

Fun Fact of the Week

The Top 8 Fitness Trends for a Fitter 2018*

New ways to channel your inner athlete — and take your workout routine to the next level.

By Tiffany Ayuda

These days, your workout routine might not involve a big box gym. And if you're up on the latest fitness trends, it might look a little something like this: sled pushes and battle ropes before work, mindfulness meditation during your lunch break, and a cryotherapy appointment before dinner.

Because when it comes to wellness, it's more than just a routine; it's a lifestyle. And the numbers say it all: According to the Global Wellness Institute, the wellness industry is a \$3.7 trillion business. It grew 10.6 percent from 2013 to 2015, and is expected to grow 17 percent in the next five years.



But it's not just the feel-good effects of exercise that keep us coming back for more. It's also the appeal of training and living like an athlete. Pete McCall, MS, CSCS, former exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise and director of fitness programming for Vicore Fitness, says, "More people want the athlete experience and that's why we'll continue to see athletic-based training workouts."

That's right, people aren't just interested in working out like LeBron James. They want to eat and recover like him, too. So, if you, too, want to train like athlete, check out our list of the biggest fitness trends for 2018.

1. BOUTIQUE BOXING

Muhammad Ali fans aren't the only ones hopping in the ring to train "Thrilla in Manila" style these days. Celebs, models and everyday athletes are shuffling into new studios like Rumble, Everybody Fights and Box Union in impressive numbers. And when people can't hit a bag, they can do it at home with programs like Daily Burn's Undeclared kickboxing program. One reason boxing is the knock-out workout of the year? Sandy Todd Webster, editor in chief of the IDEA Fitness Journal, says, "We're all living with an incredible amount of stress in our lives and hitting a bag or throwing forceful air punches using the torque of our whole bodies is an amazing release!"

And since most boxing studios offer the experience of training like a true boxer with strength training and conditioning components in each class, you get the performance benefits, too. Rick Richey, MS, LMT, NASM-certified trainer, says, "Exercise can seem boring when only focusing on physiological outcomes, but sports conditioning classes provide us with performance-based outcomes that make the exercises more engaging and fun."

2. FUNCTIONAL TRAINING 2.0

While functional training is nothing new, McCall says there's going to be greater focus on enhancing strength in all planes of motion. Think about the daily activities, like pushing, pulling, lifting, bending and twisting, you do. "If you're going to live a healthy, active and injury-free life, functional training needs to be the baseline for everything else you do," Webster says.

Barbells have become more popular for functional training, but McCall thinks, "We'll see a re-birth in using medicine balls, resistance bands and plyometric training." On the other hand, Richey says since more educational courses and trainers are trending toward weightlifting modalities themselves, their clients and classes will soon follow. "There will likely be an uptick in weightlifting, Olympic lifting and kettlebell classes that focus on building strength." According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association 2017 report, the use of barbells rose 4.3 percent last year and kettlebells 3.2 percent.

3. REVVED-UP RECOVERY

Over the past decade, workouts like HIIT and CrossFit have encouraged us to dial up the intensity, but 2018 is going to be all about slowing down. “Instead of killing ourselves with extremely intense workouts seven days a week, we’ll see more intelligent programming that includes recovery,” McCall says. “High-intensity workouts are just one part of the equation for better performance. The other half is recovery,” he explains. But recovery goes beyond taking a 30-second water break in between circuits or supersets. Webster notes, “Recovery is multifaceted and includes taking short breaks from exercise, active rest, myofascial release, sleep...they’re all a huge part of overall health.”

4. GOING HOT...OR COLD

Speaking of chilling out between sweat sessions, cryotherapy is continuing to gain popularity for post-workout recovery. Proponents of cryotherapy believe that sub-freezing temps can help speed up muscle recovery and reduce inflammation by constricting blood vessels. Post-session, you should experience improved blood flow and less pain overall. “Cryotherapy is something you see more professional athletes who train at a high level doing,” McCall says, but with ClassPass offerings and flash sales, cryo appears to be making a cold dash for the mainstream.

Meanwhile, some fitness studios believe heat is a better way to relieve pain and reduce stress. Sky Ting yoga studio in New York City has a built-in infrared sauna, and the Fitting Room recently partnered with HigherDOSE to offer a sauna sesh post-workout. But are these recovery methods just a smoke show? Richey, who is opening his own recovery facility in early 2018, says, “There’s a lot of theoretical reasoning and rational, but little empirical research [about these recovery methods].” That will all change once science starts catching up with the trends, he says. “Research in fitness is often not pioneering. Research tries to measure, validate and quantify outcomes of what is already being done in the field.”

5. EXERCISE IN 3D

Basic, one-dimensional fitness classes won’t cut it in 2018. Studios are going immersive with their experiences. That means yoga studios with sound baths, and spin studios leveraging virtual reality into their classes. “Change and experimentation are inevitable in an industry with super creative minds, and necessary to keep offerings dynamic for exercisers who want to stay motivated through change,” Webster explains. These immersive experiences also provide perspective on how to use fitness to overcome life’s challenges. Webster says. “The instructor takes you on an amazing journey through imagery, storytelling, varied tempos and inspiring music.”



This year, we saw FlyWheel and ClassPass expand their businesses online with live streaming workouts, joining the likes of Daily Burn and Peloton. “I think this is the next generation of exercise DVDs. Some people just prefer to work out in the comfort of their own homes,” Webster says. McCall says this is also another way for trainers to connect with their clients when they can’t make it to the gym. “It will be interesting to see how people start to re-create a live experience. We’re going to see how technology can change fitness,” McCall says.

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7. MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Meditation hit it big in 2017. And it incorporated HIIT, too. Nike Master Trainer Holly Rilinger’s Lifted class, for instance, infuses a meditation pre- and post-workout. But McCall predicts meditation will be baked into other types of workouts in the new year. “We’re going to see mindful movement as part of strength training to improve cognitive function and mental acuity,” he says. Think: Workout apps and audio workouts with five-minute meditations. Webster says since we’re constantly glued to our screens, meditation can give us the headspace we need to truly focus on the push-up at hand. “If it’s five minutes before or after a class of guided meditation, it might be the only personal quiet time a person gets all day,” Webster says.

8. BREATH WORK

OK, now that we've learned how to be more present, what's the next step in fueling our workouts from within? That's where breathing classes come in. "Meditation classes may turn the corner this year and start offering breathing techniques," Richey says. The Valsalva maneuver is a method used in many weightlifting workouts. It involves taking a deep breath before lifting and holding that breath while you lift. At the release, you exhale. And if you're new to meditating altogether, perhaps simply sitting and breathing could be the first step.

"We are distracted by our screens and devices 24/7," Webster says. "Emphasis on being more present and mindful in our lives — for however long we can manage — is an important way to regroup with yourself."



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