLOUNGE**  **BALLET LOUNGE**

 ALAN BAILWARD

Ballerina turned fitness instructor Suzy Kaitman combined her two loves to create a fun, safe, and encouraging dance studio for everyone. “Ballet was my first love, and I started dancing at a very young age,” she says. “During my training, I started going to the gym to meet the high demands of my art. I then fell in love with the fitness industry because I learned that anyone could be fit and healthy regardless of their shape or size.”

“The most amazing part about this journey is our amazing community full of like-minded individuals who just want to dance, get fit and have fun! I have met so many incredible people in which I would have never met otherwise, and that in itself is very special.”



JILL NADON | 36

Owner & Group Fitness Instructor at The Beat Studio

BURNABY, B.C.

📸 LIVFIT_JILL WWW.THEBEATSTUDIO.CA

📸 ALLY MATOS

Jill Nadon went to university to study engineering, but it was becoming a fitness instructor that would prove to be her true passion. “After obtaining my first certification through Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA), I was hooked. I fell in love with group fitness and quickly took several more certifications,” she says. “When I became an instructor, I didn’t know I would fall head over heels in love and build a career around it.”

“The energy of a group class is unparalleled. Welcoming new exercisers and challenging the weekly regulars is incredibly rewarding. I’ve stayed in this industry for so long because I want my participants to feel welcome in the fitness community. I love seeing the social, emotional, and mental health benefits that come from group fitness.”



MARK RAMOS | 40

Group Fitness Instructor at
Drive365 Fitness and Health

SURREY, B.C.

@DRIVE365FITNESS WWW.DRIVE365FITNESS.COM

RONALD LEE

Mark Ramos began his athletic career as a professional track athlete before moving to training professional athletes. But it was a favour to an old friend who needed some coverage for group fitness classes over the holidays that saw Mark find his way to Drive 365 Fitness and Health Inc., where he is now the manager. “Gone are the days of the high performance of heavy lifting, hard plyometrics and lots of recovery days,” he says. “Now it is all about passing on the knowledge and experience that I have learned to clients and colleagues to make themselves better.”

“Nothing gives me greater joy than watching and experiencing the fitness journey with my clients as the lessons they learn in the gym are applied to their everyday life.”

SUSAN SCARLETT | 50

Group Fitness Instructor at Barre Fitness
South Surrey

SURREY, B.C.

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BY BEN OWENS

As a university student, Susan Scarlett danced and became an instructor to earn extra money. “I quickly realized how rewarding it was to teach and motivate others to reach their fitness goals,” she says. “After a few detours and after having children, I began on my own path of fitness and wellness. I found barre and began taking classes and committing to my own fitness regime, and it changed my life.” In 2006, Susan opened her own studio—Barre Fitness South Surrey.

“Every day I get to meet the most amazing people and motivate and inspire them to lead happier, healthier lives, one plié at a time.”





WESLEY WOOD | 41

Founder & Group Fitness Instructor at Limitless Training

VICTORIA, B.C.

📍 LIMITLESSVICTORIA 📱 LIMITLESS TRAINING

📷 GRAHAM COX

An infantry section commander in the Army, Wesley Wood was deployed to Iraq to conduct security operations. He was involved in combat numerous times and was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal for courage and leadership in action. “After joining the Army and deploying to the Middle East, I needed a positive environment and new challenges with regards to career,” he says. “I absolutely love what I do.”

“I have always had a passion for sports and fitness. A healthy lifestyle has always been important to me and my family, so I wanted to share that with the world and more importantly with other Canadians that need the extra motivation to achieve their own fitness success.”



SHERYL FIELDSTONE | 57

Group Fitness Instructor, Westside Recreation Centre

CALGARY, AB

📍 WESTSIDEREC f WESTSIDE RECREATION CENTRE

📷 GREG BOLSO

Sheryl Fieldstone's 'why' has changed over time. With more than 40 years spent working in the fitness industry, her teaching style has evolved. "Beginners need a supportive environment so they can feel comfortable starting their fitness journey. Intermediates need to stay inspired, to embrace new fitness knowledge, and to be challenged," she says. "Those who are aging need to understand functional fitness so they can continue to engage in their daily activities and live quality lives." From a background competing internationally in aerobics in the 80s and 90s, Fieldstone now leads a team of more than 40 instructors at Calgary's Westside Recreation Centre.

"Mentoring a large team of fitness professionals helps me to continue learning," she says, "and to recommit continually to creating a supportive space where my team can thrive and evolve."



JODI JUBINVILLE | 48

Group Fitness Instructor at Goodlife, Zoom Zumba Fitness Classes

SHERWOOD PARK, AB

📍 JODIJUBINVILLE 📷 JODI HECK JUBINVILLE

📷 KRISTINA STEINBRING PHOTOGRAPHY

Five years ago, Jodi Jubinville collapsed while she was teaching her usual Saturday doubleheader: Body Pump and Zumba Fitness. “When I collapsed I had no idea what was wrong with me. I could not see out of my right eye, I could not move the right side of my body, and I could not speak.” Jubinville, a healthy 42-year-old at the time, had experienced a stroke. She had to relearn how to walk, talk, even how to write her name. She fought to improve through rehab for her students and was back teaching Zumba four months later.

“Leading group fitness is my happy hour,” she says. “Fitness needs to be enjoyable and fun, something you want to do, not something you have to do.”



CARLA LALONDE | 41

Group Fitness Instructor at Goodlife Fitness Shepard, REGYMEN Shepard, Goodlife Fitness Canyon Meadows, Online

CALGARY, AB

Instagram: CMLALONDE Facebook: CARLA LALONDE

Carla Lalonde's passion for helping people as well as her love of health and fitness are what led her to becoming a fitness instructor. "I have always felt like my purpose in life was to assist in bettering people's health & wellbeing," she says. "I also have an innate interest in connecting with others and developing deeper relationships. I am simply one of those people who love people!"

"Ultimately, being a fitness instructor is more of a calling and passion for me than a job, or work. It allows me to be who I really am. I just absolutely love inspiring a group of individuals to transform into a team through strong, safe, technical, challenging, fun and easy-to-follow workouts!"



JARI LOVE | 57

Group Fitness Instructor at MNP Centre, Founder
& Group Fitness Instructor at Get RIPPED! App

CALGARY, AB

📸 JARILOVE f JARI LOVE FITNESS

📸 COLIN TYLER | MNP COMMUNITY & SPORT CENTRE

A veteran of the fitness industry, Jari Love has designed her own fitness certification program while continuing to teach classes herself. Through the certification, Rockstar Instructor, she instructs other teachers on how to be “rockstar instructors.” It has allowed her to build a bigger community than just Get RIPPED and forced her outside of her comfort zone.

“I became a fitness instructor so that I get to be that positive influence in a participant’s life. It is my chance to make that difference. I want others to feel better after leaving my class than before they came, and help people do things that they never thought they could do before. At the end of the day, we fitness instructors are helping people improve themselves. We can inspire people, but best of all be that positive person in someone’s life!”

MALLORY LOVE | 38

Group Fitness Instructor at MNP Centre
& Crush Camp

CALGARY, AB

📸 LOVE.MALLORY 📺 MALLORYLOVE

Mallory Love was stopped after a class she'd taught one day and given a ginormous, sweaty hug. The man explained that he'd experienced a loss recently and thought his life was over. "He told me that I saved his life," she says. "That all of the energy I offered him every class, the love, the coaching to help him find joy in movement and to move properly and efficiently, had changed his outlook on life, had given him a way to cope with everything, and had ultimately made him feel that he still had fight left in him to live his life."

"I have a background in musical theatre and a love of activity, especially in the realm of group fitness. There is nothing like it. There is real power in numbers. Other people in the space inspire me, and so many others, without even knowing sometimes, and I wanted to be a part of that. I want to help people find joy and community through movement!"





KELSEY NORMAN | 35

Group Fitness Instructor at REGYMAN Shepard

OKOTOKS, AB

@_KRAEKRAE_ f KELSEY NORMAN

ALBERT PASCERI & GLENN AFALLA PHOTOGRAPHY

Kelsey Norman didn't set out to become a fitness instructor. After reconstructive surgeries on her knees, she was afraid of movement. But in 2011, trying to be healthy as a new mom, she began her fitness journey. The group fitness instructor is busy these days. She teaches more than seven classes every week, using her personal experience to connect with participants.

"Find what works for you and do it consistently. Take your time for lasting results. There is no magic pill, just constant focus and enough self love to make the daily effort."



KALYN SWIHART | 39

Group Fitness Instructor & Founder of Ballet Beats

CALGARY, AB (TRADITIONAL BLACKFOOT TERRITORY)

📍 BALLETBEATS WWW.BALLETBEATS.COM

📷 ARTPHOTO INÉS

As a child, Kalyn Swihart was an entrepreneurial dance teacher. She offered her services as a ballet teacher to athletes in sports like gymnastics, figure skating, synchronized swimming and martial arts, who might benefit from ballet. This inspired her to combine fitness with dance and her Ballet Beats program was born. “I love teaching movement more than words can express,” she says.

“I love to see my students grow and improve, and the healing that happens through physicality and connecting mind and body.”

“I am passionate about creating a teaching environment that is for all bodies. One that starts with acceptance and self love and focuses on the movement, being our strongest selves and rebelling against the idea of an ‘ideal body,’” she says. “I think the world needs more of that to get all people moving and benefiting from exercise.”



NAZ TABIBI | 49

Group Fitness Instructor at Westside Recreation Centre, Vivo, Online, Alberta Health Services' Living Well

CALGARY, AB

📷 NAZTABIBI_STRONGWORKOUTGROUP f STRONG WORKOUT GROUP

📷 GINGERSNAP PHOTOGRAPHY

On her way to becoming a fitness instructor, Naz Tabibi overcame a system designed to oppress. Growing up in Iran when the Islamist government came into power, she and other women and girls had their rights and opportunities severely limited. In her late teens, Naz discovered the power of fitness and movement and the role they could play in empowering women. Since then, she hasn't looked back. "I soon learned how powerful fitness training empowered women and girls especially to achieve their potential and their right to be healthy and fit," she says. "I have never looked back since then."

"It was so rewarding to help others to invest in their health and feel confident," she says. "I believe everyone, regardless of underlying health status, economic abilities or gender, deserves support in their journey to mental and physical health."

JUSTIN TAVERNINI | 37

Group Fitness Instructor, Owner & Head Trainer
at O2 Training Centre Inc.

LETHBRIDGE, AB

Instagram: @O2JUSTIN Facebook: JUSTIN TAVERNINI

Website: O2 TRAINING CENTRE

Growing up, Justin Tavernini had a hard time fitting into the traditional school system and was bullied. But when he turned 11, he was introduced to martial arts. “It changed my life forever,” he said. He started kickboxing, Muay Thai and MMA and at age 15, he went pro. Justin also started teaching others martial arts. He now owns his own training centre where he works with both young and old athletes.

“After my professional career in martial arts competition, my focus shifted into helping others seek the confidence that I gained by starting to train in martial arts and fitness. It truly changed my life for the better and I knew I could have the ability to help impact others for the better.”





CATHERINE WOODWARD | 51

Group Fitness Instructor at GoodLife Fitness Okotoks, Orangetheory Fitness Okotoks

OKOTOKS, AB

📍 CADOWOOD 📱 CATHERINE WOODWARD (BALL)

Catherine Woodward has always been passionate about exercise. But it wasn't until she began attending group fitness classes regularly while on leave from a previous job that she realized just how powerful it could be. "Exercise bought me back from a dark place," she says, "and I needed to share that and help others who were struggling." She became a group fitness instructor in the late 90s, and started teaching the Les Mills Body Combat program in the early 2000s, which she still teaches today.

"I thrive seeing members work towards their personal goals, watching them challenge and grow, push and achieve. ... Exercise is and should be a part of life forever, and you have to love what you do or it really is very hard to keep going. Being that cheerleader makes me smile."



HEATHER GARDNER | 43

Owner & Group Fitness Instructor at Kardia

TORONTO, ON

📷 CATCHINGHEATHER WWW.CATCHINGHEATHER.COM

📸 ALLISON LAROUCHE

Growing up in an active family, Heather Gardner has long known the benefits of movement. But she soon found out that not everyone felt the same way. “For me to be able to help others find that joy in movement, to feel welcome in our community,” she says, “And to know they have an emotionally safe place to move and grow has been most rewarding in my career in fitness.”

“Whether it is helping people take their first steps as a runner, push a higher watt during a training ride, or find a love of their own bodies flow and grace in yoga, being able to support my clients’ goals and subsequent love of movement is gratifying.”



JESSICA HASTINGS-LESPERANCE | 36

Founder & Group Fitness Instructor at Cedar Wellness Studio

GEORGIAN BLUFFS, ON

📍 CEDAR.WELLNESS.STUDIO 📱 CEDAR WELLNESS STUDIO

A busy mom of three kids, Jessica Hastings-Lesperance is an advocate for mental health. She was managing four businesses and had a newborn baby when she lost her father suddenly. “It was chaos, and fitness is what kept me strong,” she says. “Teaching kept me focused on learning anything and everything I could to manage my anxiety, my son’s, and manage grief as a family.”

“There is a need for mental health awareness, and I know my impact from my experiences is helping a lot of people. This is why I became a fitness instructor, to teach others through my experiences and inspire them to be the best they can be.”



LORI KIRWAN | 53

Group Fitness Instructor at Pure Fitness Canada 1 York, Ultimate Athletics, The Toronto Lawn Tennis Club, MCAP Corporate Wellness Fit Together Program

TORONTO, ON

📷 LORIKIRWAN 📷 LORI KIRWAN

📷 BRUCE ZINGER

Lori Kirwan has her PhD in exercise physiology and has been teaching group fitness for over three decades. But when the pandemic forced fitness businesses to close, she had to learn a new set of skills: virtual instruction. “I feel that I grew as an instructor and became such a better teacher through this very negative occurrence of the pandemic,” she says.

“I believe that exercise is the solution to almost all health issues that exist. ...I believe that fitness classes offer the added opportunity to provide a social setting and enable people to connect and interact together which adds a whole level of social belonging and community. I believe that we are stronger together than we are alone and believe in the power of group dynamics.”



SHAKERA MARTIN | 35

Founder & Group Fitness Instructor at Carnival Spice, Guest Instructor at Humber College, Trust 15 in the Toronto District School Board, Habitual Fitness and Elle Fitness & Social, Virtual and In-person

TORONTO, ON

📸 SIMPLYSHAKERA f SIMPLYSHAKERA

📸 DESIREE THOMAS

Shakeria Martin became a fitness instructor to be the person for others that she needed along her own journey. “Fitness is a right that I believe everyone should experience regardless of their circumstance,” she says. “Unfortunately, most of the spaces I attempted to train in did not make me feel comfortable or welcome. I eventually drifted away from gyms and leaned on dance as my source of physical activity.” Martin became a professional dancer, and loved performing for others.

“I was often asked to teach classes until I eventually did. This allowed me to create beautiful spaces where folks of all colours and creeds could come together, cultivate joy, and feel comfortable in their different bodies.”

GARETH NOCK | 41

Group Fitness Instructor at
The Nock Academy

STOUFFVILLE, ON

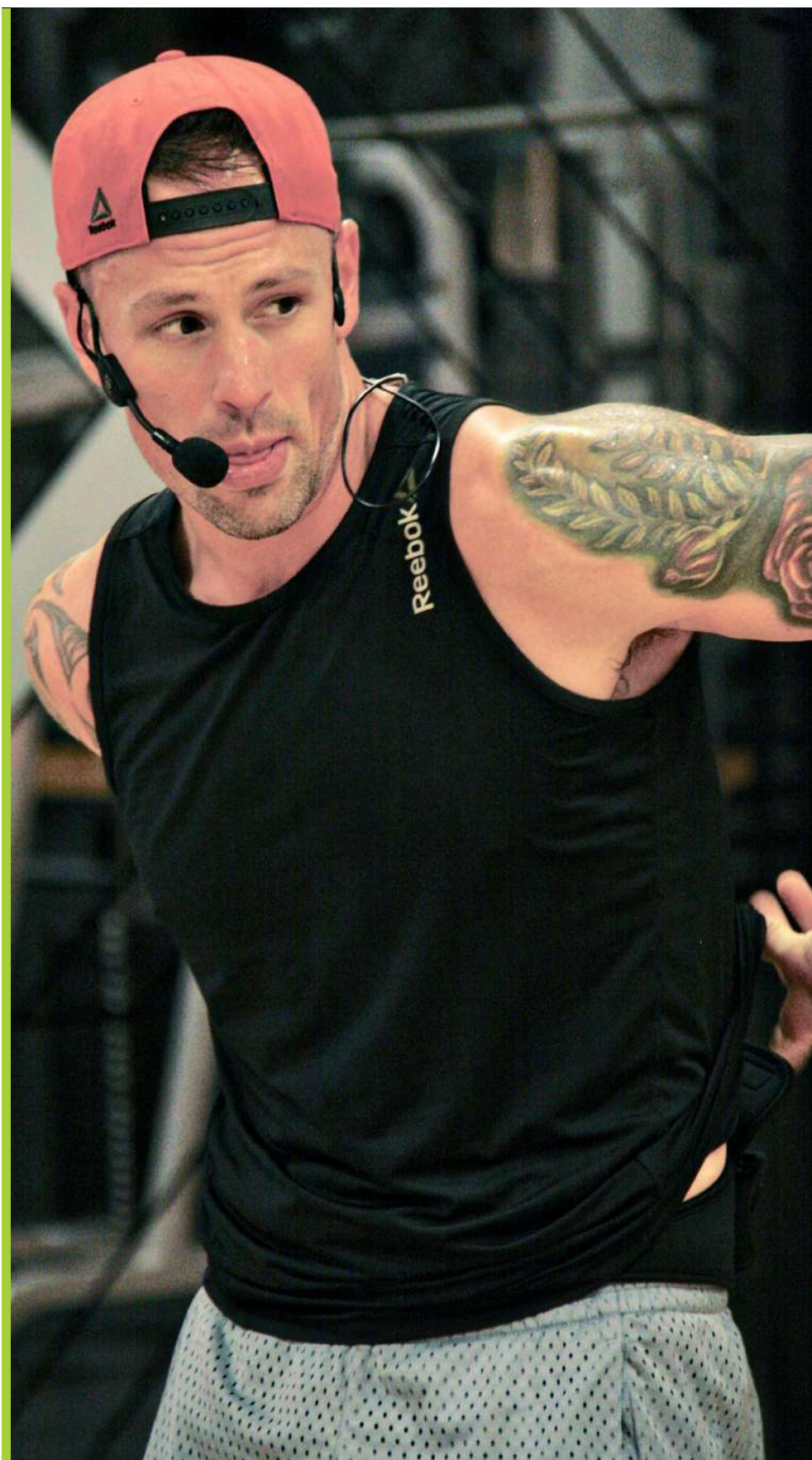
📸 COACH_GARETH_NOCK

WWW.THENOCKACADEMY.COM

📷 TRACI ISENBERG

Gareth Nock has taught fitness classes far and wide, from Canada to Australia, but he had to develop a completely new set of skills when he started teaching online. “The responsibility for the energy in an online class falls a lot more heavily on the instructor, as you cannot feed off the energy in the room as much,” he says. “Another major difference is the coaching language you use. It is a whole different ball game helping people move better through a screen. Your descriptive coaching really has to be dialed up.”

“Learn how to do an exercise, learn why you are doing it and learn how to improve it! It builds an appreciation and understanding of movement and promotes longevity.”





KAYE PEÑAFLOR | 44

Founder of Ashtaerial & Group Fitness Instructor at The Attic, Joe Rockheads, Camp Yoga Ontario, Tmrw.Tday, Online

TORONTO, KITCHENER, PARRY SOUND, ON

📍 KAYEPENAFLOR WWW.ASHTAERIAL.COM

📷 JAY CREWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Kaye Peñaflor's journey as a fitness instructor began when she took a hot yoga class with a group of friends. Soon, it became a regular activity in her life. "Having struggled with my mental health since high school, yoga opened the door to mindfulness and a connection back to my body," she says. "The desire to become a yoga teacher came because I wanted to dive deeper into my own personal practice. What I learned about myself ignited a passion to share with others how the practice of yoga could benefit their lives too."

"For over a decade, and with my background in events, hospitality and entertainment, I have been able to create programs, workshops, events, and classes to help my students build a stronger, healthier relationship with themselves."



ERIN PHELAN | 50

Group Fitness Instructor

TORONTO, ON

📷 ERINPHELANFIT WWW.ERINPHELAN.COM

📷 SEAN MCBRIDE

When Erin Phelan was a teen, fitness was a chance to spend time with her mom. They would attend aerobics classes together in the church basement, partly as a way to make their grief subside. “My father died of a heart attack,” she says. “I have always felt that part of my purpose is to work people’s hearts—the most important muscle in the body.”

“I grew up on grapevines, hi/low and step, and fell in love with Jane Fonda, leg lifts and the way exercise made me feel. ... When I realized you could teach fitness, I signed up right away and got my YMCA instructor training in 1992—and I have never looked back.”



DANA ROCKET | 48

Founder and Owner of Rocket Cycle

TORONTO, ON

@ROCKET.CYCLE f ROCKET CYCLE

by JENNIFER ALLISON

Dana Rocket was 19 years old when her father suffered a massive stroke, leaving him paralyzed on his left side. She dedicated her young life to helping him recover. “I started to work with him every day and encouraged him to move his body, challenge his mind and dig deep into his capacity. Through my love and passion for music, fitness, dance and psychology, together we slowly started to put the pieces back together,” she said. “It was this defining moment where I realized how much I have to offer others and that I can make a difference and be an integral part of helping people feel, heal and live real.”

“I’m truly grateful for the opportunity every day, to do what I love.”



MJ SHAW | 44

Founder & Group Fitness Instructor at Soul Fuel Fitness

TORONTO, ON

📷 MJSHAWB 📷 SOULFUELFITNESS

📷 KRISTA ELLIS

At 18 years old, MJ Shaw became a fitness instructor through the YMCA to pay her bills during her theatre school undergrad studies. “I’d always loved fitness classes and thought, ‘I can teach aerobics classes!’ It was better than cleaning the Argonauts’ residences, which is what I had been doing. I started with two classes a week and by the time I graduated, I was teaching 12 classes a week.”

“I’ve been teaching dance fitness in the city for years. There is the most beautiful range of folks; some have been dancing for years and others are downright terrified newbies. The honed ability to bring everyone together on the same foot, same beat, and same vibe is pure magic. I feel honoured that this is my life’s work.”



FYONNA VANDERWERF | 52

Owner & Group Fitness Instructors at Hive Muskoka

BRACEBRIDGE, ON

📍 HIVEMUSKOKA INC 📱 HIVE MUSKOKA INC

📷 ANDY ZELTKALNS

As a kid, Fyonna Vanderwerf was uncoordinated; she struggled with team sports. “People wrote me off,” she says. “Being written off as someone without merit in their movement ticked me off. Everyone has an ability, and just because you cannot do five pushups, does not mean you cannot find joy and achievement in movement.” Fyonna now has 90 fitness certifications and leads a fitness community in Ontario’s cottage country.

“I remember what it felt like to be laughed at during my first step class and I vowed to never shame someone for not knowing a triple repeater. So I learned how to teach it. ... Movement is joy. No one likes to be put in a category and having people come to your class is such a community builder: to give back a fire, a joy, an energy, and a sneaky groove that makes you smile however you do it.”

2023 Canada's Top Fitness Instructor Panelists



Michael Legat, San Diego, CA

Marketing Media Director at American Council on Exercise (ACE)

Michael Legat is the Marketing Media Director at American Council on Exercise. He has over twenty years of experience in advertising and media strategy at both agencies and technology firms. In 2018, Michael and his wife opened their own gym with a specialty in obstacle course race training, and his passion for fitness and wellness led him to ACE, where he has focused on bringing their mission to a larger audience and navigating the many transformations within the industry. He lives in San Diego, California.



Graham Longwell, Toronto, ON

Publisher of FitBizWeekly

Graham Longwell is the former publisher of the print trade magazine *Fitness Business Canada*, which was distributed to gyms and fitness facilities across Canada from 2000-2019. Graham has worked with multiple industry partners including canfitpro, Fitness Industry Canada, IHRSA and many equipment and service suppliers to help engage, inform and inspire the Canadian fitness industry. In early 2020, he launched *FitBizWeekly*, a weekly E-newsletter and website directed to owners, managers and fitness professionals of gyms, studios and health clubs across Canada. To keep active, he divides his time on the squash court and the local CrossFit studio.



Stacie Mistysyn, Whitby, ON

Founder of Stronger With Stacie

Stacie Mistysyn is a personal fitness specialist, healthy-eating & wellness coach and most recently, a menopause fitness specialist, well known for her roll on the classic Degraasi series. During her award-winning run as Caitlin Ryan, she secretly struggled with disordered eating and severe anxiety. After the show ended, fitness became an organic and crucial part of her life as a means of coping and helping others. She is the founder of Stronger with Stacie coaching and fitness programs and continues to advocate for both physical and mental health.



Scott Salling, Port Coquitlam, B.C.

Founder of F.I.T. Academy

Scott Salling is a former multi-sport athlete and has been a certified personal trainer and strength coach since 2009, accruing over 10,000 hours of client and personal training experience over the last 13 years. He is the founder of F.I.T. Academy in Port Coquitlam, B.C., which is a business model designed specifically to enhance and develop the careers of dedicated fitness professionals. Scott is a three-time IMPACT Magazine's Canada's Top Fitness Trainer, as well as a recipient of IMPACT's Business Resilience Awards 2022 for Individual Leadership.

*Thank you to our expert panelists for helping us select
Canada's Top Fitness Instructors 2023*

Unstoppable

Motivational speaker and Paralympic champion snowboarder Tyler Turner rides on

BY COLEMAN MOLNAR 📷 KAYLEEN VANDERREE

Freelance journalist, digital marketer and part-time associate producer at CBC Radio in Kamloops, B.C. Find Coleman in the gym, on the court or on the mountain.

📧 LIETCO 📱 LI ET CO

Tyler Turner is your typical ‘B.C. Boy.’ Raised in the western province, he fell early and hard for the area’s rare combination of winter and summer sports, transitioning seamlessly from a youth of outdoor recreation to an adulthood funded by the mountains and skies. As a 20-something, he made a living when the grass was green instructing skydiving or working on the golf course or local brewery. When it snowed, he’d relocate and work at a ski hill. Simply put, he was living the B.C. Boy’s dream.

That dream nearly came to a tragic end when Turner suffered a catastrophic skydiving accident. Like a page torn from the middle of a book, the 60-second period that forever changed his life is missing from his memory.

“We honestly don’t know what happened,” he says of the fateful landing. “It was probably a lot of factors, definitely a mistake. There could have been some environmental factors too, but it’s five-and-a-half years later and I still don’t know. I made a conscious choice in the hospital to give up trying to figure it out, but I still really wish I knew what happened.”

After days in a coma, Turner came to and took stock of his body for the first time: his right leg was gone, his left leg “essentially blown to pieces...like shattered glass.” He had multiple spinal cord fractures, a broken pelvis, traumatic brain injuries, broken teeth, and he’d bitten through his tongue.

Over the next two years and one day, Turner worked tirelessly on his recovery with the experts at the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre in Vancouver. Some 18 months in, with treatment of his left leg yielding poor results, he decided to amputate.

“That was a choice to make my life better, and I was sure of it,” he says. “I had my right leg as a reference. It had a prosthetic, everything including my pelvis was healing, I was going to be able to walk, but my left leg was going to keep me in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. It was the best day of my life going into that surgery... best day of my life coming out. I was so happy. The nurses were confused, but I was like let’s get life going here.”

After grinding through months more of recovery and struggling to unhook the claws that the opiate-based medication had sunk into his psyche, Turner finally returned to his passions, starting with the very same one that claimed his legs.

“I got back in the sky pretty quick and that was a massive boost,” he says. “I got that community back, you know. There were so many things checked off the list immediately. I mean, I was just safely getting out, safely floating down with my friends and that was good, but I knew there was room for progression there.”

Next came the return to surfing, with the help of friends there to push him onto his first wave. Turner knew, on the other hand, that with the unavoidable shock to the prosthetics, getting back on



a snowboard would be even tougher. The idea was to hold hands with his friend and ease down the hill for the first run, maybe hit the bar afterward, but they hadn’t slid four feet before Turner released his friend’s hands and took off. “I was doing 70 km/h down the hill, wide open, riding like the day before I lost my legs.”

It didn’t take long for word to spread of the double amputee with an unstoppable urge to shred, and soon Turner found himself competing in, and winning, snowboarding competitions. “My first ever




race was the World Cup during extreme Covid times and we pulled it off and I won,” he says, recalling his 2021 trip to Italy. “So, I think I turned some heads.”

The next season, he turned thousands more, taking home two gold medals and a bronze at the 2022 World Para Snow Sports Championships in the men’s team event, snowboard cross and banked slalom, respectively. Then followed up his performances just over a month later with Paralympic gold in snowboard cross and bronze in banked slalom. The B.C. Boy was

officially back doing B.C. things, this time at an elite, international level.

Now 34 years old, Turner has also been sharing his inspirational journey via a non-profit organization called the High Fives Foundation in an effort to help other injured athletes. “I just want to continue being a part of that and getting adaptive athletes, people who’ve been injured, out doing athletics and trying new things,” he says. “It’s pretty cool to be able to see the excitement of people who thought they lost everything or thought they’d never do

their thing, and get them back in the water surfing or back on a mountain bike, or fly fishing or sit skiing or whatever they do.”

When he’s not travelling for competitions, Turner and his partner live on their sailboat, currently anchored off the coast of Mexico. Relaxing, perhaps momentarily, but Turner’s goals and challenges remain lofty, with the 2026 Olympic run fast approaching. There’s little doubt where he’ll settle after all the travel and competition has run its course, though. You can take the boy out of B.C.... 

Rediscovery Through Yoga

Shayla Stonechild is making space for all in health and wellness

BY AMY KENNY 📷 THOMPSON CHAN FOR LULULEMON, DENITA GLADEAU

Amy is a writer, curator and runner of mountains based in Whitehorse, YT.

📸 AMYKNY 🐦 AMYKNY



Shayla Stonechild doesn't take the easy route. Eight years ago, when she tried yoga for the first time, she opted for a hot yoga class—one that ended up being difficult in ways beyond just the profuse sweating that typifies the style.

"It was a time in my life where I was going through a lot of personal stuff," says Stonechild, who is Métis and Nehiyaw Iskwew (Plains Cree Woman) from Muscowpetung First Nations. "I didn't realize how the practice would make me return back to myself."

For a long time, she says she was running away from her emotions and everything else in her life. All of a sudden, she had to sit still and face everything she'd been running from.

That realization might cause some to keep running, away from yoga, but Stonechild had the opposite reaction. She says she got addicted to it. She kept up her practice. She trained as a teacher herself. Today, she is the first Indigenous person to appear on the cover of *Yoga Journal Magazine*. She has worked as an instructor at CMMN GRND. She's part of Lululemon's Diversity and Inclusion Committee in Vancouver, and works for them as a global yoga ambassador.

In each of these roles, she puts her own stamp on the practice. She weaves in her own understanding and her own experience of having found a reconnection to herself through yoga.

"As much as it was healing through the physical body, it was just as much, if not more, healing through my emotional and mental and spiritual health," she says of her introduction to the practice. "And so it really allowed me to cleanse everything that I was holding on to."

It was uncomfortable. She'd end classes in tears. But she always left feeling refreshed and as though she had let go of something that needed letting go.

"I really wanted to bring that feeling into Indigenous communities," she says. The more time she spent in yoga studios, the more she noticed that the health and wellness sphere wasn't one where she met a lot of other Indigenous people. There was a lack of accessibility to classes in Indigenous communities, let alone teacher training.

Stonechild decided she specifically wanted to work with Indigenous women and Indigenous youth. Since starting as a teacher, she's had a number of students tell her they didn't think they belonged in that space because they didn't see themselves represented.

“The more time she spent in yoga studios, the more she noticed that the health and wellness sphere wasn’t one where she met a lot of other Indigenous people.”

During the pandemic, she found an increased virtual demand for the kind of teaching she was doing. A lot of Indigenous women opened up to her, over the course of classes, about things they were facing. It made Stonechild feel valued and validated in her role, though that kind of support takes a toll. Stonechild says she had to take a step back from teaching for a while and evaluate how much of herself she was giving as an instructor.

“It’s something I’m still learning to this day,” she says.

In the new year, that role includes a new component to her partnership with Lululemon. The company sponsored the Matriarch Movement, a non-profit that Stonechild founded to amplify Indigenous voices through story, meditation, movement and medicine. They spent the last year putting together a virtual Indigenous wellness series highlighting seven Indigenous wellness instructors. The goal is to see it released in 2023.

Lululemon also approved a grant for a series of retreats throughout Canada in 2023, where Stonechild will bring in Indigenous instructors as a way of creating community and strengthening that sense of belonging.

In her personal practice and instruction, Stonechild says she’s been in a process of unlearning some of what she has learned so she can bring her own style to her teaching, one that focuses on the Indigenous communities she wants to serve.

A lot of her own training focused on posture: certain physical cues, the body. There was a very specific script, she says. It was easy to get hung up on the physical and get lost in that script. But yoga is more than just the physical. She says she wants to create more room for students to feel validated in their own autonomy and for them to focus on more than the physical.

She works to translate yogic language and tie it to the culture of the community where she’s teaching.

“At the end of the day, yoga is ceremony and we can relate to ceremony as Indigenous people,” she says. “We have a medicine wheel. We also teach of the balance and harmony that exists within our mind-body-spirit connection. When you go to a sweat lodge ceremony, you’re going in with an intention, and you’re creating a dedication to something bigger than just yourself. When you go to a yoga practice, you’re doing that same thing. You’re creating an intention. You’re dedicating your practice to someone else, and you’re creating a deeper relationship with something that extends far beyond just your individual self.” ■







The Undiscovered Paradise of Laos

The destination you never knew should be on your bucket list

BY EMILY MEYER 📷 EMILY MEYER

IMPACT assistant editor, fitness and travel enthusiast in Calgary, AB.

📧 EMILY.MEYER.TRAVELTALES 📺 EMILY MEYER

Looking out over the mountains that rise from the water on either side of the river, a jungle of greenery covering their limestone slopes, I sit back in my kayak and stop paddling. I want to remember this moment—to capture the feeling of awe and appreciation for such beauty.

The more I travel, the more I cherish the serenity of the low-key locations, the ones that don't fall on the typical tourist trail.

Laos—many people don't know how to pronounce it, let alone where to find it on a map.

I too might have struggled to place Laos on a map before researching the trip that would take me there. I knew little about the country that sits landlocked between Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam, sharing its northern border with industrial giant, China.

And maybe it was better that way—to enter the country with no expectations.

One of the few remaining communist countries in the world, the borders of Laos first opened to foreign tourists in 1988. Since then, Laos has seen a boom in the tourism industry, although it's not particularly obvious when visiting. →



Lookout point on the drive from Vang Vieng to Luang Prabang.

The country feels untouched by the western hand of modern convenience and tourist traps. Although ex-pats and backpackers dot the cities and towns, they blend into the surroundings rather than acting as an interruption as they do in so many other places.

Travelling with my husband and a group led by a local man from Southeast Asia, I fly into Vientiane, the capital of Laos and home to less than one million people. The city sits along the Mekong River, which separates Laos from Thailand and runs north through the country.

Vientiane is a unique city. You'll find visible French influence from France's colonization in the late 19th century as well as traditional Buddhist temples, like Pha That Luang, an impressive gold-covered stupa from the 3rd century. Although quite a grand monument, it's not the first thing that comes to mind when I think of

Vientiane. That honour goes to a site 25 kilometres from the centre of the city.

Wat Xieng Khouane Luang, better known to tourists as Buddha Park, is home to more than 200 marvellously carved statues.

Stepping into the park, I'm amazed. There is a bizarre and intricate collection of statues. Some are clear representations of Buddha, while others are more mystical and have Hindu influences. There are statues with four arms, statues that have serpent bodies and human heads, statues holding weapons and some posed dancing. There are giant statues that reach into the skies and others quite small. There are animals too: elephants, snakes, alligators.

But I am most fascinated by a carved tree that sits atop a large concrete dome and stretches high above the park. A face maybe six feet tall is carved into the side of the hollowed-out dome, its mouth the entrance.

I step through the mouth, mindful of the teeth. There are dozens of statues inside, but I'm more interested in following the narrow staircase that winds along the walls. Reaching the end of the staircase, I'm spit out onto the roof, the tree statue just above my head. Before me is the entirety of Buddha Park. It's beautiful, and I sit, admiring the palm trees, flowers, and bushes that grow among the statues.

Laos is an adventurer's paradise, with much of the country covered in mountains and river valleys, making it the perfect destination for trekking, biking, boating and exploring. So, although Vientiane is a fascinating city, the true magic of this landlocked country cannot be felt until stepping outside the bustle of the capital.

The sun is setting as I arrive in Vang Vieng. On the banks of the Nam Song River, hot air balloons speckle the orange evening sky, and limestone mountains

Views of limestone mountains while kayaking on the Nam Song River.



act as the backdrop to the quaint and atmospheric Laotian town.

Early the next morning, I climb into the back of a windowless truck, plastic recreational kayaks stacked on metal racks above me. My companions and I are dropped off at the banks of the Nam Song River where we're given a short safety demonstration before setting off.

Our journey will take us 10 kilometres down the river.

The water is calm and flat most of the way, which allows me to enjoy my surroundings. My husband sits in the back of our kayak, and I'm splashed with every flip of his paddle. It's refreshing though, as the sun is strong.

At times we come across rapids, although the water level is so low that most are barely more than a ripple.

The entire time we're surrounded by limestone mountains that seem to reach

higher the farther we kayak. Lush forests crowd the river. The only noise comes from my group and occasionally children playing along the shore.

Up ahead some locals wait on the shore, kayaks lined up beside them, and I know our paddle is about to come to an end. It's only now that I allow myself to acknowledge the dull ache in my arms from the hours paddling on the water.


Certain that I have seen the best Laos has to offer, I am awed again a few days later visiting the Kuang Si Waterfalls outside of Laos's fourth largest city, Luang Prabang.

Home to about 70,000 people, Luang Prabang is situated on the Mekong River and is a popular hiking and biking locale, but what has many people flocking to the city is the Kuang Si Waterfalls.

Known for the turquoise blue waters, cascading waterfalls and tranquil pools,

the Kuang Si Waterfalls is a spot of incredible natural beauty. I hike to the top of the tallest waterfall, some 200 feet up. It's hot and humid, and sweat drips from my face and runs down my back as I climb the steps. Reaching the top, there's barely another tourist around, although there is a natural pool that looks inviting. Slipping into the water, I'm refreshed by its cool touch, and I swim towards a swing that hangs over the turquoise waters, little fish nibbling at my toes.

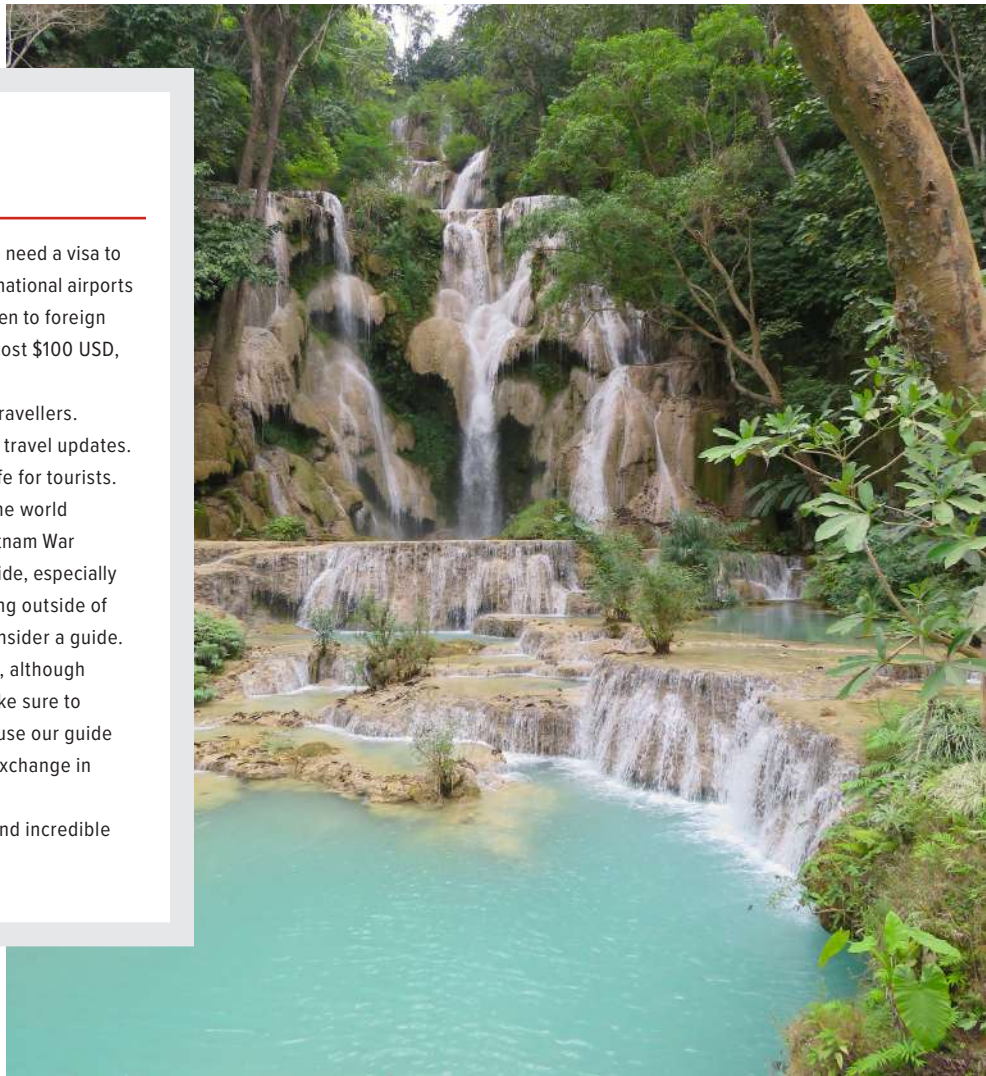
I climb onto the swing and let my feet dangle into the cool water. For the second time since arriving in Laos, I'm hit with an overwhelming admiration for this country I knew so little about.

But now I do know about Laos. I know about its beauty. I've seen its nature, met its people and learned about its customs, and what I can say is that such a place truly is an undiscovered paradise. 

Tranquil pools at the Kuang Si Waterfall.

TIPS & GOOD TO KNOW

- When travelling with a Canadian passport, you need a visa to enter Laos, which can be obtained at the international airports in Laos and some border crossings that are open to foreign travellers. When I travelled to Laos, the visa cost \$100 USD, and only crisp, unsoiled bills were accepted.
- There are areas of Laos that are not safe for travellers. Visit <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/laos> for travel updates. Generally speaking, the areas I visited are safe for tourists.
- Laos is the most heavily bombed country in the world per capita, and there are still unexploded Vietnam War ammunitions being discovered in the countryside, especially along the border with Vietnam. When travelling outside of the main centres, be conscious of this and consider a guide.
- The Kip (LAK) is the national currency of Laos, although USD is generally accepted in major cities. Make sure to exchange your Kip before leaving Laos, because our guide warned us that it would not be accepted for exchange in neighbouring countries.
- Laos is a very inexpensive country. You can find incredible meals for a few dollars.





24/7 ACCESS



Fifth Avenue Club

Calgary's very own Fifth Avenue Club is one of Calgary's longest running gyms in operation today. This newly renovated club is now UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP with local Calgarians, Rod Coulter and Leo & Charlotte King, who are bringing the already high standard up to current training trends and bringing in state of the art equipment.

With over 15,000 square feet, this facility is more than just a gym - it's a community. Conveniently located in downtown Calgary, Fifth Avenue Club is a premium fitness facility that sets the standard for friendly, personalized service.

"We are passionate about building relationships with our members and meeting their fitness needs with sincerity."

In addition to the gym, there are two squash courts, a multi-purpose studio with group classes, massage therapy, personal trainers, luxury changing rooms with steam rooms/saunas and a fully stocked cafe (Juice & Java) proudly serving Rosso Coffee.

We pride ourselves on our friendly, knowledgeable and energetic staff! Our team selection process is rigorous, and the end result is an unmatched level of superior service in a comfortable and genuine atmosphere.

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From Bootcamp to Zumba, from Spin to Hot Yoga, and Deep Water, MNP Community & Sport features over 80 different group fitness classes. Led by expert coaches, these classes take place at a variety of times to help meet the needs of even the busiest schedule. Whether you are looking for a relaxing low intensity workout, or you are ready to feel the burn we have a class for you.

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To learn more about memberships, programs & training, please visit mnpsportcentre.com ■



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At MRU Recreation, we serve our community by inspiring movement for life. Whether you're looking to reduce stress, try something new, improve your physical health, or simply play, we have the tools to help and support you on your wellness journey. We offer a wide array of activity and membership options to help get you moving.

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To learn more about public membership options, visit mrucougars.com/memberships.

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Vivo for Healthier Generations

Vivo is a charity on a mission to raise healthier generations by inspiring a holistic mindset for healthy living. And with that mission, Vivo is expanding to be a more inclusive, accessible and sustainable community and a place for all generations to belong. Vivo's \$60-million building expansion is close to being complete. Vivo will be welcoming the community back with a partial reopening of existing spaces in January 2023. The NEW fitness centre with state-of-the-art equipment will open this Spring followed by the pool and first-of-its-kind indoor park opening by Summer 2023.

We recognize that we are not yet able to offer our full expansion components so to address this, we are providing a limited time 25% discount to access current modified fitness programs. This early-bird pricing not only gives you the chance to come back to Vivo and start working on their fitness goals now, but it also gives you a exclusive access to experience our new facility offerings as they open at 25% OFF. Purchase of 10x passes, daily drop-in, and pre-paid annual passes will be 25% off with the promo code WELCOMEBACK. This promotion ends February 15, 2023.

The gym doesn't have to be intimidating!

Our individual & small group training ensures you have the support you need to meet your fitness goals. Stay tuned for our re-opening in early 2023, when we'll have heaps of training options to help you take your health to the next level!

Vivo is offering modified fitness programs while we renovate and expand

Drop-in gym/workout zones, a selection of Group Fitness and Registered Programs, skating, basketball, badminton and pickleball.

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Accessibility was an important consideration for the expansion, and Vivo has delivered with things like accessible equipment in the fitness centre and a fully accessible pool, complete with wheelchair ramp, pool lift, water wheelchair, accessible and universal changerooms and more. ■

To learn more about Vivo's opening and new offerings, sign up for our newsletter at vivo.ca



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To learn more about membership and admission options, visit westsiderec.com.

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Racing the World's Highest Ultramarathon

High altitude running at ground zero for climate change

BY NICKI REHN 📷 NICKI REHN

Calgary, AB-based ultra-marathon runner, orienteer, and adventurer who loves to travel the world doing crazy races, disappear deep into the mountains, and rip up the local single-track.

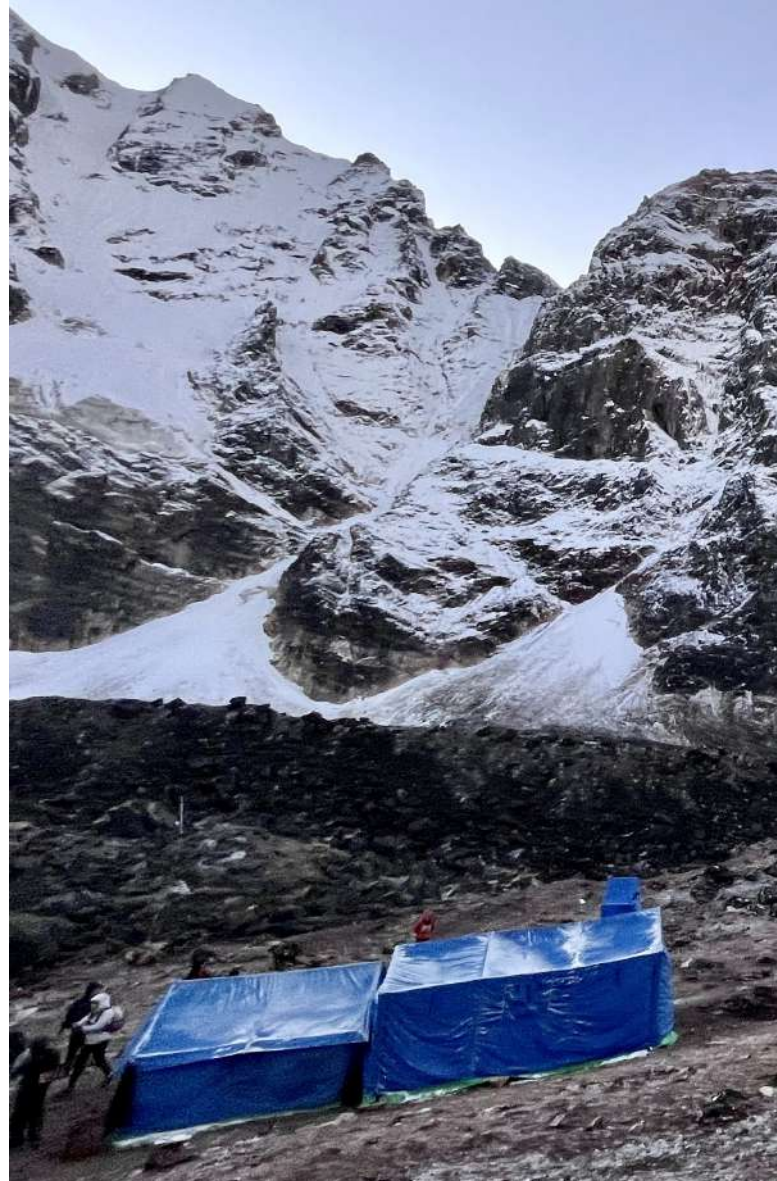
@NICKI_REHN 📷 NICKI-REHN

I reach the highest point of the Snowman Race late on day three. Standing atop the 5,490 m (18,000 ft.) *Gopu La Pass* in the fading light, I can see *Gangkhar Puense*, the world's tallest unclimbed mountain, and just beyond that, Tibet.

I'm deep in the Bhutanese Himalayas in a place few have been. The lack of oxygen makes my brain fuzzy and my vision clouded, but I am acutely aware of the beauty all around. It takes me six hours to cover the last 15 kilometres in one of the most remote corners of the world, and I'm alone for most of it. At this altitude, every step takes effort, but I'm rewarded for my continual forward motion by making it to the pass before dark. For the last hour, I follow snow leopard prints and have to remind myself: *This is real, Nicki. All of this is real.*

I'm part of a team of 29 international and Bhutanese ultramarathon runners invited to compete in what is now the world's highest ultramarathon. This is no ordinary event. The King of Bhutan conceived the race as an audacious way to tell the world that climate change is disproportionately impacting the Himalayan glaciers in the country, the downstream ecosystems below, and the people who call Bhutan home. We run through valleys and villages, meeting those most affected, and then sleep in tents under the clear night sky in remote camps set up by local adventure companies.

I've been curious about Bhutan for many years. The stories of its pristine and mystical landscape, unexplored Himalayan peaks (mountaineering is forbidden), and gross national happiness caught my interest. When I heard the King commissioned a mountain race to bring awareness to climate change, I immediately applied. I've watched our own glaciers in the Canadian Rockies retreat over the nearly thirty years I've lived here, so this is not some abstract problem in a faraway place. This race combined all my loves—travelling, running, and mountains—and so it was a no-brainer.



Trail runners tend to be deeply connected to the wild places in which they run and are passionate about preserving them. We pay attention to the weather, the terrain, the smells, and the sounds. These wild places are necessary for our sanity, and we empathize with those who also draw life from them. The King figured that if we came and ran in his mountains, we'd want to help protect them too. He was right.

Bhutan is a tiny country in the eastern Himalayas with a population of under a million. It values gross national happiness, responsible tourism, and sustainable development. Bhutan has promised to keep 65 per cent of its land under forest canopy forevermore, making it one of the three countries in the world to be carbon negative. The air is thin, but delicious, as if produced by the planet's most powerful air filter. However, Bhutan is sandwiched between the two biggest polluters—India and China—and its people are threatened by the climate impacts caused by others.

The race is named after the Snowman Trek, known to be one of the most arduous, yet stunning journeys in the Himalayas. It's more ancient trade route than trail, with shoe-sucking mud and tricky footing, better suited to yaks than people. But the biggest adversary is the altitude. The rule of thumb for high-altitude pursuits is to sleep no more than 300 metres higher than you did the night before.



“

When I heard the King commissioned a mountain race to bring awareness to climate change, I immediately applied.

”



Ultramarathoner, Nicki Rehn.

Our night one camp, at almost 5,000 m, was 2,700 m above the start line (nine times recommended). It was a brutal way to kick off the 205-kilometre race, and it set the tone for what was to come.

Back on *Gophu La Pass*, I still have 20 kilometres to reach the third overnight camp. I have been racing for two and a half days above 4,000 m and by now, ten of my friends have succumbed to acute mountain sickness (AMS).

My body seems to be holding together but staying in this race is precarious. AMS does not care if you are elite or experienced, it only cares if you are adapted to the thin air, or lucky. Having just spent two weeks trekking in Nepal, I am both. But still, everything is more difficult up here — eating, breathing, even thinking.

I find two fellow athletes on the pass, and we decide to stick together for improved safety and morale. We don't have a lot of daylight left and we all need more oxygen, so despite those incredible views, we don't linger.

The sun sets shortly after we begin descending, the temperature plummets into negative double-digits and a heavy fog comes in like a tsunami. We stumble down the broad valley, navigating by the line on our GPS for what seems like forever. I remind myself that these difficult moments are the price we pay for the incredible ones.

Just before 10 p.m., after almost 16 hours of effort, most of which was deprived of oxygen, we reach camp.

Two days later, I run out of the mountains and proudly cross the finish line in Chamkhar in front of thousands of school children and locals. The noise of the crowd is jarring after five days of silence, but I relish the celebration.

I've raced many of the world's hardest ultramarathons, but I've never done anything like this—not this high, this hard, or this risky. Often, in ultramarathon running, we say that “just finishing” is what matters. But this race was about showing up. And I've never done a race that carried as important a message: that we need to do everything we can to preserve our wild places, natural areas, and ecosystems, particularly in Bhutan. Technically we came to compete, but we left as ambassadors of the country and climate action. Bhutan is one of the last barely touched, pristine places in the world, and I hope it stays that way. 

Four Horsemen of the Spine

Mobilize the back's big movers

BY DR. KELLY STARRETT  THE READY STATE

Physical therapist, speaker, New York Times bestselling author of *Becoming a Supple Leopard*, living in San Francisco, CA. Watch for Kelly and Juliet Starrett's new book release, *Built to Move*, on April 4, 2023.

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You've likely heard me talk about the four horsemen of the spine before. These are four big movers that, together, all support hip flexion or spinal extension. Now of course the body's movement system is "slightly" more complex than just a few big muscles around the pelvis, but over the past few decades, we've discovered that these four muscles (and attendant connective tissues) can be a great place to start if you are experiencing low back pain or discomfort.

The first of the four horsemen is the rectus femoris. This long muscle in the quadriceps connects the kneecap all the way up to your pelvis. So, this is a knee-to-pelvis connector. It has a tendency to become stiff in a lot of people.

Next is the iliacus, coming from inside the pelvic bowl to the femur. This muscle sits deep inside the pelvic bowl and just doesn't often get much love when it comes to mobility. Though hard to reach, it's not impossible, and we'll discuss some great ways to get in there.

The third is the psoas muscle, which connects the trunk to the femur and forms the iliopsoas system with the iliacus. The psoas crosses a lot of real estate and is a powerful hip flexor, or spine forward flexor, or spine extender. It also swells to keep the spine stable. I like to think of this amazing tissue as the quads of the low back.

Last but not least is quadratus lumborum (QL), which connects the bottom of your rib cage to the top of your pelvis in the lower back. As I often say to athletes during mobilizations, "The QL is not a bone! No matter how much it feels like one." The QL actually shares a common attachment to the psoas and can be considered the hamstrings of the spine (yes this is over-simplified).

While all of these four tissues have incredibly diverse functions, they all can potentially create an extension load on the spine. This is one of the reasons why stiff quads can contribute to low back pain, for example. If you think about couch stretch for a second, that position loads the iliacus, psoas, and rectus femoris by challenging hip extension, or three out of the four horsemen. When we are able to relieve some of the passive extension forces on the spine, we often see significant improvements in spinal and hip function, and decreases in back pain.

ADDRESSING THE RECTUS FEMORIS

The rectus femoris is one of the four quad muscles, connecting your pelvis all the way through your patella. This tissue system can become especially fibrotic and jerky-like, and doesn't typically respond as well to stretching. It's hard to stretch jerky, but you can mobilize it.

To find the rectus femoris, we're going to mobilize in the same position as the basic quad smash on a roller, starting just above the knee.

- Lay down, belly facing the ground, and get your leg on that roller.
- Roll across that patch of tissue, looking for anything that feels tight and fibrotic. If you find a tissue that clunks back and forth each time you roll across it, that's the rectus femoris. We're gonna go all the way up the quad, scrubbing across and focusing on that tissue. Don't worry, the rest of the horsemen are less gnarly.
- Take this mobilization, moving and scrubbing, from just above your knee to just under the bottom of the pelvis.

REACHING THE ILIACUS

The iliacus sits deep inside the pelvic bowl, making it one of the most difficult muscles to reach with stretching or tissue mashing. It is simultaneously a major player in creating stability for your trunk and torso, but can easily become the main contributor to immobility and pain.

- We're going after the iliacus by laying a ball (a large hardball, or even a kettlebell handle will do) just on the inside of our hip bone.
- You can find this point by laying on the ball with the tip of your hip bone on either side and then just falling off it into the musculature on the inside of that pelvic bowl.
- We want to breathe and sink into these tissues, tracing the pelvic bone down towards the femur.
- Know that as you move towards your leg, you may run into the nerve and artery in your groin. You can stop when you feel it!

ROLLING-OUT THE PSOAS

Often people refer to the iliacus and psoas together as the iliopsoas, but these two muscles are different systems. The iliacus



Kelly Starrett is one of the world's top experts on mobility, movement and human performance.

connects the pelvis to the femur whereas the psoas connects the spine to the femur, so though they do similar things, they are quite different in terms of connections.

With a heavy ball, or a lacrosse ball, and a kettlebell for more pinpointed work, we can address the psoas while laying on our back instead of laying on top of the ball with our stomach. This lets us receive a different input and have access to hip flexion within the mobilization.

- To go at the psoas this way, lie on your back, take a lacrosse ball, and press it into your gut about halfway between your belly button and your hip bone.
- Then put a kettlebell on top of the ball and hold the bell handle to press the lacrosse ball into your psoas. From here you can floss the muscle by flexing and extending your leg, and internally and externally rotating the hip in combination with that.
- Breathe into the mobilization and move the ball to different places in that system. We want to spend about three to five minutes per side, if possible.

The other mobilization I like for psoas work is to lay on a textured, hard foam roller and use it to scrub out these tissues.


- Focus on the area at and below your hip bones right in that pelvic bowl. For five to six minutes, scrub back and forth, contract and relax. Think of cutting yourself in half over that roller.
- After you feel your tissues change, move down a notch towards the bottom of your pelvis.

TALKING TO THE QL

The QL runs from your pelvis to the bottom of your ribs in the area of your lower back. In athletes, this muscle can become so stiff and ropey that it feels like a bone. Instead, we should be able to feel the QL on our back with our fingers and even grip around it. If you try this, you might find it like trying to press your fingers through a wall.

Using a larger soft or hard ball, we're going to "bend" across these tissues. Sounds horrendous? Don't worry, this is actually one of the best feeling mobilizations we do and should feel like satisfying a deep itch.

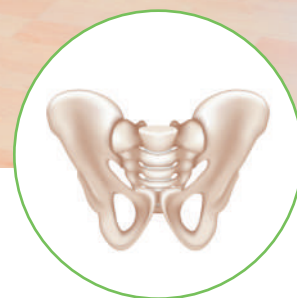
- Grab a large ball and place it away from your spine over towards your obliques, but below your bottom rib, on the right side of your low back.
- Laying on the ball in this position, bridge up and let your right leg fall to the side, knees bent and feet on the ground.
- In this position, breathe into that musculature and think of scraping across that QL muscle in your back slowly and with focus on taking full, deep breaths.
- Once you get to the other side of that sausage, reposition the ball back in the starting position but down a notch from your ribs towards your pelvis. Keep scraping across that QL all the way down to just above the pelvic bone.

You don't need fancy tools to get started on improving your horses. Happy mobilizing. I hope this helps you get into your Ready State. 

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ASK THE EXPERT



Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy

BY Kyla Majewski MSc.PT, Pelvic Health Physiotherapist

This specialized branch of physiotherapy treats both the internal and external pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor consists of a group of muscles that attach throughout the inner pelvis, creating a sling type structure. The sling of pelvic floor muscles needs to contract and relax to allow urine and fecal continence, support your organs, stabilize your pelvic girdle as well as provide sexual satisfaction. However, when this pelvic sling is not functioning properly, it can lead to some embarrassing and uncomfortable concerns for both men and women. Often, these concerns are the result of pelvic muscles that are too tight or too weak.

A pelvic floor that is too weak can contribute to urine leakage when laughing, sneezing or playing sports. Another common presentation of weakness is pelvic organ prolapse. Prolapse occurs when the pelvic organs move from their secured position in the pelvis, giving the sensation of a heaviness at the vaginal or rectal opening. A weak pelvic floor is a common issue during or after pregnancy.

A pelvic floor that is too tight can contribute to incontinence and pelvic pain. Urinary Incontinence is urine leaking out when you are unable to make it to the toilet in time. Other symptoms can include an urgent need to use the bathroom or pain and straining with bowel movements. Pelvic pain is a term used to describe the inability or pain with vaginal penetration, orgasm, erections or any sexual stimulation as the result of a pelvic floor that is too tight.

Many patients incorrectly assume these symptoms of weak or tight pelvic floor muscles are a normal aspect of aging or motherhood. Often these sufferers will do their Kegels and hope for the best without knowing the true 'status' of their pelvic floor. Unfortunately, Kegels are not always beneficial and can make symptoms worse. To truly understand the 'status' of an individual's pelvic floor, both an external and internal evaluation by a pelvic therapist is required.

Many people express concern at the thought of an internal exam. For both males and females, the internal and external exam is guided by each individual's expressed concern in conjunction with their answers to diagnostic questions. An internal exam is not always indicated and will only be conducted if the therapist determines it will provide additional diagnostic value and the patient is comfortable. In saying this, an internal exam is considered the gold standard in adequately assessing the pelvic floor. Keep in mind, some pelvic floor issues are too painful to allow for internal exam. In these cases, the practitioner will depend solely on the external component of the exam.

The assessment and treatment of pelvic floor dysfunction is a patient led process. Individuals with pelvic floor concerns are encouraged to schedule an appointment with a pelvic floor therapist to discuss assessment and treatment options to see how pelvic therapy can help improve their sexual and pelvic health. ■



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Yoga Nidra for What Ails You

A guided lying-down meditation for well-being at every level

BY ANNE DOUGLAS

Founder of *Anahata Yoga Therapy* and creator of *R & R Sleep Meditation – a Hybrid Healing Practice for Radiant Health*. Anne has been teaching yoga, nidra & meditation for 33 years and is based in Banff, AB.



If you have stepped into a yoga studio lately, you have likely experienced or at least heard of yoga nidra. Many studio aficionados will be familiar with the short relaxation pose known as *Savasana* (Sanskrit for corpse) that comes at the end of a yoga series of poses. This is an abbreviated form of yoga nidra where you lie still for several minutes to absorb the health-inducing benefits of the yoga practice you just completed.

Yoga nidra, or *yogic sleep*, is a guided, lying-down version of meditation. This is a welcome form of meditation practice for those who struggle with facilitating the practice for themselves, as well as the discomfort of traditional seated forms of meditation.

Yoga nidra is also a healing practice because it mimics sleep, which is the body's optimal state for rejuvenation through muscle repair, memory consolidation, enhanced immune function, weight and mood regulation, and more.

The effectiveness of the practice begins by setting a clear intention, be it for stress reduction, health, mindful meditation or spiritual insight. Then you may be invited to visualize yourself in a place of sanctuary, imagining whatever images, memories or sensibilities that invoke a feeling of ease and safety. Next, you will go through a body scan from head to toe (or toe to head, as the case may be), feeling the sensations of each body area. This efficiently

triggers a relaxation response through the neuro-muscular system, which also has the beneficial effect of effortlessly quieting the mind.

The practice continues with a simple breathing pattern that is designed to further invoke a deeper sense of ease. For those who suffer from chronic stress, anxiety, pain or insomnia, this can offer a profound sense of relief.

Once the foundational experience of ease is established, yoga nidra can also be used to mindfully work with challenging thoughts, emotions or symptoms. In this way, what used to seem too overwhelming or insurmountable to address, can be approached from a place of calm. This portion of the practice can be accomplished through a variety of means that include guided imagery, the experience of opposites, or bridging challenging emotions with the sensations of inner peace and calm.

In the later stage of the practice, one is invited to experience the emotional qualities of contentment, pleasure, joy and even bliss, as a way to elicit the body's natural "happy hormones" that are known to instill an overall sense of well-being while reducing inflammation, pain, anxiety and depression. This is often evoked by simply recalling or imagining people, places or events that draw forth these emotions and accompanying sensations.



There are many forms of yoga nidra, each having approximately eight to 10 steps or stages to move through. Each stage builds upon the last so as to gently lull the practitioner into a deepening state of relaxation, well-being and receptivity. This allows a shift out of our normal waking state of beta brain wave, in which mental activity dominates, into at least alpha brain wave or deeper.

In alpha brain wave, relaxation dominates and our normal limited sense of self can recede into the background so that a greater sense of wholeness and new possibility can rise into the foreground of our experience. The deeper stages of the practice open into theta brain wave, in which our bodies' healing processes are optimized. Once the mind is quiet, we may enter into gamma brain wave, in which we are more likely to experience states of profound insight, universal love and expanded consciousness

Yoga nidra is a full-spectrum meditation that begins by invoking a basic experience of relaxation and mindful presence, which can then instill a sense of emotional harmony, resilience and heightened joy. Ultimately, yoga nidra is designed to bring us to the recognition of our most essential nature as abiding peace and wholeness, regardless of life circumstances. It is a practice for our time, for a planet in need of peace. **M**

8-STEP YOGA NIDRA SAMPLER:

PLAY AUDIO

1. Settle yourself into a comfortable position seated or lying down, with eyes open or closed. As you're settling in, consider your intended outcome for the practice: reduced stress, enhanced well-being, mindful presence, etc. Turn it into a one-sentence affirmation in the present, such as: *I am radiantly healthy and happy.*
2. Imagine yourself in a beautiful and quiet sanctuary, surrounded by aspects of nature or objects of comfort that instill a feeling of peace and ease. Notice soothing colours, textures, sounds or smells that contribute to the felt sense of well-being. You can come back to your sanctuary as a place of retreat at any time in the practice or in your life.
3. Slowly scan your body from toes to head, feeling the sensations of each body area as you go. Notice each area spontaneously relax as you feel it. Then feel your whole body at once.
4. Begin to gently slow down and lengthen your breath. Bring your inhalation all the way down into the lower lobes of your lungs, for the most efficient oxygen exchange. See if you can make your exhalation just a little longer than your inhalation.
5. Feel your body as heavy and sinking down into the surface underneath it. Then feel your body as light and spacious. Go back and forth a few times with each opposite. Then feel both heavy and light at once. Notice how you feel with each step.
6. Notice any thoughts or emotions that may arise, without engaging them. Mindfully let them come and let them go. Notice and enjoy the space between thoughts.
7. Recall or imagine a person, place, thing or event that evokes a sense of contentment or joy, love or gratitude. Feel the pleasure of the positive emotions that arise as a result. Don't be in a rush. Linger in this feeling for a while.
8. Recall the intention for the practice that you set at the beginning and imagine and feel and affirm it as true now. Transition out of the practice slowly, by gradually opening your eyes, enjoying a simple stretch in your arms and legs, and feeling the benefits of the practice.



The Health Benefits of Cold Exposure

An increasingly popular therapy, and with good reason

BY **ROBBIE BENT** 📷 **OTHERSHIP**

Founder and CEO of OtherShip, based in Toronto, ON.

📸 **ROBBIEBENT** 📱 **OTHERSHIP**

In the past few years, cold exposure has grown in popularity, with serious athletes turning to the practice for its long list of health benefits. In less than 30 seconds, you can experience significant mental, emotional, and physical improvements.

If you haven't been experimenting with cold exposure, you may want to try after learning about all its power.

ENHANCED MOOD AND COGNITION

After just 30 seconds in the cold, your body experiences a 250 per cent increase in the neurotransmitter directly responsible for how we feel: norepinephrine (NE). The boost of norepinephrine in the brain has a profound effect on mood, vigilance, and attention span.

One study demonstrated that low levels of norepinephrine are associated with depression and concluded that “therapeutic agents that specifically increase NE activity are effective antidepressants.”

Also, when NE increases in the bloodstream, it acts as a vasoconstrictor. This allows the body to retain heat and works as a powerful anti-inflammatory agent.

GROWTH THROUGH HORMETIC STRESS

By exposing the body to short bursts of intentional stress — also known as hormetic stress — we activate a variety of stress response pathways encoded in our genes. In turn, this triggers our bodies to produce an ideal biological response. Essentially, acute stress activates a healthy adaptive response.

Through intentional, short stressors, we train our bodies and minds to grow more resilient and adaptable in the face of life's stressors.

INCREASED METABOLISM

When we expose our bodies to cold temperatures, our natural response is to generate internal heat. This happens through a process called thermogenesis.

Thermogenesis occurs in two ways:

- Shivering - our muscles contract to produce heat.
- Our bodies convert white adipose tissue into brown adipose tissue cells. We want this. The more brown adipose tissue our bodies have, the more fat we are able to burn as fuel.

Studies have found that consistent cold exposure therapy increases metabolism by 300 per cent.

IMPROVED IMMUNE SYSTEM FUNCTION

One prominent study found that winter swimmers had more white blood cells compared to summer swimmers.

This therapy has been shown to increase white blood cell counts, T-cells (active in repelling cancer cells), and other beneficial immune cells. Cold also elevates our resilience to stress.

MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RESILIENCE

While the physiological benefits are massive, the mental benefits are just as

profound. When we expose ourselves to extremely cold water — or really anything that elicits stress on the body — we build our tolerance and ability to navigate intense stressors.

When our bodies first hit the cold, we experience an intense physical reaction. It's in this moment we are presented with a choice: let our instinctual response take over and jump out, or harness the power of our intention and willpower to persevere.

When we utilize our breath and relax, we train our ability to flip from the sympathetic nervous system response (fight or flight) to the parasympathetic nervous system state (rest and digest). By choosing to embrace the sensations, control our breathing and soften into the experience, our resilience strengthens. We create a tangible opportunity to strengthen our ability to overcome adverse situations.

Cold exposure acts as the perfect life metaphor for mindfulness mastery. When we're thrust into fight or flight situations, we strengthen our ability to pause, breathe, and choose a different response instead of reacting to emotions.

Cold exposure and breathwork act as a perfect training ground for navigating the stressors thrown at us in life. The more we practice, the more we harness our ability to navigate challenging life situations.

Cold exposure can do wonders for athletic recovery. After intense workouts, particularly cardiovascular activities, cold exposure expedites the recovery process.


It significantly decreases inflammation and reduces muscle soreness. Inflammation is the cause of 70 per cent of age-related diseases; engaging in activities that reduce inflammation increases longevity and physical performance.

Those recovery benefits are a big part of why Shea Pierre, a celebrity trainer with City Shred and a former CFL strength coach, recommends cold therapy for his athletes. "It encourages the flow of fluids like blood and lymph through your body," he said, "helping to flush metabolic waste from the body, increasing oxygen and nutrients to your muscles."

When we produce NE in the cold, we produce a molecule called TNF-alpha. This leads to a decrease in the production of inflammatory cytokines. In other words, you fight inflammation through cold exposure.

For Toronto triathlete Cheryl Willberg, incorporating cold therapy into her training has allowed her to have personal-best performances in every race last season. "Post-cold dip or cold shower, I feel decreased tension and the benefits of better sleep too, which is so important in IRONMAN training," she said. "Given cold helps to aid my nervous system, it allows my body to get into a better state of rest and has helped with recovery and athletic performance, even after training multiple days or post-race preparing for the next feat."

Fitness expert, Dr. Rhonda Patrick, reports that regular exposure to cold has been linked to improved glucose and lipid metabolism, muscle recovery after physical activity, hormone regulation related to sleep and energy levels, and cognitive and athletic performance.

It is important to note that timing influences the effects of cold on recovery. If you weight train, it's imperative to wait at least four hours before taking the plunge to ensure you don't negate the process of muscle hypertrophy. For cardiovascular exercises such as running, sprinting or biking, it's best to cold plunge soon after you exercise to optimize your results and recovery. 

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Start small. You can start by implementing a daily cold shower. Have your shower in warm water and turn to cold for the last 30 seconds before getting out. You can work your way up to two minutes.
- If you want to upgrade from a cold shower, you can utilize your bathtub at home. Fill it with cold water and purchase a few bags of ice to experiment with.
- We also recommend organizing a cold-plunge experience with friends. The community component makes the entire process a more exhilarating experience.
- Breathwork is a crucial component to the success of cold exposure. If we simply try to jump into a cold tub directly, without any preparation, our body immediately shifts into a fight-or-flight response, where it feels extremely difficult to drop in and stay.
- Breathwork to prepare and breathwork during your cold exposure experience will drastically improve the quality of the time spent in the cold and teach you how to regulate your nervous system in a new environment.



The Recovery Session

How to approach your rest day

BY SEAN ALLT

Founder & head coach, BackcountryStrength.com and one of IMPACT Magazine's Top Trainers in 2022, in Chilliwack, B.C.

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One of the biggest paradigm shifts we've experienced over the past few years has been toward a massive focus on recovery. From supplements to tools, a wide range of products have flooded the market attempting to tap into this shift in priorities.

While many of those products may be helpful in promoting recovery, one area that is still under-represented (likely because there's not much money to be made from it) is the idea of exercise programming to actively promote recovery.

Unfortunately, when most people think about incorporating recovery into their overall training plan, the go-to solution is a rest day. This often manifests as a day loafing around or, at best, going for a gentle walk.

In order to promote optimal recovery, you'll want to increase your respiratory rate slightly above resting and create gentle movements with any of the muscles you've recently trained. This accomplishes several things:

1. Delivers fresh oxygen and other nutrients that support recovery in the areas you've been training.
2. Promotes lymphatic circulation which, among other things, is how your body clears out inflammation. Unlike your circulatory system, your lymphatic system is passive, relying on the contractions of your muscles to help create movement within the system.

Let's take a moment to examine some practical techniques that work to actively promote recovery from your higher-intensity training sessions and, honestly, the stress of everyday life.

BREATHING

Much of our ability to perform—and to recover—is driven by our breath. Poor breathing mechanics can lead to limited performance and poor recovery.

Most of us are chest breathers, only utilizing our upper respiratory tract. This limits our ability to bring in fresh oxygen and clear out metabolic waste products like carbon dioxide. It also restricts range of motion in our hips and shoulders, and keeps our nervous system stuck in fight-or-flight mode.

By taking the time to practice proper breathing mechanics with exercises like crocodile breathing, and controlling our breathing rate through techniques like box breathing, we can help restore proper movement throughout our bodies and stimulate the activation of the parasympathetic (rest and digest) nervous system.

MOVEMENT PATTERNING

When we're constantly pushing performance in our training sessions, we tend to develop movement compensations over time. These compensations can eventually lead to limiting our performance or, in some cases, injury.

It's worth a few minutes on your recovery day to focus on restoring and practising proper movement mechanics.

Exercises like the world's greatest stretch can help to restore range of motion throughout your hips, back, and shoulders simultaneously.

Of course, after you've mobilized those areas, you'll want to ensure you're properly activating the muscles that create stability around those joints in order to protect yourself from injury and teach your muscles and nervous system how to create stability in your newfound range.

I like pairing the world's greatest stretch with a band-resisted dead bug or yoga push-up to train the hips, core, and shoulder girdle and create stability while moving your limbs.

LOW-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (LIIT)

LIIT is a great complement to high-intensity interval training (HIIT) since it continues training your aerobic system to recover dynamically without creating the type of stimulus that your body then needs to recover from. Remember, we're discussing techniques that promote recovery right now, not techniques that require recovery (like HIIT).

Ideally, we want to use activities that target most of the muscle groups that we've been training. A rower, air bike, or gentle bodyweight circuit are all great options.

HIIT is still more effective at training heart-rate recovery than LIIT, so don't take this as license to drop your HIIT work. This is simply a supplement that you can use on your recovery day.

SELF-MYOFASCIAL RELEASE

It is now suspected that the reason self-myofascial release (SMR) is so beneficial is its ability to help shift your autonomic nervous system from sympathetic (fight or flight) to parasympathetic (rest and digest).

SMR helps decrease neural tone, allowing your muscles to relax more fully. Some studies have even suggested that SMR may help improve arterial stiffness and increase the level of



circulating nitrous oxide in your blood, thus reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, though more research is still needed in that area.

Try this simple 30-minute routine on your next recovery day:

Crocodile Breathing x 12 breaths

- Lying on your front, breathe deep enough that you feel your entire abdomen expand 360 degrees. You should feel your belly expanding into the floor.

World's Greatest Stretch x 5/side

- Set up in a long lunge with your back knee as straight as possible and both hands on the ground next to your forward foot.
- Raise the same side hand as the forward foot up towards the ceiling as you rotate through your upper back.

Band-Resisted Dead Bug x 8/side

- Anchor a resistance band to a pole or squat rack roughly two feet off the ground.
- Lie on your back facing away from the pole with your head about three feet from the anchor while holding the free end of the band with both hands and your arms reaching straight up, creating tension.
- Bend your knees and hips to 90 degrees. From there, keep your core and lats engaged as you alternate extending each of your legs.

Yoga Push-ups x 8

- Complete a normal push-up. From the top position, drive your hips back and up with a long spine and bring your head in between your shoulders (you should now be in downward dog.)
- Return to the start position before repeating your next rep, starting with the push-up.


Low-Intensity Intervals x 15 minutes

- Alternate between short bouts (about 10-15 seconds) of upper-zone-2 or lower-zone-3 heart rate (HR) work and actively try to bring your HR back down to mid-zone-2.
- Begin your next 10-15 second interval once your HR has come down to the middle of zone 2.

Self-Myofascial Release (foam rolling) x 4 minutes

- Focus on rolling the major muscle groups such as the quads, glutes, and lats while keeping the movement, and your breathing, slow and controlled in order to best stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Box Breathing x 8 breaths

- Inhale for four seconds.
- Pause, with your lungs full of air, for four seconds
- Exhale for four seconds
- Pause, with your lungs empty, for four seconds 

Reasons to Keep a Training Journal

Set realistic goals and optimize your athletic program

BY DR. DAVID COX

Based in Vancouver, B.C., Dr. David Cox is a clinical psychologist and a professor in the Department of Psychology at Simon Fraser University. He is the chair of the Sports Medicine Council of British Columbia.

We know movement is good for our bodies. Yet, many of us still struggle to make it to the gym, or hit the path for our long runs consistently.

Keeping a training journal or diary can help to increase our commitment to our goals at all levels of development, from beginning to high performance.

A good training journal will promote a sense of accountability by monitoring daily progress. A journal can be used in a highly personalized manner that reflects an important form of “self-talk.” Personal thoughts and feelings can be shared in a manner that is rarely seen when sharing with other people. Out of this, a profile of what prepares us to perform mentally, technically and physically can be developed.

As a sport psychologist, I have used training journals extensively. It is not necessary to obtain an expensive system. A notebook or binder with loose-leaf pages works well. It may come as somewhat of a surprise that I continue to prefer paper journals that one can write in, put in a training bag, review and reflect on. It is my impression that this format increases our commitment as it serves as a physical reminder to train.

You may want to organize your journal around training cycles or training periods such as pre-season or off-season, or into blocks such as four 13-week blocks for the year. You may also want to set goals for the entire cycle and then set weekly goals that are evaluated each week, leading to an overall evaluation at the end of the cycle.

It is, however, a good idea to set goals that are relevant to your specific training program. This could include goals in domains that are physical, mental, technical, tactical, nutritional, recovery and regeneration, although there may not be entries for each domain every day. Remember that recovery, rest, regeneration and holidays are goals within an effective training program.

Three types of goals should be set: outcome, performance and process.

Outcome goals focus on results where the emphasis is on “winning and losing.” The concern here is that one can give their best effort, perform to the best of their ability and yet still not achieve their outcome goal. This can undermine their confidence in their ability to achieve their goals. An example would be attaining a “best ever” time in a marathon and yet finishing well back in the race in comparison to others.

Performance goals focus on *output* rather than *outcome* and should be emphasized. These are goals that are primarily under one’s control and can be achieved independently of the outcome. Successfully giving a best effort will enhance confidence in one’s skills. These goals should be realistic yet challenging.

Performance goals can be established in three domains: technical, physical and mental. An example would be someone doing resistance training through lifting weights in a gym. They might focus on their technique or form (technical), try to increase the number of repetitions or weight they are capable of achieving (physical), or use a breathing technique

to help maintain their focus on the task (mental). An implication of this approach is that one can fail to achieve an outcome goal and yet be very pleased with their performance. Conversely, one can achieve an outcome goal and yet not be satisfied with their performance.

I would also encourage the setting of process goals which are those that are very much under our control and can directly affect our ability to perform well. Examples of these would include nutrition, rest, equipment, travel, injury management and, in this context, maintaining a training journal.

The shift from outcome to performance and process goals allows one to focus on competence rather than competition. The emphasis is on how we feel about ourselves and our own performance rather than comparing ourselves to others. This should increase the likelihood of adherence to a training program by providing us with specific, relevant reasons to continue.

Using a training journal to track our objectives should help in the following ways: increasing motivation and commitment to persist through challenges; identifying strategies for improved training effectiveness; avoiding overtraining injuries; allowing progress monitoring; and, importantly, increasing awareness of our accomplishments.

Recording training activities is important as they become part of a precise progress profile that an individual can refer to as they move forward with their sport or exercise program. A formal training journal is effective in helping to make this happen. ■



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Raw or Cooked Vegetables — Which is Better?

The answer is both, depending on the type of vegetable and the nutrients each contains

BY DR. JOEL FUHRMAN

Author of seven New York Times bestsellers, including *Eat for Life*, in San Diego, CA.

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There's a debate that's been raging about vegetables for (almost) as long as humans have been eating plant foods: Which is the better, more healthful way to eat them—raw or cooked?

Here's the good news: It turns out, the answer is both.

Raw foods bring the crunch, and incredible flavour—think of crisp lettuce leaves, brilliant berries, and so on, with no nutrient loss from the heat of cooking. But in some foods, such as carrots, some nutrients are not as bioavailable in the raw state.

Cooking modifies the physical and chemical properties of foods. It causes degradation or leaching of certain nutrients and phytochemicals, but also softens cell walls and other food matrix components, facilitating the extraction and absorption of others.

Every day, we should eat a combination of raw and cooked vegetables. Let's examine some important points about how our bodies absorb nutrients from food.

SOME NUTRIENTS CAN'T STAND THE HEAT (OR LIGHT, OR OXYGEN)

Water-soluble vitamins. Vitamin C appears to be the nutrient most vulnerable to cooking temperatures. About 30 percent of vitamin C in leafy greens is destroyed by cooking. Other nutrients degraded by heat are folate, other B vitamins, and phenol antioxidants. In contrast, minerals and fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) are more stable during cooking.

Myrosinase. Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, kale, bok choy, and cabbage contain valuable nutrients called glucosinolates. These are converted to cancer-fighting isothiocyanates (ITCs) when the plant cells are broken up by chopping or chewing. Unfortunately, heat deactivates the enzyme (myrosinase) that drives this conversion—but there's an easy way to get ITCs from cooked cruciferous vegetables: chop or blend the veggies before cooking them.

Add some extra chopped raw cruciferous to the cooked.

Chopping (preferably blending) the raw cruciferous vegetables conserves the most ITCs. Once the vegetables are chopped, steaming—compared to stir-frying, boiling and microwaving—resulted in the smallest glucosinolate losses in broccoli. And since the myrosinase is deactivated by heat, you can produce more

isothiocyanates from the remaining glucosinolates after cooking by adding some raw cruciferous (such as shredded cabbage or arugula) to the cooked greens.

DEGRADED DURING COOKING:	HEAT STABLE:
Vitamin C	Minerals
B vitamins	Fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K)
Phenol antioxidants	Carotenoids
Myrosinase	Isothiocyanates (ITCs) — once formed

The drop in vitamin C and polyphenols with cooking could also limit nitric oxide production from green vegetables. When we chew nitrate-rich vegetables, such as dark leafy greens and beets, oral bacteria convert nitrate to nitrite then nitric oxide, which helps oxygenate tissues better and keep blood pressure down. Vitamin C and polyphenols enhance the conversion of nitrite to nitric oxide. Nitrate is water-soluble, so there may be some reduction in nitrate with steaming or boiling, since the water is discarded, but not with water-sautéing or cooking in soups. Bottom line, eat greens raw and chew well to enhance nitric oxide and make soups your main source of cooked vegetables, which minimizes the nutrient loss from cooking.

Try this: Eat a large green salad, containing a variety of raw vegetables (including cruciferous), with a nut- and seed-based dressing at least once a day. Add some raw cruciferous vegetables (such as shredded cabbage or arugula) to your cooked vegetable meals to increase the production of ITCs and nitric oxide.

CAROTENOIDS BECOME MORE ACCESSIBLE WHEN VEGETABLES ARE COOKED

Raw carrots have natural sweetness and deliver a satisfying crunch, and fresh tomatoes are tasty in salads, but to get maximum nutritional benefit, bring on the heat too. Carotenoids, such as alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, and lycopene are not only heat stable, but actually more absorbable once foods are cooked.



Carotenoids are inside the plant cells, embedded in the matrix of the food, and some of the cellular structure must be mechanically disrupted (such as by blending or heating) to make the carotenoids extractable by the digestive system. Vitamin E fractions from plant foods have also been reported to be more bio-accessible after heating. A study on raw foodists found that lycopene status was low without eating any cooked foods. Of course, carrots, tomatoes, and other carotenoid-rich foods contain more nutrients than only carotenoids, so a combination of raw and cooked is ideal.

ADDING HEALTHY FATS AIDS CAROTENOID ABSORPTION FROM RAW VEGETABLES

Higher fat intake in the study on raw foodists was associated with better plasma carotenoid status—adding fat is an effective way to improve carotenoid absorption from raw vegetables. One study measured alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, and lycopene in the blood after subjects ate salads topped with fat-free dressing, or dressings containing either six or 28 grams of fat. Carotenoid absorption was negligible from the salad with fat-free dressing, and high from the fat-containing dressings. So not merely to enhance carotenoid absorption, but other phytonutrients as well. Though I do not recommend adding oils to salads, it is important to use some nuts and seeds with the vegetable-based meals either eaten separately or as a key ingredient in the salad dressing or sauce. It's not only carotenoids, using nuts or seeds enhances absorption of other phytochemicals too.

WHAT ABOUT FROZEN VEGETABLES AND FRUIT?

Frozen foods leave some people cold; they associate them with lackluster taste and low quality. But there's good news. Yes, the blanching step of the freezing process means frozen produce has lower levels of vitamin C, thiamin, riboflavin, and niacin than fresh. But because frozen vegetables are picked fresh and frozen soon after, a large proportion of the nutrients are preserved.

Compare this with fresh produce, which loses some nutrients during storage, and produce that has been shipped a long distance will likely have less nutritional value than the same produce bought locally. And once the food is frozen, nutrient losses due

to storage slow down substantially. For frozen fruits, there is minimal loss of polyphenol antioxidants (such as flavonoids) because fruits are not blanched before they are frozen.

SOUPS RETAIN NUTRIENTS

Soups are satisfying. They're also a great way to cook fresh and frozen vegetables and retain more nutrients. While some nutrients are not destroyed by heat, they can still be lost in the cooking water if you are boiling or steaming your vegetables. That's why making a big pot of soup is an excellent way to cook your vegetables—just make sure they're not overcooked.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A good general guideline to maximize nutrient quantity and variety is to eat a large variety of raw and gently cooked vegetables—large daily salads plus vegetable-bean soups or stews, or vegetables cooked in a wok with water, steamed for only a few minutes, or baked at a low temperature. 🍲

SUGGESTED HEALTHY COOKING METHODS FOR VEGETABLES

- Steam greens in a wok, alternating covering and stirring.
- Steam greens in a steamer for 10 minutes or less.
- Half artichokes up the middle and steam for 18 – 20 minutes.
- Cook carrots and parsnips in soups and stews.
- Bake winter squash at a low oven temperature (325 F) for one hour.
- Wok or steam mushrooms, or add to soups and stews.
- Puree raw cruciferous greens, shallots and onions before adding them to soups and stews.

Eating Plants for Better Gut Health

A healthier gut starts in the supermarket

BY **DESIREE NIELSEN**

Registered dietician and bestselling author of *Eat More Plants*, based in Vancouver, B.C.

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Let's talk plants. There's a lot of scientific truth to the statement "You are what you eat." Your body is built of the nutrients—the amino acids, glucose, fats, vitamins, and minerals—that your gut digests and absorbs from food.

Eat more plants isn't just a tagline for me, it's how I live. In my opinion, a plant-based, anti-inflammatory diet is the ultimate foundation for better digestive health and optimal well-being.

Let's start with the most science-y reason to go plant-based: good bugs like plants. You see, the kind of bacteria you want in your gut need fermentable fibres and carbohydrates that you will find only in plant foods. These are the good bacteria that fight off the gut-wrecking bugs, create plenty of short-chain fatty acids to feed gut cells, calm inflammation, and support the integrity of your gut barrier.

Bacteria are kind of amazing, and they are starting to get the credit they deserve.

In the research, we see a lot of evidence that plant-based diets boost the microbiome. For example, people who follow vegetarian or vegan diets tend to have a more anti-inflammatory ratio of Bacteroidetes to Firmicutes bacteria. Vegans tend to have increased levels of *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, a species of bacteria with anti-inflammatory and gut-protecting effects.

An anti-inflammatory diet is really about eating as many whole plant foods as possible. I'm talking fruit, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. It's that simple. We are part of the natural world and have survived this long by eating what we find in nature. So, when we ditch the fad diets and drop hyper-processed foods, we don't need to worry as much about the minutiae of nutrition.



When you eat mostly whole plant foods, you are automatically eating in a way that:

- improves blood sugar balance by reducing high-glycemic and pro-inflammatory processed foods like white flour and added sugars
- improves the quality of fats consumed: less saturated fats and more unsaturated fats
- increases your intake of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds
- provides ample fibre and fermentable carbohydrates to encourage regular elimination and feeds your gut microbes

Eat more plants is easy to say, but our collective habit of eating out of boxes and bags is so deep that sometimes our brains have a hard time processing the change. We associate snacks with packaged snack foods so intensely that simply grabbing some almonds or a peach seems odd. Or we'll scour the ingredients lists of every granola bar and cracker on the shelf looking for the healthiest one instead of buying some hummus and carrots.

More often than not, eating a plant-based diet is about shifting mindsets and habits instead of eating in a drastically different way. Change can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be when you realize that it doesn't need to happen overnight. Just keep tweaking your habits until all of a sudden you realize that you are rocking plant life. Here are some simple ways to shift to eating more plants:

- Buy enough fruit and vegetables at the grocery store (we're talking pounds of them) to get more onto your plate. If all you buy is a couple of bananas, a few apples, and a head of broccoli, it won't get you through a week of plant-full eating.



- Double the fruit and vegetables in your favourite recipes or add beans to them.
- Cook with what's in your fridge, as opposed to on a whim, to ensure that produce gets eaten, not wasted. Vegetable waste is always a big concern for clients, and it leads them to skimp on buying plants at the store.
- Always order a side of vegetables at a restaurant if your main isn't plant-y enough.
- Snack on whole foods, not packaged foods.

Remember that all plants are good plants. Choose the foods that fit into your budget. Buy what's on sale and make a plan to use it up. Don't underestimate the power of frozen fruit and veggies.

You might be worried that the way you currently eat is wrong or fearful that the only way to be healthy is to go vegan overnight, and that sparks some anxiety for you. But, remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint.

This is about consistent, gentle, daily effort toward a healthier you. The best place to start is to choose a habit or two to focus on until it becomes automatic. It could be a green smoothie for breakfast or some fruit mid-afternoon instead of a candy bar. The good news is that drinking a glass of wine or eating a piece of cake on Friday night doesn't magically erase your healthy habits.

The magic is that the more you eat plants, free of any restrictive or good/bad mindsets, the more you'll begin to crave them naturally, and you just might find that you want a bowl of pasta with a big helping of roasted broccoli or garlic-sautéed white beans on the side. Sometimes, you won't and that's fine too. Your relationship with food, just like your relationship with your body, is an important part of this whole wellness equation. **M**

ALL PRODUCE IS GOOD PRODUCE, BUT HERE'S SOME TO TRY:

- All veggies are good, but make sure you always put some brassicas and greens into your cart, like broccoli, parsley, bok choy, kale, and cauliflower.
- Make extra space for anti-inflammatory aromatics such as onions, garlic, ginger, and turmeric.
- When you can, focus on higher-fibre and temperate fruit most often, such as apples, pears, and berries. Bananas, kiwis, and pineapple are excellent for their gut-soothing properties, and peaches and watermelon for their bacteria-boosting FODMAPs.
- Don't forget about frozen fruit and veggies. They are healthy and budget-friendly.
- Nuts and seeds are packed with fibre, minerals, and healthy fats. Always have two or three types on hand, such as cashews, almonds, pistachios, hemp hearts, and pumpkin seeds. Avoid sweetened trail mixes that are more candy than they are nuts.
- Whole, intact grains are tops for gut health. I find the high-chew grains, such as wheat berries, spelt, and barley, the most satisfying, but they contain gluten so they aren't for everyone. For gluten-free options, try buckwheat, gluten-free oats, and millet.
- Keep it 100 when it comes to prepared grains, such as 100 per cent sprouted grain breads, 100 per cent whole-grain traditionally fermented sourdough breads, and 100 per cent whole-grain crisp breads; 100 per cent whole-grain pastas (cooked al dente) also fit the bill.
- Plant protein is essential for a happy gut. Always have two or three legume options in your kitchen, such as chickpeas, tempeh, and lentils. Canned (no salt added) is convenient. Dried is more economical and typically has a nicer texture.
- Smoked tofu is a great ready-to-eat option, and pre-marinated tempeh saves time in the kitchen while boosting flavour.
- Chickpea flour is a great way to incorporate more protein and fibre into baked goods and is also an alternative for eggs.

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Cheesy Savoury Leek and Potato Soup

This simple, cozy recipe is perfect for the cold winter months

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HANNAH SUNDERANI**

Founder and creator of Two Spoons in Toronto, ON.

📍 [TWO SPOONS.CA](#) 📱 [TWO SPOONS](#)

This vegan cheesy leek and potato soup is a great seasonal meal: it's comforting, it's easy to make, it's packed with fall flavours, and of course, it is absolutely delicious!

Prep Time – 15 minutes

Cook Time – 35 minutes

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

Leek and Potato Soup

- 2 leeks
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil
- 3 potatoes, medium sized, chopped into chunks (500g)
- 3 cups water

Cheesy Cashew Cream Sauce

- ½ cup raw cashews soaked overnight, strained
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast
- ¾ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¾ tsp. apple cider vinegar
- ¾ tsp. cumin

Topping

- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds
- 1-2 Tbsp. fresh rosemary (optional)
- 1 tsp. coconut oil
- Pinch salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Chop the tough, dark green ends off leeks and discard, keeping the white and light green stems only. Then chop leeks into roughly 1-inch pieces and wash thoroughly. Add leeks to a large pot with coconut oil and bring to medium-high heat. Cook leeks, stirring often until soft and wilted (approx. 10 minutes).
2. Add chopped potatoes to pot and stir mixture until potatoes have softened slightly (approx. 10 minutes). Pour in water and simmer veg on low heat until potatoes are very soft and tender. (approx. 15 minutes).
3. While you are waiting for the potatoes to soften, make your Cashew Cheese Sauce. In a blender, add soaked cashews (strained), almond milk, garlic cloves, salt, nutritional yeast, Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar and cumin. Blend until smooth and creamy. Pour cheese sauce into a bowl or jug (as you will need the blender for the soup. No need to wash it out, however).
4. Add leek and potato soup to blender and blend until smooth. Then pour back into saucepan along with cheese sauce. Taste and adjust flavours if desired (adding more salt, or cumin, or apple cider vinegar for brightness, or water to thin). Keep on a low simmer until ready to serve.
5. Add coconut oil to a small skillet with pumpkin seeds, rosemary and a pinch of salt. Bring to medium-high heat and toast rosemary and pumpkin seeds until browned and perfumed, (approx. 3-5 minutes).
6. Divide leek and potato soup into bowls and top with fried rosemary and pumpkin seeds.


NOTE:

Be sure to wash leeks well as they hold a lot of dirt between the layers. I like to cut mine first and then give the pieces a thorough wash.

Cashew Cheese Sauce can be replaced with 1/2 can (200ml) canned coconut milk. But the cheese sauce makes it extra cheesy!

Soup will keep in the fridge for up to one week.

Nutrition facts per serving

Calories 374; protein 18 g; fat 16 g; carbs 42 g. 

Creamy Chickpea and Dumpling Soup

This comforting soup is vegan and made with simple ingredients

BY CAROLINE DOUCET 📷 COURTESY OF CAROLINE DOUCET

Caroline Doucet is a registered dietitian based in Kelowna, B.C. She has a private practice where she helps clients eat more plants and improve their relationship with food.

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Done in about 30 minutes, this is an easy delicious vegan substitute for the classic chicken and dumpling soup. It's packed with flavour from fresh herbs and garlic, then made creamy thanks to coconut milk. It's perfect for a light, yet comforting vegan dinner.

Prep Time – 15 minutes

Cook Time – 20 minutes

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

Soup

- 2 Tbsp. vegan butter
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 4 large garlic cloves, finely minced
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced or diced
- 2 medium celery stalks, diced
- ½ tsp. thyme, dry
- 1 tsp. summer savoury (or oregano)
- ½ tsp. turmeric, ground
- 1 tsp. salt
- 4 cups vegetable broth, unsalted
- 1 can coconut milk, light or regular
- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

Dumplings

- 1 cup all-purpose white flour, spoon and leveled
- ¾ cup oat milk
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the vegan butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and sauté for 5 minutes or until fragrant.
2. Add the carrots and celery and sauté for 1-2 minutes. Stir in the savory, thyme, turmeric and salt. Sauté for another 1-2 minutes.
3. Add the broth, coconut milk and chickpeas. Increase to high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-high and let it simmer for 10 minutes or until the vegetables are fork-tender.
4. Meanwhile, prepare the dumplings: add the ingredients in a small bowl and stir until combined.
5. Once the soup is done, spoon the dumpling dough into the soup, then cover and cook at medium heat for an additional 5 minutes or until the dumplings are cooked.
6. Serve immediately with pepper to taste. Enjoy!

NOTE:


Low-fat and high-fat coconut milk are both great options in this soup. High-fat will result in a creamier, richer soup, but might add a hint of coconut flavor.

If you dislike coconut, try using plain almond or oat milk instead of coconut milk. You'll need just a little under 2 cups.

If you can't find summer savoury, you can substitute it with oregano.

I tested this recipe with unsalted vegetable broth. If you're using regular or low-salt broth, start with less salt and add more to taste.

Nutrition facts per serving

Calories 517; protein 11 g; fat 26 g; carbs 60 g. 



Mushroom Udon Noodle Soup

A rich mushroom broth meets tofu, veggies and udon noodles in a flavourful, heart-warming soup

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NISHA VORA**

A vegan recipe developer, food blogger, and cookbook author in San Diego, CA. After graduating from Harvard Law School and working as a lawyer for four years, she exchanged her casebooks for cookbooks and launched her dream career.

📸 RAINBOWPLANTLIFE 📖 RAINBOW PLANT LIFE

This vegan soup is delicious, flavourful, and packed with umami.

Prep Time – 25 minutes

Cook Time – 35 minutes

Serves 4


INGREDIENTS

- 1 (14-oz.) block of firm tofu
- 1 oz. dried shiitake mushrooms or dried porcini mushrooms
- 8 oz. mixed fresh mushrooms, trimmed and sliced (reserve stems and scraps)
- 6 scallions, white and light green parts only, diced (extra scallions for garnish)
- ½ cup cilantro leaves
- 2 (4-inch) pieces of kombu
- 1 Tbsp. freshly minced ginger
- 2 Tbsp. thinly sliced lemongrass stalks
- 4 Tbsp. tamari (gluten-free soy sauce) or soy sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 oz. dried udon noodles
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 Tbsp. white miso paste
- Garnishes (optional): fresh scallions, thinly sliced; crushed red pepper flakes; sesame seeds; toasted sesame oil

DIRECTIONS

1. Press the tofu. Place the drained tofu on a cutting board lined with paper towels; place more paper towels on top of the tofu and weigh them down with a heavy cookbook or a heavy skillet filled with a few cans of beans. Let sit for at least 20 minutes to remove excess water.
2. Rehydrate the mushrooms. Place the dried mushrooms in a medium saucepan and cover with 6 cups of water. Let the mushrooms rest for 15 minutes until they have softened and rehydrated. Remove the mushrooms with a slotted spoon and leave the liquid in the saucepan. Slice the rehydrated mushrooms and set aside.
3. To the mushroom liquid in the saucepan, add the reserved fresh mushroom stems and scraps only, scallions, cilantro, kombu pieces, ginger, and lemongrass. Bring the broth to a boil and then reduce it to a gentle simmer and cook for 20 minutes.
4. After the mushroom broth has simmered, strain it through a fine mesh sieve and discard the solids. Return the broth to the saucepan and stir in the soy sauce. Taste for seasonings and add a pinch or two of salt, as needed.
5. While the broth is simmering, cook the udon noodles in a large soup pot or Dutch oven until the noodles are al dente. Drain the noodles and rinse well with cold water. Set aside at room temperature while you prepare the rest of the dish.
6. In the same pot used to cook the noodles, melt the coconut oil over medium-high heat. Add the garlic cloves and cook until fragrant but not yet browned, about 1 minute. Then add the sliced fresh mushrooms and cook for 4-5 minutes, until starting to soften. Season with salt and pepper to taste and cook for 1 more minute.
7. To the pot, add the reserved mushroom broth and bring it to a simmer. Add the rehydrated mushrooms, cooked udon noodles and diced tofu, and then whisk in the miso paste. Cook for 1-2 minutes until the noodles are loosened and the tofu is heated through.
8. Divide the noodle soup among four bowls and garnish with sliced scallions, crushed red pepper flakes, sesame seeds and sesame oil, if desired.

Nutrition facts per serving

Calories 405; protein 15 g; fat 8 g; carbs 70 g. 







Winter Vegetable Soup with Chickpeas & Wild Rice

Chickpeas and rice add protein to this simple and satisfying winter vegetable soup

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HEIDI RICHTER**

Food photographer and recipe developer on Vancouver Island, B.C.

@THE_SIMPLE_GREEN f THESIMPLEGREEN

Parsnips and celery seed create a subtle earthy sweetness in the broth, which makes this soup taste divine. Top with fresh parsley and serve with a slice of rye bread for a hearty comforting meal on any cold day. This winter vegetable soup is vegan and gluten-free.

Prep Time – 10 minutes

Cook Time – 35 minutes

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
 - 1 yellow onion, diced
 - 3 cloves garlic, chopped
 - 1 large carrot, diced
 - 1 stalk celery, diced
 - 1 medium parsnip, diced
 - 1 medium leek sliced, white part only
 - A good splash of sherry cooking wine or white wine
 - ½ cup wild rice, uncooked
 - ½ tsp. whole celery seed
 - 1 bay leaf
 - Sea salt & fresh black pepper to taste
 - 6 cups vegetable broth
 - 1 ½ cups cooked chickpeas
 - Fresh chopped parsley
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and allow to simmer for 30-35 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the rice is cooked. Stir in the chickpeas and season with salt and pepper to taste.
 4. Serve with a generous helping of chopped fresh parsley, spinach or kale.

NOTE:


Parsnip can be exchanged for either additional carrot or diced new potatoes.

Wild rice can be substituted for white or brown rice; however, cooking times will need to be adjusted to compensate. Use the package instructions for directions to estimate cooking times for your particular type of rice.

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the olive oil in a medium pot. Add the diced onion, garlic, carrot, celery, parsnip and leek and cook, stirring frequently, over medium-high heat, or until the vegetables are tender and slightly browned (about 5 minutes).
2. Deglaze the pot with a splash of sherry cooking wine. Stir in the wild rice, celery seed and bay leaf. Add the vegetable broth and stir to combine.

Nutrition facts per serving

Calories 287; protein 11 g; fat 8 g; carbs 38 g. 



Black Bean and Tomato Soup

with Toasted Fennel Seed

The combination of browned onion, fragrant fennel, tangy tomatoes, and hearty black beans is a match made in heaven

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ANNA PIPPUS**

Anna Pippus is the voice behind Easy Animal-Free, and is known for her casual, creative approach to health and flavourful vegan cooking. Anna was one of IMPACT Magazine's Top Vegan Influencers in 2017, and is based in Vancouver, B.C.

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Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 tsp. extra virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 1 ½ tsp. fennel seeds
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 (28 oz.) can tomatoes— crushed, diced, or whole peeled (squished) (see Note)
- 2 cups cooked black beans, including their cooking liquid (or sub ¾ cup water or stock)
- 1 ½-2 cups water or stock
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat a large pot over medium heat. Add the oil and fennel seeds. Sauté until the seeds turn brown.
2. Add the onion and a pinch of salt, stirring constantly until the onion comes up to temperature, to prevent them from sticking to the pan. Cook until the onion is soft and translucent.
3. Add the garlic, oregano, and bay leaves, and sauté until toasty and fragrant, about 30 seconds.
4. Add the tomatoes, beans, and 1 ½ cups water or stock. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Bring to a simmer and cook partially covered for at least 10 minutes to combine and deepen flavours. Add an additional ½ cup water or stock if the soup seems too thick for your liking.
6. Remove from the heat and remove the bay leaves. Taste and adjust for salt and pepper. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil if you'd like.
7. Refrigerate any leftovers in an airtight container for up to five days or freeze for up to three months.

NOTE:

Any type of canned tomato works here, and I use whatever I have. Crushed tomatoes make a smoother soup. Diced tomatoes add a little more texture. If I had to pick a favourite, it would be whole peeled: add them to the pot one by one, squishing them up in your clean hand as you do, before pouring in any remaining juice from the can. This creates a varied, slurpable texture, one I find absolutely delicious. Plus, squishing tomatoes in your hand is just fun.

I take a page from Indian cooking techniques and toast whole fennel seeds in a little oil before adding the onion to sauté. This simple step adds a world of flavour.

Nutrition facts per serving

Calories 212; fat 4 g; protein 9 g; carbs 35 g. 

Courtesy of The Vegan Family Cookbook by Anna Pippus / Penguin Random House © 2021 / Republished with permission.

Lifting Forgotten Voices

Angela Houle is doing the heavy lifting in her sport and community as the first female Indigenous athlete in Canada to earn her pro card at a strongwoman competition

BY MIKAILA KUKURUDZA 📷 JOEL KINGSTON

Runner, brunch enthusiast and co-founder of Colada Marketing Ltd. based in Toronto, ON.

📧 MIKAILAKUKURUDZA 📺 MIKAILA KUKURUDZA

Her alarm goes off at 4 a.m. It's time to start fueling her body with the 5,000 calories required for the grueling day ahead. For the last week, Angela Houle, 40, has had butterflies thinking about competing in the 2022 Strongman Corporation Canada Nationals in Thunder Bay, Ont. Equipped with her moccasins and a red handprint across her

face to represent Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, she ignores the nerves and heads out.

On the way, Houle reflects on how far she's come in five years. She thinks about her husband, four children ages eight through 16 and all her supporters from the Whitefish Lake Band #128, for whom she is about to lift.

Houle turned to fitness—first flipping tires outside—to escape her thoughts. “I suffered from postpartum depression and a lot of trauma from my residential school,” says Houle. “I picked up a weight and that saved my life.” She now trains five days a week, starting months before a competition.

As her lifts got heavier, her mental state became lighter. “I lift some of the heaviest weights I never thought I could lift in my life,” says Houle. And she truly means heavy—Houle lifts a 600-pound yoke, deadlifts 400 pounds and holds a national record for the axel press. “When we go into these types of competitions, mentally we have to prepare for a lot of these lifts because it could easily snap your back,” she says.

On Oct. 22, 2022, Houle was handed her pro card. With six sponsors already and invitations to some of the most prestigious competitions in the country and around the globe, Houle's platform continues to grow—and she has big plans for it.

An advocate for mental health and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Houle hopes her title of Canada's first Indigenous strongwoman to earn a pro card will only continue to amplify her message. “It just hits so close to home because our numbers are so high. In almost every family we know there's two or three women that have never been found,” Houle says. “I do it for them because they never made it home.”

Houle is currently training to compete at the 2023 Arnold Classic in March, and you can bet she'll be in red face paint and her moccasins, ready to lift the voices of those forgotten. 📺



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