

Personal Insights from the Old Pueblo Group

Sharing our world with you.

It's Just a Fitness Class!

In the Gym – Kristine A. Newman

I have always been extremely shy and it's one trait I absolutely do not like about myself. To emphasize, it was a painful level of shyness to the point that, as a child, that I would hide behind my mom if anyone tried to talk with me. I also acknowledge that my shyness has held me back in accomplishing and experiencing things in life. As I grew to an adult, and especially after having my own two kids, this was something I really wanted to improve on about myself.

After my youngest was born I really struggled to lose the baby weight. It wouldn't move and actually I gained more, every woman's nightmare! I needed a change. Once I was able to let go of the "Mom guilt" and started carving off time for myself, I decided to go to the gym. I had no clue what I was doing, and the weight area intimidated me so I stayed with the cardio machine (no surprise since I could be solo). After months of hiding out on the stationary bike, finally came the day that I decided to try group fitness. I remember feeling like a fish out of water, scared people would stare at me or giggle under their breath. I didn't want to feel judged that I didn't know what I was doing or looked awkward. Fortunately, this was not my experience in the slightest as people in the class were encouraging and so were the instructors. Week after week we all would notice everyone's accomplishments and were there to give high fives as goals were met. I was hooked on the environment.

When we moved to Tucson 7 years ago, I did not immediately sign up with a gym. Instead, I bought weight equipment and opted for home workouts finding videos on YouTube to give me that "group fitness" feel. One day I found a Les Mills BODYPUMP workout video and decided to give it a go as it was like a class I took before. Instant LOVE!!! It was filmed in a class like setting and all the instructors were so amazing and encouraging. There were three promotional videos on YouTube that I repeatedly followed until the company removed them and encouraged users to sign-up on the app. Can you guess what I did next? Yup, I signed up. There were so many different styles of classes to choose from, it was perfect. I did a variety of workouts five days a week for the next year until my husband and I decided to join a gym. We signed up at the local YMCA and I reluctantly canceled my on-demand subscription.

Over the next year, I attended some of the classes they offered, mostly cycling, and lifted with my husband. One day I was walking into my normal Saturday morning cycling class and saw a flyer for Les Mills BODYPUMP, the gym was adding this to their program...I was ecstatic! There I was in the very first class, excited to be in a live class and even more so that it was a BODYPUMP class! My husband on the other hand was bummed to lose his workout partner as I was busy attending as many classes as possible.

After just a few classes, I was approached by the Group Fitness Manager who asked me if I would consider becoming a certified instructor. They were in need of qualified trainers, and she liked how much I enjoyed the class. Well, I've never taught a class before, so I decided to investigate the process to see what was involved. But wait, I am super shy!!! It was at that point I made a choice to not let this hold me back, took a breath, and I

signed up. The training consisted of multiple full days of classes followed by practical application; of which you are assigned a track to present in class. I was freaking out. All my old anxieties about not knowing anyone, getting up in front of people without any real education on fitness training other than what I learned along my own fitness journey started to overwhelm me and self-doubt started to return. When it was my time to present my track, I swallowed my fear and just went for it 110%. I was shaking on the inside hoping no one would notice. After an eternity (more like 5 minutes) I got through it and received great feedback from the instructors. I passed my Initial training and was on to the next step for presenting a full hour class to become an instructor. Here is where it got hard for now I had to remember 10 tracks of about 5 minutes each. Yikes!

At first you ease into the program and co-teach with another certified instructor taking turns sharing the load. Having another trainer beside me really put me at ease as I felt the women mentoring me were truly amazing. Through their example and knowledge, they helped me develop my own teaching style and build the self confidence that I COULD do this. Of course, this high energy transformation didn't happen as soon as I passed my initial training. In the beginning, when I presented more than 1 track, my heart would pound, and knees would shake as those early classes really caused me to question what I was doing. What if I go completely blank? What if I can't teach? Then I reminded myself, all those harsh words in my mind were just noise and to instead focus on what I know. Slowly but surely, I found a way to turn the doubt off and utilize the positives and really started to shine as an instructor.

Now, when I tell people I am extremely shy they find it hard to believe me. I crack jokes and am a little quirky but that is my personality and I realized I need not be afraid to show it. I have even added an extra program and instruct cycling now. Group fitness allowed me to break the barrier of self-doubt even if I am my own worst critic about my performance. This is the beauty of group fitness; everyone is there for a reason whether it be to lose weight or just get stronger. Maybe it's a mom or dad who needs to find a little "me" time. Or perhaps it's best friends just spending time together. Whatever the reason is, we all have a story as to why we show up, and that's the whole point - to show up. I promise you no one is there to mock you. They are there to lift you up and celebrate your goals.



Kristine instructing a class

I want to end this story with a poem I came across from an unknown author. It really speaks to what group fitness is and means to its participants. Personally, it is simply AMAZING and has been one of the best experiences of my entire life! I am truly grateful that I took the leap and learned so much on how to be an instructor. It's more than just getting up there and telling people what exercises to do, it's how to connect with different types of people.

It's just a fitness class!

*4 walls, a floor and a roof.
A stereo and a beat.
Trainers and lycra.
Movement to music.
It's just a fitness class!*

*Things get built here -
Stronger bodies.
Fitter bodies.
Confident bodies.*

Things get broken here -

*Barriers.
Silence.
Sweat.
.....but it's just a fitness class!*

*Friendships are forged.
Community is created.
We rally together in the sad times.
We celebrate the good times.
.....but it's just a fitness class!*

We conquer our demons.

*We relieve our stress.
We quiet the voices in our heads.
We feel at home here.
.....but it's just a fitness class!*

*It's the date in our diary we never miss.
It's the time for us to be carefree.
It's the place where we can let go.
It's part of our lives.*

It's not just a fitness class.

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