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SPRINGFIELD PRESS

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

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TO YOUR HEALTH

Get back to boot camp basics

By Annie Linton, M.Ed.

Ten Hut! It's a new year and new fitness goals. Time to get down to basics! Basic Training that is. And what better way to get your attention is a fitness boot camp at Performance Fitness. Performance Fitness is a fitness company that provides in-home personal training, boot camp classes and kettle bell training on the Main Line and surrounding areas and is owned and operated by Fitness trainer Michelle Collier.

If you have never taken a boot camp class, and despite what you may think, I will first tell you that it is not about wearing fatigues, crawling under barb wire and being barked and spit at by a platoon sergeant.

Boot camp exercise is a voluntary type of group physical training basically designed to use your own body weight and a few other props to build strength and fitness through a variety of intense interval exercises over a period of 1 hour. It became popular in late 80s and early 90s. "Boot camp (at least the way we do it) is a good fit for many because it covers so many bases - strength, cardio, flexibility, and mobility," says Michelle.

My friend Dana and I arrived last Friday at 0930 hours and promptly were

given opportunity to get a mat and a jump rope and get ready for the class. Our Instructor Sandy Kirshner, who has been instructing classes for some time now, was using the 2015 workout. 20 of this and 15 of that. This particular class was held at the All Saints Church in Wynnewood at 9:30 am. Our class was small and intimate and everyone introduced themselves before we got started. "Our classes are the closest that you can get to personal training in a group setting. The class size isn't huge, so there's no hiding in our classes. My trainers get to know our clients, their histories, and their limitations. This means that our clients get attention, modifications, and form correction. While the workouts aren't designed for a particular individual, they are scalable (up or down) and are very user-friendly."

We started with six different exercises (mountain climber, prisoner squats, bear crawls, pushups, lunges and plank leg lifts) where the goal is to do as many sets as you can in 12 minutes, which is not that easy. In my younger days, I may have been able to do more, but I paced myself and allowed Sandy to teach me some modifications so not to overdo it my first time. Next we used a medicine ball for various triceps (back of upper arm) exercise, in addition

to wall sits and squat thrusts. Yikes! We were half way through at this point. After taking a well needed rest and drink of water, we worked on core (abdominal and low back muscles) for the next 12 minutes alternating with arm and leg exercises too. We then went on to 10 minutes of plyometric exercises that really worked the lower half of the body (jump squats, split squat jumps, burpees and box jumps too). We finished up the class with some breathing and stretching exercises. One full hour of exercise using very little equipment, and mostly our own body weight, really surprised me how intense this workout could be.

While many fitness centers offer boot camps, I asked Michelle what was unique about hers. "The feedback that we most often get is that our classes are challenging, but doable, and that our clients are friendly and welcoming. This culture is on purpose. It comes out of my experience as a group exercise participant. There's nothing like walking into a room packed with people (who all know each other) as the new guy who's feeling a little anxious, and having people "size you up", but not utter a welcoming word. This would never happen at Performance Fitness. Our clients know to introduce themselves by name



Members of the Boot Camp Class at Performance Fitness.

(in a non-creepy way) in order to make newbies feel relaxed and welcome. Otherwise, there's burpee punishment for our clients."

Performance fitness provides a variety of different classes and locations which you can check out on their website www.Performance-FitnessLLC.com. "We have classes six days a week and offer 16 classes per week. I have five trainers on staff plus myself."

So if you are looking for a new type of exercise to work all muscle groups, get in line and march! As always, if you have any medical concerns consult with your doctor before starting any exercise or boot camp class.

Contributor Annie Linton, M.Ed., is a Pediatric Clinical Exercise Physiologist at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, owner and program director for GrowingStronger, www.growingstronger.org. E-mail: growingstronger@comcast.net. She resides in Springfield.