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## Fitness tough love: Motivation the key to success at boot camps

By Suzanne Wintrob, For Postmedia News March 23, 2011

It's pitch black outside when George Evans dons several layers of clothing and leaves his condo in Vancouver's trendy Yaletown district. Braving rain, the 45-year-old walks along Nelson Street until he reaches the Cambie Street Bridge, where a small group of other Survivor Boot Camp enthusiasts awaits.

Their mission: to pump their bodies into tip-top shape before heading off to work.

Using the big city as their outdoor gym, they spend an hour running up stairs, squatting against walls and hanging from railings. Mondays they work on their upper body, Tuesday their legs and Wednesday their core. Thursday is reserved for a city run and Friday is devoted to circuit training using resistance bands and whatever equipment their instructor, Fred Masse, brings along. Sometimes they head to the Plaza of Nations to weave through the flag poles, getting strange looks from casino players enjoying a 6 a.m. smoke break. Masse pushes them hard and won't put up with laziness despite the ungodly hour.

While Evans doesn't love getting up so early, he's thrilled with the payoff. Three months into boot camp, the professional quantity surveyor with a sedentary desk job has lost four inches off his waist, his arm muscles are more defined and his legs are slimmer. He's a lot stronger and fitter than before he started, and his clothes feel much more comfortable "which is ultimately what counts," he says. At less than \$200 a month, he says it's cheaper than hiring a personal trainer. Add in the great friends he has made under that bridge and Evans is pleased as punch that he took up the boot camp challenge.

"If I had to do it myself I simply wouldn't," says Evans, who recently lost 30 pounds by learning to run and curbing his calories. "That's been my problem for years - self-motivation. Having someone to train with makes a big difference. It's a group thing. We have fun. We enjoy it. And it's a good laugh."

In winter and summer, rain or shine, Canadians are taking to boot camps at parks and community centres to buff their bodies.

Some are inspired by television's The Last 10 Pounds Boot Camp while others hope to tighten up for an impending Big Night Out or just get toned. Classes run the gamut from female-only groups led by young perky trainers to ex-military men barking commands at their fitness recruits. But whatever the boot camp style, the goal is to work the body hard and bask in the results.

"It's tough love [but] we're not yelling at people or calling them a schmuck," says Seana Wade, CEO of Survivor Boot Camp. "It's very motivating and encouraging."

Wade, 37, says she pioneered the outdoor boot camp concept in Canada back in 2003 when Masse taught the first outdoor class at Rocky Point Park in Port Moody, B.C. Today, Survivor Boot Camp has 115 franchised locations across the country offering six-week sessions that put people through an intense total body workout. Like other boot camps now on the market, cardio might involve power walking, running or stair and hill climbing, while upper and lower body work uses weights, rubber tubes, medicine balls, park benches or even monkey bars. Wade even tailors some classes to specific demographics, with 55+ boot

camps and weekend sessions for busy professionals.

Sammie Kennedy, whose all-female Booty Camp has 100 locations across Canada, says boot camps differ from gym classes in that there is much more variety, which leads to less boredom and tighter bodies. It's cross-training at its finest, where activities alternate so different muscle groups are worked at every session.

"Your body stays confused and you get way faster results than if you're just going to a dance or a kick-boxing or a weight training class," says Kennedy.

Boot camps can attract 20 to 100 people, with instructors offering tips to challenge different fitness levels. Firefighter Brandon Gaulden, owner of Hardcorp Fitness in St. Alberts, Alta., gives new recruits an army-style fitness test and then divides them into "units," with two ex-military instructors assigned to each "platoon." Women apply in greater numbers, he adds, yet both sexes get pushed to the max. Yet as Cpl. Mark Nadon, Ottawa district owner of Soldiers of Fitness, puts it: "We never leave a man behind."

Gaulden admits boot camps aren't a miraculous quick fix. Rather, being fit is a lifestyle and a lifelong commitment.

"You can't just come in for one month and expect miracles, but it's a kick-start to any fitness regimen," he says. "Our job is to make sure you finish. As instructors, we like to see results so come out and give it a try."

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