



ALL TOGETHER *now*

Story | ANGELA AMBROSE

Most people start the new year with the best of intentions. They plan to start exercising regularly, yet about 80 percent of Americans fall short of that goal, says Neal Pire, owner of Inspire Training Systems and Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM).

A simple, but powerful way to stay committed to exercise is to work out in small groups that create a supportive, motivating environment, Pire says. With the ailing economy, group personal training and boot camps offer a low-cost, challenging and efficient way to get fit.

“We empower these small groups to lean on each other,” says Walter Thompson, Ph.D., Regents’ Professor of Kinesiology and Health at Georgia State University and spokesperson for ACSM. “For example, if one person calls and says, ‘I can’t make it today,’ the other person says, ‘Well, why can’t you make it today? We’re a team. We work

out together.’ So there’s some peer pressure that goes along with that, and it’s motivating.”

Boot camps are one of the hottest new trends, says Pire. “You pat each other on the back...everybody’s very positive, hooting and hollering and high-fiving each other. It becomes very much a social thing.”

Boot camps typically incorporate calisthenics, body weight exercises, sprints and plyometrics in a fast-paced environment.

People are also gravitating toward group fitness classes, from Zumba and strength training, to indoor cycling and yoga. These classes inject more excitement and variety into exercise routines and offer built-in opportunities to socialize. Working out in a group also provides a consistent schedule and increases the likelihood of having a skilled fitness instructor or trainer who can modify exercises to match a person’s abilities and help avoid injury.

As baby boomers enter retirement, they are also

increasingly turning to functional fitness classes that are tailored for older adults and emphasize strength, balance and activities of daily living.

“We want to strengthen the body and train the body so it does well outside of the gym,” says Lance Breger, president of Infinity Wellness Foundation and IDEA program director of the year. “This form of training allows us to be pain-free...and do everything that we want to do at any given moment.”

Functional training makes all aspects of life easier, from doing chores or taking a hike to playing ball with grandchildren.

“We need a multi-dimensional approach,” says Breger, who emphasizes the importance of creating a workout program that includes cardiovascular exercise, strength training, as well as flexibility and balance exercises. Varying the workouts helps stave off boredom and keeps people committed to their exercise program over the long haul.

MAKE IT STICK

To reap the full benefits of exercise, you need to make it a regular part of your schedule. Lance Breger, IDEA Health and Fitness Association program director of the year, offers simple ways to integrate exercise into your daily life:

- **Set short- and long-term goals.** “They need to be specific, measurable, attainable and time-oriented,” Breger says.
- **Share your goals.** Tell at least three other people, so they can offer support and keep you accountable.
- **Find activities you enjoy.** Choosing a sport, fitness class or activity you love will help keep you motivated.
- **Get professional guidance.** Hire a certified, experienced personal trainer or coach.
- **Create an incentive for yourself.** Reward yourself with a massage, new workout gear or clothes when you reach your monthly goal.