

Fall Into Line, Brides: Fitness boot camps will kick recruits into shape for the big day, but they aren't just for the to-be wed ~ By Candace Nelson

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By Candace Nelson

<http://intherail.wordpress.com/>

One of the hottest wedding trends is to get into rock-hard shape with pre-wedding boot camps. These programs can have you looking smokin' hot in your wedding photos, but for best life-long results, keep up with the program post-honeymoon, or start well before there's a ring on your finger.

Amy Vellinga, trainer at Babies 'N Brides Boot Camp in Utah, says her brides bring it. "They always work way harder than my other ladies because the date is ticking," she said.

She said her programs are tailored to meet the individual's goals. Most want to tone up and lose 15 to 20 pounds before their big day. Her plan is tweaked, depending on how soon the wedding day is. She gives clients with just weeks to go a clean diet plan and workouts to do at home and with her. She also offers training online through her website (babiesinbridesfitness.com) for those further away. But it takes work to get the results.

"I'm not too keen on having women start out slow especially because if they have a wedding date in the future, they don't have time to start out slow," she said.

Jennifer DiDonato, trainer at Brides Made Fit in Detroit, says brides respond well to her reminders of "honeymoon abs."

"From working with brides for over six years, I have seen that the commitment level in the beginning is much more solid than people who may not have a deadline as urgent," she said. "Brides-to-be tend to be more diligent with their day-to-day food choices and push themselves in their workouts."

But once the deadline passes, many brides don't come back. DiDonato said many brides stop post-wedding, but she calls the ones who continue an active lifestyle on their own, "the biggest reward." Vellinga also works with new moms, who she says are much more likely to continue fitness programs.

"I also focus on women who have given birth and they seem to make it a true lifestyle change whereas the brides are more of a temporary fix. I'd say about 10 percent of the brides continue, but 80 percent of the after-baby women keep coming," she said.

That said, some habits are easy to continue. "Most people who attend my camps realize that it's not that difficult to make healthier choices. They just have to learn the mind shift that takes place over the six-week period. They have reported to have more energy through eating healthier too," Vellinga said.

Vellinga's best advice is to take better care of your body and don't wait until a big deadline to get started.

"It shouldn't be about looking good for the big day. It should be about living longer," she said. "People who eat healthier and workout regularly end up looking better. It should just be a habit that you form and work into your day. You feel better, you look better, and you have more energy to take care of kids, work, etc. It only takes 30 to 45 minutes of working out plus a clean diet to look and feel great."

DiDonato dispels a few misconceptions: Spot training is a myth. Another myth is getting too bulky, she says. "With my training, I get my clients to not only focus on the workouts they do with me, but the workouts I assign them on their own, along with their nutrition plan. My focus is quality over quantity. My brides, just like all of my clients, learn to train their big muscle groups effectively to increase their strength, metabolism, energy, shape and posture. Goals can range from just having more energy to get through the stressful wedding planning to getting down a certain size or weight."

Jennifer Molina, from New York, is one of those women who decided to do something now. She enrolled in an eight-week boot camp at Equinox gym called ETC. She said the toughest part was the push-ups and working on her upper body strength.

"ETC was an eight-week session in which they took attendance, it was mandatory we attended three days a week or had the option to make up on the weekends," she said. "They took measurements at the beginning, photos, etc and then checked our progress after the eight weeks and gave us a celebratory party at the end."

Molina says the results were worth the work. She feels stronger and leaner. And yes, her push-ups got stronger, but she still feels she has work to do there.

Tiffany Royal, of Bremerton, Wash., committed to 5:45 a.m. boot camp sessions at her local Y.

"I prefer working out in the morning and it really makes a difference in how I feel during the day, versus when I don't go to class," she said.

Royal had been going to the gym, taking classes and hiking before boot camp, but she was looking to add something new to her routine. Still, she was surprised by how challenging it was.

"Basically, our class is nothing but push-ups, lunges, squats, ab work and sprints, in any and every possible way you can imagine," she said. "It kicked my butt. When I started, I could only do about 10 to 15 'real' push-ups (no knees on the ground). I set a goal for myself to get up to 22. Now, doing 22 push-ups is a piece of cake. After about six weeks of attending class, several of my classmates and I commented on how much stronger we felt."

She said the classes make her feel stronger and toned.

"I'm not a big person, 4-feet, 11 inches, and a few pounds on my frame make a huge difference in how I feel and how my clothes fit," she said. "Keeping off the 3 or 4 pounds the past six months has been a great result."

She was also surprised by how fun the class felt. Not only was she surrounded by like-minded people, but it felt like play – like recess or gym class.

"I'm jumping, pushing, moving, and running and I'm using balls, weights, mats, and resistance bands," she said. "I also think that because it's so early in the morning, we're not thinking about it and just doing it, so that makes it easier, too. But deep down, we all know that this movement makes us feel good."

The boot camp participants and trainers, alike, said classes work for all fitness levels, but they're called boot camp for a reason. They're tough. Participants get pushed. Some people respond well to that, others don't, but boot camps deliver results quickly.

Trainer DiDonato reminds that when starting a fitness program, find what works for you.

"If you don't like working out in a group – don't," she said. "If Zumba makes you feel clumsy, don't do it. If you like going to the track or you like Rollerblading, do it! Don't just blindly follow what others do or say because there is no one set program or method for everyone."

She also reminds that you don't have to dive in head-first – especially if you don't have deadline pressure. Start making healthy changes and be consistent with them.

"For instance, if you always eat fast-food at lunch, replace it with a healthier option that you can make at home," she said. "A complete overhaul too fast and too soon can overwhelm the client and make them feel worse about themselves."

DiDonato shares the secret to accomplishing: "Mental and emotional happiness is the key that leads you to having a healthy body. If that means not working out with certain people, waking up a tad early, investing some money, whatever it is – just know that if it is what makes you happy and keeps you committed, then that is a good sign that you will reach your goals."

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