

Honoring Women in Fitness **Katherine Adamenko, CPT**

When I began my life in fitness, it was on the cusp of the female bodybuilding explosion and the very early beginnings of female fitness competitions. Only a few years earlier, pioneers like Rachel McClish and Gladys Portuguese were displaying their very buff and very muscular bodies around the country and wowing the world. When I began to bodybuild while in college in 1987, very quickly, the likes of Carla Dunlop, Diana Dennis, and Corey Everson were plastered all over my college room. Eight months later I won Ms. Rutgers, the largest collegiate bodybuilding competition in the nation at the time.

These female bodybuilding pioneers served as my early inspiration. Although I did not go on to pursue a career in bodybuilding, I did forever become hooked on weightlifting and the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. In thinking about this month's theme, I thought about the incredible women in my life – my friends, co-workers, and especially my personal training clients, who serve as my inspiration every day.

This article is dedicated to my best friend's mother, Arline, who unexpectedly passed away in February. Arline was not only like a second mom; she was one of the most incredible women I have ever met. She was a dedicated mother of three, who was also a small business owner who ran her own employment agency for nearly 30 years. And, Arline was a breast cancer survivor who swam, walked, and ran four marathons.

It is no surprise that her daughter has her same spirit and for the past few years, has trained for and completed the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, a 40 mile marathon over two days and has raised thousands of dollars in the process (for more information or to get involved, check out www.avonfoundation.org).

So to honor these wonderful warrior women, I have asked them answer one simple question: What does fitness mean to you? The answers speak for themselves.

To feel good. To look good. Period.

Anne T, 58, retired architect, painter and pianist.

Fitness takes a whole new meaning after surviving a five-year struggle with Lyme disease and Babesiosis (a form of malaria), which are autoimmune diseases. The diseases attacked my thyroid (weight gain), heart (blood pressure highs and lows), and the nerves in my brain were inflamed (memory loss). The doctor recommended Pilates. My weakened muscles, ragged nerves, and mental malaise were replaced with a stronger body, restored confidence, weight loss, and the joy of defeating the monster.

Lucille, 63, retired NYPD detective

This past year, I gave myself two gifts, one was to stop feeling guilty when I wasn't spending time with my kids and second was getting my body back into shape after having three kids close together (ages 5,4,2). When I get on my spin bike, I allow myself to forget everything and for 45 minutes I am just a woman on a bike, that's all I want to be. It's healing and challenging all at the same time. Through weights I have seen my body transform, its like dusting off the cobwebs and finding out what is underneath. I love my new muscles, they don't scare me and I feel amazing.

L.V. 35, stay at home mom of 3, spin junkie

Fitness means feeling good in my skin and full of life. It means covering ground and cutting through water with minimum effort and maximum speed. It means lungs full of air.

Charlotte T., 35, Plumber and mother of one.

Thank you ladies and to all those incredible women who have transformed their lives and the lives of those around them.

Katherine Adamenko is an elite certified personal trainer, fitness expert, award-winning bodybuilder, group fitness instructor, movement specialist with over 20 years combined experience in the dance and fitness industries. For more information please visit her website at www.Ironkat.com.

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