

RIDE HIGH



PHOTO: ©ORBIKE

THE BRAIN HEALTH & HAPPINESS ISSUE

Happy hour

The science-backed way to market fitness

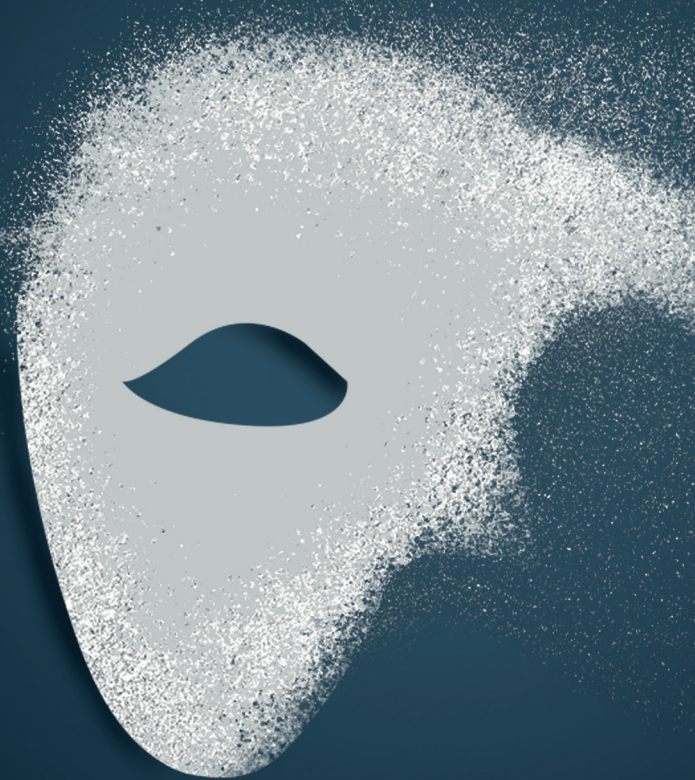
ILLUMINATING!

The power of light to inspire emotions

Switch the focus

Sell feelgood, not physical perfection

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All cycling lovers invited 

“Gyms remain hesitant to embrace this huge, happy opportunity to expand their reach. What are we waiting for?”



PROMOTING HAPPINESS

For as long as I can remember, the fitness sector has pushed a ‘no pain, no gain’ message of physical transformation; indoor cycling has arguably been among the sector’s worst culprits.

Could it be that mindsets are finally changing? From the conversations we’ve had for this edition of *RIDE HIGH*, it would seem so – among consumers at least.

On page 36, boutique operator and former IHRSA chair Carrie Kepple says the post-pandemic consumer is pushing back against physical perfection, and that it will hurt our sector if we continue to sell it.

“This isn’t about making workouts easy,” she explains. “It’s about helping people find instant joy and reward in the effort itself.”

There’s a similar theme in ‘Happy Hour’ (page 40), where leading experts discuss the almost immediate mental and emotional benefits of exercise. Their suggestion: that happiness and improved energy – how you feel – should be the focus of our marketing.

If this all sounds rather familiar, it should. This isn’t new news.

It was in 2014 that London-based Psyche launched to the world, its brand defined by the mental and spiritual connotations of ‘psy’. (For the latest news from Psyche, see page 6.)

Journalist and *RIDE HIGH* contributor Kate Cracknell tells me she first wrote about this topic in that same year. In one of her 2014 thought leadership pieces

– entitled *The feelgood factor* – she commented: “Quite simply, exercise makes you feel good: happier, less stressed, more alive, more energetic. This is a very compelling, instant benefit that gyms and studios should absolutely be harnessing in their marketing.”

In another, she noted: “Focusing on the immediacy of how people feel straight after their workout will keep them coming back for more.”

And there’s data to prove it, she adds: “It was over 10 years ago that research by Michelle Segar, published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, showed how those motivated by quality of daily life – lower stress, better sleep, increased vitality and so on – exercised 34 per cent more than people with weight- or appearance-based goals.”

Yet all these years on, gyms remain hesitant to embrace this huge, happy opportunity to expand their reach with an inclusive, encouraging message.

My question: What are we waiting for? I hope this edition of *RIDE HIGH* further fuels the conversation, and I welcome your views.

Uffe A. Olesen
CEO, Body Bike International A/S

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PHOTO: ©SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDAS CREATIVITY

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The CEO of Psycle outlines plans to scale the brand in the London market as a springboard to growth across the UK and beyond.

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If consumers no longer seek physical perfection, we have to stop selling it, says Carrie Kepple, owner of Styles Studio Fitness and former IHRSA chair.

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Exercise has scientifically proven benefits for brain health and happiness, and they come far quicker than physical results. So, are we marketing fitness all wrong?

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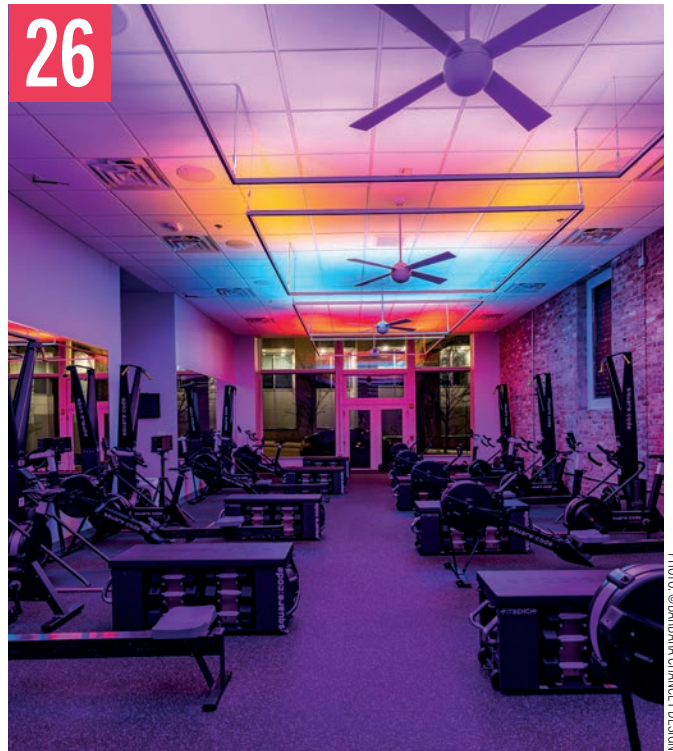


PHOTO: ©BARBARA CHANCEY/DESIGN

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As BODY BIKE marks its 27th birthday, its CEO celebrates his own milestone of 20 years with the company. He takes a walk down memory lane.

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From creating an online class for her mum, to full-time content creation and a community that's hundreds of thousands strong – Kaleigh Cohen shares her story.

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PHOTO: @SPORTENGLAND

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PHOTO: @BOOM CYCLE

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CONTENT & CONTRIBUTIONS

Do you have a great indoor cycling story you'd like to share? From studio successes to new innovations – and everything in between – we're keen to showcase best practice in indoor cycling from around the world. If there are any topics you think we should cover, please let us know!

ALL IDEAS ARE WELCOME – info@ridehighmagazine.com

LONG READ
WHOLE
STORY



Above: David Watt joined Psycle in 2017, the year it introduced three new concepts

DAVID WATT

As Psycle celebrates its 10th birthday, its CEO outlines plans to scale the brand in the London market as a springboard to growth across the UK and beyond. He speaks to Kate Cracknell.

Tell us about the ‘psy’ of Psycle.

Psycle launched in 2014 with an ambition to get people hooked on the transformative power of movement. There are no metrics, no scoreboards, no focus on weight loss or calorie count. Just encouragement to come to class, move your body, get lost in the music and free your mind. It’s all about how our classes make you feel.

Our fundamental belief: that the state of people’s health has a direct influence on how they feel, that how they feel determines the attitude and energy they bring to their lives – and that within this pathway to happiness, exercise and movement have a big part to play.

It’s a judgement-free approach that’s won Psycle a loyal customer base over the last 10 years.

How does this approach translate to your cycling classes?

Our programming has always been about putting aside inhibitions and losing yourself to the movement and the music. You will be challenged physically, but you’ll be immersed in the shared rhythm of the class, focused on gratitude for your body and your life, and the endorphins will flow.

We also embed a consciously meditative moment around three-quarters of the way through class. Coming straight after a high-exertion track, riders are in exactly the right frame of mind to switch off mentally and zone in to the rhythm of the music and/or the instructor’s voice.

“Obviously ‘Psycle’ immediately says ‘cycling,’ but we don’t want to rebrand. We’re proud of what we stand for.”

Below: Lose yourself in the music of Psycle’s indoor cycling classes





- ▶ And in fact, the 'psy' element starts even before class, with our instructors spending up to five minutes welcoming people, dismissing preconceptions and sharing the Psytle ethos.

When we launched, our mind-music-movement connection was a real USP. It's less so now as more operators embrace this thinking, but I believe we still bring it to another level through our relentless focus, with regular check-ins and instructor workshops ensuring it's embedded in every class.

The result is an uplifting, high-energy, addictive product that's also low-impact, lending itself to high frequency. When

you combine that with the community we've created and the ability to get everything in one place, I'm confident ours is a product with longevity.

Everything in one place – how so?

Psytle started out as an indoor cycling brand, but in 2017 – the year I joined the company – it added three additional concepts to its roster: strength (HIIT), barre and yoga. In 2018, we also launched memberships and a benefits package to encourage people to commit and take part in more than one concept.



Above (both images): Ride is Psyche's north star, available in all five locations and enjoyed by 85% of customers

Left: All Psyche instructors are trained at least quarterly, with a big focus on musicality and authenticity

Ride remains our north star, available in all five Psyche locations and enjoyed by 85 per cent of our customers. However, we recognise that there's no one perfect workout, and that a rounded approach to training is critical to a healthy body and mind.

Where we have bigger spaces, we've therefore introduced additional studios and rolled out concepts that match the demographics of the local market. Of course, this also allows the business to maximise its commercial potential by utilising all available space. ▶

“We're looking to open a couple of single-discipline locations where we already have Psyche communities.”



Above (all images): Psycle's five locations offer site-specific combinations of five products, including Barre and Reformer

- ▶ Sadly, demand for yoga was impacted significantly by the pandemic, exacerbated by an ongoing abundance of content available for free online. We do still offer 1.5 days of yoga each week, but have also introduced a fifth concept – reformer pilates – in response to community demand. Since COVID, we've realised we need to be in-tune with customer wishes in a way boutiques didn't really have to be in the pre-COVID boom years.

Can you credibly diversify with the name 'Psycle'?

Obviously 'Psycle' immediately says 'cycling', but we don't want to rebrand. We're proud of what we stand for. If anything, with mental health an increasingly hot topic, we want to go further in telling our story and explaining our ethos.

“Consolidation under one brand is the way to achieve scale... We're looking to invest in businesses with ready-made communities.”

But we do now have five different products, so we are considering a reorganisation of the words we use. Rather than sitting five programmes – Ride, Reformer, Barre, HIIT and Yoga – under the Psycle banner, we may shift to ‘Reformer by Psycle’, ‘Barre by Psycle’ and so on. In this way, we take our brand credibility with us, but with more clarity around our expanded roster of classes.

What’s next for Psycle?

We’ve experienced good momentum since COVID, with consistent profitability, which is pleasing.

Customer experience is now high on our agenda. We’re looking to upgrade our communal spaces to make people feel more luxuriously welcome, creating environments that nurture our community. We’re also exploring benefits and partnerships to further enhance the customer journey and encourage even longer-lasting relationships.

Meanwhile, we’re looking at opportunities to open a couple of single-discipline locations where we already have Psycle communities – where there’s scope to complement our existing offerings for an already-engaged audience. These will not be focused on indoor cycling, as we’ll be opening them in areas where we already offer Ride. ▶

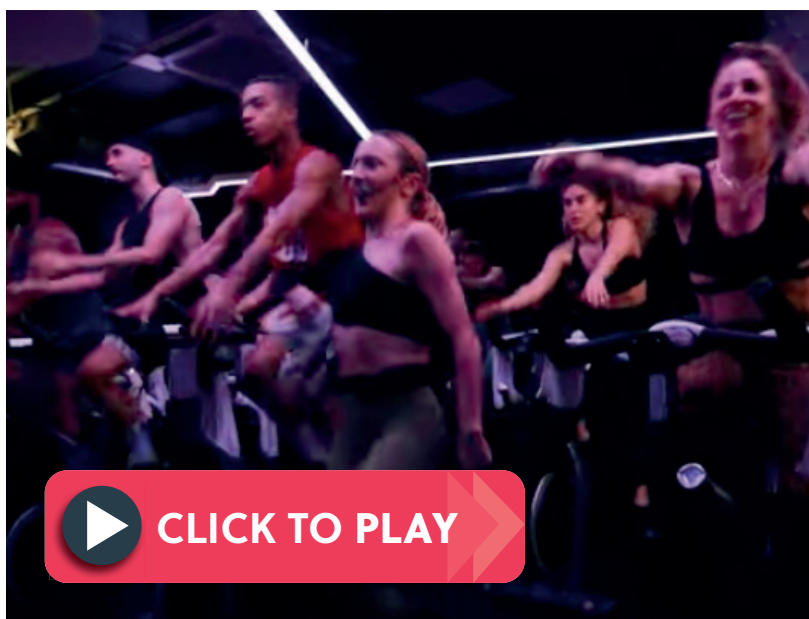
A BEST-IN-CLASS TEAM

“People send us audition videos all the time,” says Psycle CEO David Watt. “When we’re looking to recruit, we use these to create a shortlist of candidates – usually around 15–20 people – who we invite to an eight- to 12-week Psycle Academy. We pay them to take part: it’s quite intensive, which we appreciate impacts their ability to earn elsewhere.

“Some people drop out along the way as they realise they lack the right skillset, but we usually end up with around 15 potentials from which we select between five and eight – depending on the needs of the business – to take part in auditions and rehearsal rides.

“Here, we’re looking at things like the environment they create, the way they welcome people, their ability to inspire a mental and physical response in class. Musicality and authenticity are also key, and figure highly in our ongoing training once people join our team; we train instructors across every discipline at least once a quarter.

“We also send our more senior instructors around the world to guest instruct at other studios. Over the years, we’ve realised we benefit far more than we risk: this level of exposure doesn’t jeopardise our special sauce, and our team is hugely energised by it.”



Left: Psycle doesn’t focus on the data in class, but on the feelgood factor. Watch the video now!



Above: Psytle launched strength (HIIT) classes in 2017, to complement Ride

“Pre-COVID, there were too many operators charging premium prices for average products. There is no space for that now.”

► In the future though, even in new locations, we may launch multi-concept studios without indoor cycling. With the cost and complexity of creating a Ride studio – we’re talking over £1m – there are only limited locations in and around Greater London where it’s really viable. Running costs also mean we need 1,000+ bodies on bikes each week just to break even.

Add to that the fact we burned so much money during COVID, and the lack of access to capital right now, and we need to be flexible in how we scale.

What are your plans to scale?

We’ve identified three sites in London that could support multi-studio locations with Ride, and another eight to 10 that could support

non-Ride studios – that is, offering site-specific combinations of our four other concepts. After that, we’ll start to look at the white space beyond London, in big cities across the UK.

Looking ahead five years, I’d also like to be in key cities in Europe and Asia, ideally with a local partner but still in control of the brand and the product.

But all of this will only happen if we reach the sort of scale in London that unlocks access to capital; 10+ clubs is the point at which we believe private equity will be interested.

I believe consolidation under one brand is the way to achieve that scale.

A large number of small operators are running on survival right now, unable to invest in their people or consistently



Psycle recently launched reformer pilates in response to community demand



Above: Demand for yoga was impacted by the pandemic, but Psycle still offers 1.5 days a week



“We don’t see ClassPass as a discounting tool. In fact, it’s where we drive our highest yield.”

- ▶ deliver a good enough product. They simply aren’t long-term viable, and in this challenging market, there are few options to turn that around.

This is how we’re looking to scale Psycle, without being aggressive or underhand. We’re looking to invest in businesses with ready-made communities, where the current owners don’t have the funds they need to uplift the product, regain price appreciation and become long-term viable. We’ll invest, become owner and majority stakeholder, put Psycle above the door, bring in our programming and infrastructure, and offer earn-out opportunities.

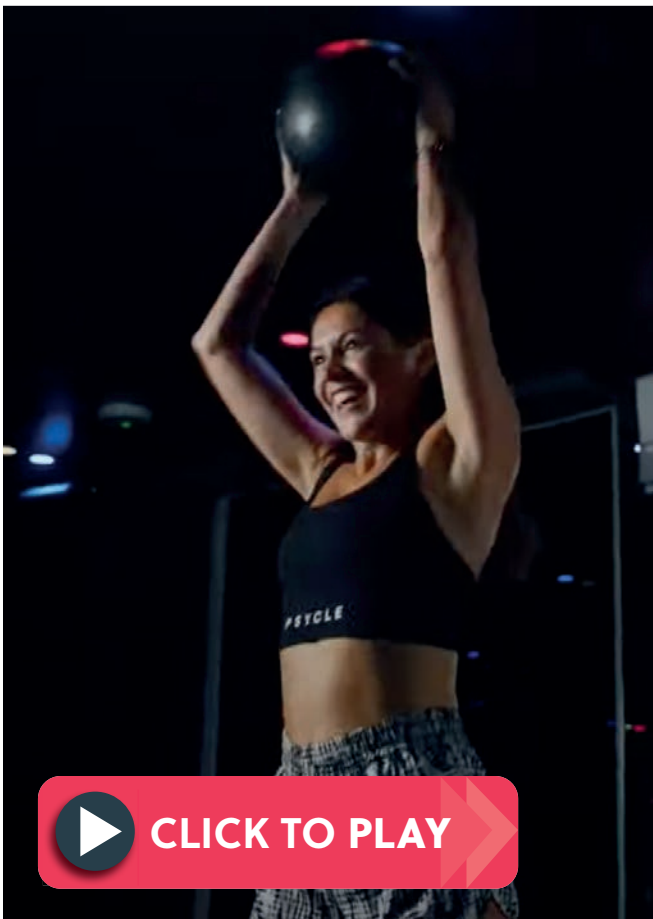
How is the London boutique market post-COVID?

This is a hard business. Many people perceive boutiques to be highly cash-generative, but costs are high if you want the best staff, the best facilities, and to offer great instructor training and development (see box out, page 11). You must be committed to a relentless pursuit of class excellence – and even then, there’s no guarantee of success.

In fact, it’s even harder now than pre-COVID, with ever-increasing rents, rates and service charges alongside consumer behaviours that have fundamentally changed. It’s super-positive for Psycle that the majority of the people who used to train with us still do, but they’re coming 40 per cent less often due to changing working patterns and the ongoing impact of working from home.

The cost of living crisis is another factor. We’ve seen customers move to lower-frequency products and have introduced a new lower-frequency membership tier to allow for this. We’ve also introduced an under-27s membership, targeting younger customers on lower incomes who used to come more often than they do now.

But product quality must still be consistently high. Pre-COVID, I would argue that there were too many operators charging premium prices for average products. There is no space for that now. ▶



Far left: Boutiques must be committed to a relentless pursuit of excellence, says Watt

Left: Get a taste of all five Psycle products in this high-energy video – click now!

“Many smaller operators are leaning on deep discounting to drive footfall at any cost. It’s devaluing what boutique stands for.”



Above: Psyscle uses ClassPass strategically, to fill spots that would otherwise not be filled



► The problem is, as market conditions bite and the number of boutique operators continues to contract, things are going the other way. The sector is now dominated by a handful of multi-site brands alongside ClassPass-led, one-stop shops that are driving prices to the floor. They're devaluing the product to the point that audiences are unsure what 'boutique' really means.

Doesn't Psyche use ClassPass?

Since COVID, yes, and actually we really like it: it helps us fill spots that would otherwise not be filled. We allocate the inventory we want, manipulating demand and supply to add footfall across all studios and times.

We don't see ClassPass as a discounting tool, though. In fact, it's where we drive our highest yield.

The cheapest way to enjoy Psyche is always through our own credit packs and memberships, meaning direct-to-Psyche customers continue to make up the

majority of our attendance. What ClassPass does is unlock an audience we might traditionally have missed – people who enjoy the flexibility of picking and choosing from a variety of studios and concepts.

The point is, the discounting issue isn't because of ClassPass. It's because of the prevailing mindset in the market. Many smaller operators are now very short-termist, leaning on deep discounting to drive footfall at any cost. It's devaluing what boutique stands for, and it's only getting worse.

Boutique is about beautiful spaces, great service, best-in-class instructors and delivering consistently high-quality classes – but it gets increasingly hard to deliver that when there's so much discounting going on. The sooner we stop the downward price spiral, the sooner we'll all feel we're building sustainable businesses. ●

Above: Products may be rebranded slightly, to become 'Barre by Psyche', for example

 @psycelelondon

Buddying can be a good option, encouraging older people to take their first steps into activity



PHOTO: © SHUTTERSTOCK/NDAB CREATIVITY

A close-up photograph of a person's hands gripping the black handlebars of a stationary exercise bike. The bike has a silver frame and black adjustment knobs. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a brick wall and a white wall.

LONG READ
WHOLE
STORY

LIFE

CYCLE

Indoor cycling can be hugely beneficial as we age. Our panel of experts discuss the science, the secrets of engaging older people, and why our sector must embrace this agenda.

A CALL TO ACTION

David Stalker

President, EuropeActive | Group CEO, Myzone

As we emerged from COVID, our sector was suddenly presented with a new opportunity: the chance to be health delivery partners. This has the potential to transform our industry, but only if we make it our foremost objective and embrace the opportunity wholeheartedly.

We can't pick and choose which elements of health to focus on. We can't just deliver to the already-healthy, which is pretty much what we've always done as a sector. We have to open up to the wider population. We have to look for the people we can influence. And the biggest group where we can make the biggest difference is the older population, because most of the things that are wrong with them – physically, mentally, emotionally – are purely age-related.

Medication is helping us all live longer, but not necessarily in good health: we have years of being infirm, alive but not enjoying life, home alone and lonely. Our sector is uniquely positioned to change this for the better, and I believe we are morally obliged to do so, but so far we aren't stepping up to this responsibility.

In most cases, we're failing to look at how we can serve this enormous population even within our existing accessible facilities: swimming pools, indoor cycling studios, even elements of the gym floor if only we'd stop making them so intimidating.



Above: "Forget your old model and your short-term focus," urges Stalker



As health partners, we can't pick and choose which elements of health to focus on. We have to look for the people we can influence.



PHOTO: ©SHUTTERSTOCK/SABRINA BRACHER.JPG

Above: "More than any other group, older people seek community. We can create that."

Honestly, now aged 60, even I find the big functional spaces intimidating, and I don't see anyone else my age at the gym.

New programming will be key to changing this. We can also take our increasingly highly-qualified staff out to the community centres where older people are. More than any other group, older people seek community. We can create that. We have a social duty to do so.

Yet many operators tell me 'that doesn't work in our business'. My answer: it does and it must. Forget your old model and your short-term focus. Forget doing things only for commercial benefit. Do things because they'll make a difference to people's lives.

Of course, I'm not so naïve as to suggest a business doesn't have to think about its finances. Even if we make nothing financially from serving the older generations, we will benefit commercially if they enjoy it and tell their families. We will create and

own a new community, and our reward will be the community's response.

Yet even this is to ignore the big picture: the unprecedented opportunity that comes with moving away from the same-old penetration and retention rates to become health delivery partners. This isn't a philanthropic gesture. Quite frankly, every operator's balance sheet will be blown out of the water if we do this properly.

But these opportunities will only come if we stop asking 'what's the commercial opportunity?' and start asking 'what's the right thing to do?' The right thing will result in a happier country, a happier state, happier businesses, happier people, better retention and a bigger market.

We are part of this solution and we must own it with absolute passion and duty. ▶

 @europe_active

MINDSET & MOTIVATIONS



Dr Lou Atkinson

Schwinn master trainer | Behavioural scientist

There's good research around the barriers and facilitators of physical activity for older people, and although there's no universal definition of what 'older' actually means, most research is based on adults aged 65+.

Safety concerns are the biggest barrier for this group: not only the fear of doing themselves harm during the activity itself, but also concerns about safely getting to and from the venue.

Indoor cycling is a great solution provided it's marketed correctly, showing it doesn't have to be hardcore – that it's an achievable, low-impact activity that's completely and instantly adaptable to all levels, with a simple movement pattern that's easy to learn.

It's also seated, but won't upset the young-at-heart in a way that being offered chair aerobics might.

Falls risk can be further minimised by lighting the studio so people can see what they're doing, especially before and after class when they're walking around; keeping the space free of trip hazards; and positioning bikes far enough apart that there are walkways. Some community providers might even consider offering transport to and from the club.

When it comes to facilitators, the social aspect is key; in a population where loneliness and isolation are big issues, physical activity is as much about being with other people as it is about fitness.

This plays to the strengths of group exercise, but note that the social aspect won't happen automatically. Instructors must be keenly aware of this agenda and encourage interaction in a non-pressured way, getting to know participants to help them get to know each other. Instructors must also step back from being the star of the show: you won't create a community if the class is focused on one person and communication is one-way.

Buddying can be a good option, introducing newcomers to well-matched individuals in class, as can post-class coffees, out-of-class

Above: Atkinson: "A social agenda unites everyone"

Below: Trainers must step back from being the star to focus on members



PHOTO: © SHUTTERSTOCK/ROBERT KNIESCHKE



Above: Many regulars in Atkinson's cycling classes are aged 50+, with some in their late 60s and 70s

activities, online communities and WhatsApp groups. If digital classes are offered – a great way to break down initial nervousness among tech-savvy older generations and cater for those physically unable to attend in-person – use camera angles that show participants as well as the instructor.

A few other thoughts... Many regulars in my classes are aged 50+, with several in their late 60s and 70s, and they have a lower tolerance for loud music. This doesn't mean they just want old music, though: it's important to ask about musical preferences and offer variety. Many also use reading glasses which they won't wear in class, making it harder to rely on console data; coaching becomes more verbal, so it's more important than ever that your voice can be heard above the music.

Last but absolutely not least, do not make assumptions based on age. Many older adults have been active all their lives, are fitter than many 40-year-olds and just want to continue with the activities they've always loved, just with a few modifications. Patronise at your peril!

I've certainly never been a fan of the 'this class is specifically for this group / this purpose' approach. Indoor cycling is so adaptable in the moment that every class is for everyone. Even as they age, regulars may well keep going to the classes they've always done.



*Do not make assumptions
based on age. Many
older adults have been
active all their lives.
Patronise at your peril!*

But as I say, there are preconceptions to address among those who haven't done indoor cycling before, especially if they've been nudged towards exercise by a health diagnosis and are nervous about the safety of taking part. My advice: take the pressure off by marketing around fun, social interaction and quality of life – living better for longer. There will still be different fitness levels in class, but the social agenda will unite everyone. ▶

 @getmefitlou

SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN



Above: Callow has a long-standing interest in healthier cognitive ageing

Daniel Callow, PhD

*Postdoctoral research fellow,
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine*

As a postdoctoral research fellow at Johns Hopkins, I'm currently exploring the impact of sleep and physical activity for healthier neurocognitive ageing, with a view to creating multi-domain lifestyle interventions for older people.

My interest in this field goes back years: I studied kinesiology as an undergraduate and did my PhD in cognitive neuroscience, in both cases focusing on exercise as a way to promote healthier ageing, and in particular cognitive ageing.

For my PhD, I became very interested in neuroimaging: using MRI scanners to look at the structure and function of the brain. I wanted to provide objective evidence of how exercise can support brain health in older adults and delay or prevent cognitive decline and dementia progression.

Most research into cognitive and mental health among older adults focuses on aerobic exercise – my dissertation included. It was based on a set of three acute exercise studies, 'acute' meaning the impact of a single session of activity. All three studies involved getting older people into the lab and onto a stationary bike, some days being sedentary, other days cycling for 30 minutes at moderate to vigorous intensity. We'd then do cognitive tests and neuroimaging.

In fact, indoor cycling is often used when researching the impact of acute exercise on

the brain and mental health. As scientists, we want to control as many factors and variables as possible, and a stationary bike is an accessible way to deliver the right sort of aerobic workout in a lab environment.

But why aerobic activity? There's a lot of research linking cardiovascular health with brain health, and it makes sense: your brain is one of the most metabolically active organs in the body, and it's the cardiovascular system that brings it the ingredients it needs to produce energy – oxygen in particular. If you start to have



All cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for the brain as we age, but indoor cycling is an accessible option that also brings strength benefits

Right: A single session of aerobic activity can benefit executive function in older adults

issues with your cardiovascular system, it may not be able to provide those resources adequately to the brain. This could be one of the causes of age- or neurodegenerative-related cognitive decline, as well as mental health problems.

All cardiovascular exercise is therefore beneficial for the brain as we age: it doesn't have to be indoor cycling. However, stationary cycling is an accessible option that also brings strength benefits, making it attractive to older people who need to minimise the load on their joints, for example, or whose gait/mobility issues make walking unsafe.

In our research, we looked at the hippocampus specifically – a small area of the brain that's crucial for memory. It's also the part of the brain that deteriorates first, shrinking by 1–2 per cent a year in normal ageing among less active older adults.

Importantly, studies suggest this decline can be delayed or prevented through regular aerobic exercise: the hippocampus is one of only two regions of the brain capable of producing new neurons throughout the lifespan, and studies suggest exercise to improve the cardiovascular system may directly support and benefit the hippocampal region.

Meanwhile, a lot of previous evidence shows how a single session of activity can be beneficial for executive function, especially among older adults – executive function being the higher-level cognitive skills that generally decline with age. There's also evidence around the benefits of exercise for depression and anxiety, although my own work is less focused on this area.



PHOTO: @RIBIKE

Put it all together, however, and there's clearly a strong body of evidence highlighting the mental and neurocognitive benefits of indoor cycling, not only in the lab, but as an accessible way to exercise our cardiovascular systems as we age. ●

 @johnshopkinsu

STUDIO DESIGN



The power **OF LIGHT**

Profound experiences can be achieved when illumination is combined with movement, music and motivation, says fitness studio design expert Barbara Chancey





CLICK TO PLAY

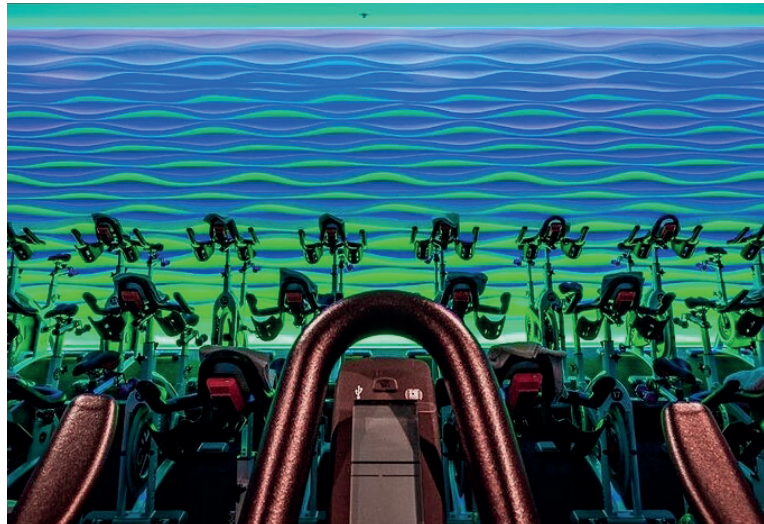
Lighting, when used correctly, has the power to create specific moods, trigger deep emotional responses, improve physical comfort and enhance mental wellbeing. Today's fitness culture is tapping into this psychological dimension, combining illumination techniques to create flow and develop the right mood within each space and class.

When instructors need a high-energy vibe to get the party started, a dazzle of kinetic lighting surrounding sweaty bodies can be a euphoric experience. But when a song or its lyrics need to shine through for inward reflection, flashing colours become a distraction; calm, subdued lighting is more effective for contemplation.

Like a musical performance, changes in brightness, colour and texture can also be used to mark pivotal moments in a workout, creating lasting memories; it's hugely powerful when lighting and sound work in harmony during a class. Note, however, that there's a thin line between entertainment and exercise. If lighting is used only to glorify the instructor, it becomes a superficial show and often defeats the purpose. ▶

“Brightness, colour and texture can mark pivotal moments in a workout; it’s hugely powerful when lighting and sound work in harmony”

PHOTOS: ©BARBARA CHANCEY DESIGN



Top left: At Shine Cycle in Brunei, the brief was to create a sense of radiant joy

Bottom left: Triumph Studios in Indiana has 7,000sq ft of “extraordinary illumination”

Right (all images): When used correctly, lighting has the power to trigger deep emotional responses, says Chancey



► **Brand-specific lighting**

At Barbara Chancey Design, our approach to fitness lighting starts with understanding the brand's core beliefs and determining how lighting can help elevate its messaging: while soft candlelight is effective for some fitness brands, others require immersive and glamorous nightclub vibes. We peel back the layers to discover what makes a workout experience deserve a place in the hearts of members.

We also do a lot of behavioural thinking to design versatile, reliable, easy-to-operate systems that provide instructors with tools for unlimited creativity. It requires an

enormous amount of thought during the design phase to create a hardwired system where instructors can unleash their creative talent at the push of a button, and where future needs have also been brainstormed upfront to maximise investment.

Our team includes British-born Daryl Vaughan, an international lighting designer who toured with legendary rock musicians including Genesis, Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones. In the fitness sector, he now works exclusively for clients of Barbara Chancey Design.

Vaughan explains: "When it comes to lighting, you obviously need to know



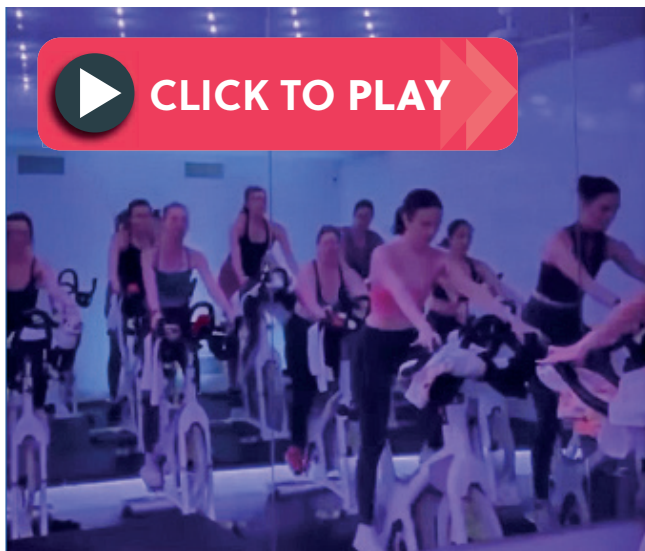


PHOTO: @BARBARA_CHANCEYDESIGN



PHOTO: @BARBARA_CHANCEYDESIGN

“Our approach starts with understanding the brand’s core beliefs and determining how lighting can elevate its messaging”



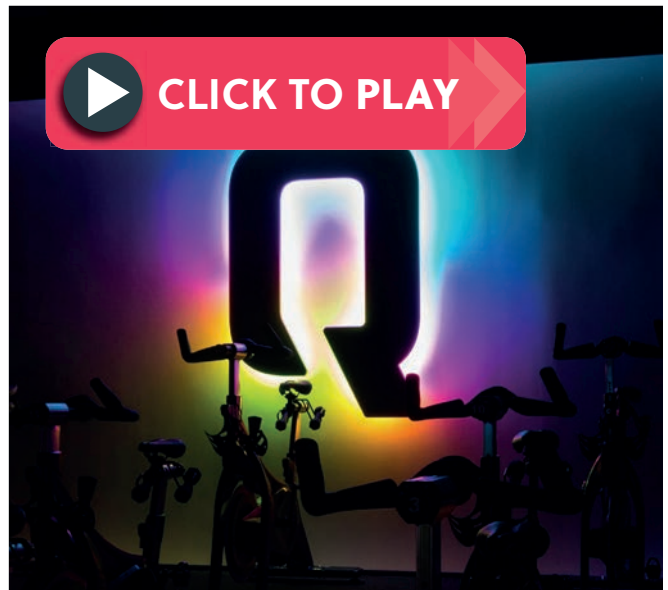
Top left: Shine X is the “dark, rebellious little sister” of Brunei’s Shine Cycle

Above: Lighting can help enhance our sense of mental wellbeing, says Chancey

Left: At City Cycle Seattle, the instructors have full control over extensive lighting

- ▶ the shape, form and dimensions of the area to be illuminated. You need to understand the class formats offered and the moods of each. Most importantly, you must study the client's logo, brand guidelines, colour palettes and graphics.

“But what's really crucial to understand is that lighting is not an afterthought: it's designed into the overall floor plan. We work directly with the architect and audio provider to incorporate illumination into the construction drawings, fully integrating the lighting into the structure at the earliest stage and weaving it into the very fabric of the building.



“Lighting is not an afterthought. We work with the architect and audio provider to incorporate illumination into the construction drawings.”





PHOTO: ©BARBARA CHANCEY DESIGN

Above: At Square Code, the lighting reflects the workout journey – “from dark doubts to bright accomplishments”, says Chancey

Above left: Utah’s QURE studio is another Chancey-Vaughan collaboration

Below left: CYCED’s rhythm rides are brought colourfully to life

“Careful selection of wall colours, surface textures, flooring and fixtures can maximise lighting effects: walls painted in dark hues absorb light and reduce reflection, for example, while walls in pale matte shades serve as canvases for painting with light.”

In his briefing on page 34, Vaughan explores some of the other technical considerations at the heart of transformative light-based experiences. ▶



PHOTO © BARBARA CHANCEY DESIGN

A SCIENCE & AN ART

Light Partners' Daryl Vaughan, Chancey's go-to light specialist, outlines some of the technical considerations of feature lighting

► **#1 Creative illumination can be divided into two principal categories:** reflected view and direct view. In the former, light from the fixtures is bounced off walls, floors and ceilings. When they're exceptionally smooth, these surfaces effectively disappear, taking on a translucent, glowing appearance. To maximise the immersive effect, the light source should be artfully concealed. By contrast, direct view light sources are deliberately on display and part of the class experience, creating a sense of drama and energy.

#2 Modern LED light fixtures feature light-emitting diodes in the three primary colours: red, green and blue (RGB). By

combining and varying the intensity of these three colours, almost any colour of visible light can be created. However, the white light created by combining 100% R, G and B can be cold and unflattering, so LED manufacturers are increasingly incorporating dedicated white (warm, neutral and cool) and amber LEDs – a much better colour palette for sensual, skin-flattering effects.

#3 Will you opt for plug-and-play or custom hardwired? The former describes a basic lighting system that can be installed rapidly and operated simply, but where a limited number of effects become predictable over time. A hardwired, custom-designed lighting system allows the true

“A simple push-button interface delivers instantaneous light changes without the instructor ever having to lose eye contact with the class”



PHOTO: @BARBARACHANCEYDESIGN

power of lighting to be unleashed. Tailored to suit a specific space, it's designed as part of the build, with electrical drawings included in the architect's set of plans.

#4 Ultra-violet (otherwise known as black lights) can be exciting, but **don't forget:** materials in dental crowns and veneers will react differently under these lights, and unflattering images are nobody's friend. If black lights are used, limit them to specific moments in a class. Strobe lights, multi-faceted projectors and laser effects should be used equally sparingly, if at all, as strobes can sometimes cause epileptic seizures.

#5 Some set-ups use Bluetooth-connected apps to control lighting via an iPad, laptop or standalone DMX controller. We favour a solution where a simple push-button interface delivers instantaneous light changes without the instructor ever having to lose eye contact with the class. Limited only by imagination, light shows can range from slow colour cross-fades and gentle washes to fast-paced kinetic sequences, all carefully crafted to suit a particular mood or style of music. ●

 www.light-partners.com

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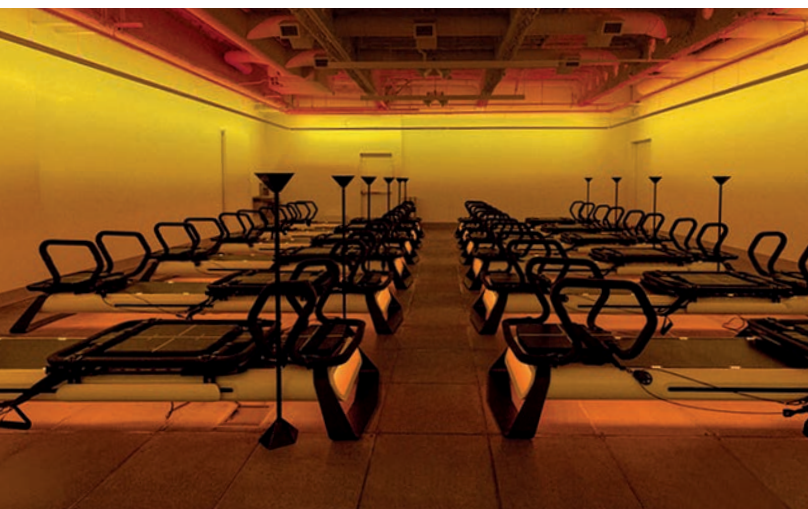


PHOTO: @BARBARACHANCEYDESIGN

Far left: Shine X's illumination is designed to evoke emotion at the touch of a button

Above: Shine X's light system features a range of special effects to use at just the right moment

Left: With RGB LED lights, almost any colour of visible light can be created, says Vaughan

“The post-pandemic consumer is actively seeking things that bring peace, harmony and joy to their lives”



PHOTO: @SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND

FOCUS

on the feelgood

If consumers no longer seek physical perfection, we have to stop selling it, says Carrie Kepple, owner of Styles Studios Fitness and former IHRSA chair

To sell any product, you must be constantly tapped in to changes in consumer mindset, evolving your positioning and messaging around emerging needs and desires. That's basic marketing.

Since the fitness industry was founded, it has sold physical perfection. And maybe, to a point and for a while, that was OK; those who achieved it certainly became hooked for life, even though it remained far too distant a goal to sustainably motivate the majority.

Things are notably different now, as a convergence of important external forces encourage our sector to establish a new 'why' in consumers' minds.

First, across society, we're seeing a push-back against physical perfection. As consumers become more self-accepting, a movement of diversity, equality and inclusion is forcing big brands to change their approach and adjust their prescriptive and restrictive views of how we should all look; even Victoria's Secrets models are now diverse in size and body shape. ▶





Above: We must help people find joy and instant reward in the effort of the workout

“We must learn to attach people not to physical results, but to the enjoyment of happy energy and the feeling of movement”

Right: At Styles Studios Fitness, Kepple has set out to create an inclusive, 'be yourself' ethos



- ▶ Second, the post-pandemic consumer is actively seeking things that bring peace, harmony and joy to their lives. In gyms and studios around the world, they're placing as much value on the mental and social dimensions as on physical fitness.

That's good news for disciplines like indoor cycling, which have long thrived on social as well as physical fitness. Yet the quest for joy means we have to deliver it differently now; the days of being beasted in an indoor cycling class are gone.

SELLING EMOTIONS

So, how do we evolve? While I was IHRSA chair, we commissioned research from behavioural science specialist ClearView, looking to understand how, post-pandemic, we might reactivate the 20 per cent who were previously gym members. We received an important lesson in human behaviour, and specifically in a thing called EROI: Emotional Return on Investment.

All day, every day, EROI shapes human decisions. If we perceive the reward of any action to be greater than the effort, we'll probably do it. If we perceive the effort to be greater than the reward, we probably won't. We naturally seek out instant gratification in everything we do: effort-reward, effort-reward, effort-reward.

And this is the issue with selling physical results: it's perceived as effort-effort-effort-effort-effort and maybe, eventually, a small reward of losing a pound or two. It ensures fitness is perceived as a chore people must do to somehow 'fix' themselves.

The alternative presented by ClearView is simple: sell the instant, feelgood reward of fitness. This plays to the strengths of group exercise in particular – the stress-busting, endorphin-rushing, energised positivity you feel from working out together

in class. Some operators have already communicated it. Now we all must.

We must learn to attach people not to physical results but to the instant satisfaction of completing a workout, the enjoyment of happy energy, the feeling of movement. We must make our experiences an escape from punishing daily life, not punishments in their own right.

This isn't about making workouts easy. It's about helping people find instant joy and reward in the effort itself.

And it doesn't just apply to 'party on a bike' boutiques. It applies to us all. We must create a new culture where every workout comes with a high: coaching styles less clinically focused on technique, instead emphasising sensations, emotions and feelings; individual effort celebrated – 'your effort today is enough'; instructors' language and tone infused with energy, happiness and belonging.

Quite simply, this is the future of fitness. Physical perfection is no longer consumers' goal, and it will hurt our sector if we continue to sell it. ●

“Physical perfection is no longer consumers' goal, and it will hurt our sector if we continue to sell it”

HAPPY HOUR

Exercise, and cardiovascular exercise in particular, has proven benefits for brain health and happiness – and they come far quicker than physical results. So, are we marketing fitness all wrong?

Kate Cracknell asks the experts.





LONG READ
**WHOLE
STORY**



PHOTO: @SHINE BRUNDI

“Physical markers are very often intangible to people,” says Oliver Patrick, co-founder of clinical wellbeing academy FuturePractice. “I

can’t get someone out of bed on a cold Wednesday morning to go and increase their VO_2 max by 3 per cent, because it doesn’t mean anything to them.

“Neither can I tell them with certainty what the long-term physical outcome of their exercise will be. It’s so intangible, so immeasurable, that it isn’t worth talking about for most people.

“As a coach, I have to find something that bothers or interests the individual, then draw a direct line between exercise and their desired outcome. That’s generally going to be something to do with the way they feel, because being mentally suboptimal is the norm in our high-stress world.

“And actually that’s useful, because there’s an immediacy to humans: to get

someone hooked on a drug, you need to give them a first fix, and with exercise that first fix will come quicker if you focus on feelings, not fitness goals.”

A feelgood boost in just 15 minutes

He adds: “In fact, it can come within 15 minutes of starting a class. From the first time someone exercises, we can expect tangible increases in energy and happiness, decreases in stress, improvements in clarity of thinking and even sleep quality.”

BrainExplainers’ Daphne Feller agrees: “The feelgood hormones dopamine, serotonin and endorphins come within a single workout, with cardiovascular exercise particularly well-known for inducing a significant release of these neurotransmitters.

“Each neurotransmitter has its own job, but all three are associated with enhanced feelings of positivity: runners’ high hormone



Left: An uplift in mental and emotional feelgood can come within 15 minutes of starting a class

Right (from top): Our expert panel features Daniel Callow PhD, Daphne Feller, Michael Hosking and Oliver Patrick



“From the first time someone exercises, we can expect tangible increases in energy and happiness”

serotonin plays an important role in regulating mood, emotions and sleep; dopamine triggers our reward system to help us feel pleasurably motivated; and endorphins manage pain, lower stress, improve mood and enhance our sense of wellbeing.

“In a 45-minute indoor cycling class, you can expect your brain to release all three; serotonin takes the longest, normally kicking in after around 30 minutes. Exercise also helps control the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline.”





► **Why group exercise is top for happiness**

Patrick continues: "The problem is, we're generally not great at attaching feelings to what we do. It's therefore really important that we tell people what we want them to observe when they exercise. Ask them: 'Have you noticed a decreased tension in your muscles, are you feeling less burdened and a bit more joyful – less keen to honk your horn at someone on the way home?'"

"That's the feeling we want to get them addicted to, so crucially we need them not just to say 'I feel a bit better today', but to actively recognise and attach that feeling to their workout: 'I feel a bit better today because I did the exercise.'"

"We need to help them understand the control that exercise gives them

over their feelings, so the next time their mood lowers or their shoulders start moving towards their ears, they know how to do something about it."

He adds: "Happiness isn't always possible, of course. You can't feel happy if you're in a state of grief, as an example. However, if I help you find more energy – emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually – I enable happiness. I put you in the best possible position to find it."

"And group exercise helps with multiple forms of energy, not just physical. We also feel emotionally, spiritually and mentally energised by being in a community where we have a part to play. There's a lot of interesting scientific work going on at the moment to explain why, but we are undoubtedly hardwired to exist and feel good in the presence of other people."

Above: We are hardwired to exist and feel good in the presence of other people, says Patrick

“If I help you find more energy, I put you in the best possible position to find happiness... and group exercise helps with multiple forms of energy”

The music in class plays a key role too, says Feller: “Music can evoke strong emotions by stimulating the limbic system – the part of the brain that’s responsible for emotional responses. When activated in a positive way, it can encourage feelings of happiness.

“Music also lowers cortisol levels, especially slow, calming music. It means the final cool-down track of a cycling class is particularly beneficial not just for the body, but also for the brain.”

How exercise helps us deal with stress

Yet the science of exercise and its impact on the brain is still emerging, warns Daniel Callow PhD, postdoctoral research fellow at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

“We don’t actually know what’s changing in the brain at a molecular level when we exercise,” he explains. “BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) is something people talk about, as we know BDNF is likely important for brain health: the suggestion is that it may be released in the brain when we exercise. However, most of this research has been done in animals.

“In humans, we can only measure BDNF in the blood, not the brain, and it may cross the brain/blood barrier and respond to exercise in an inconsistent manner. At this stage, there’s insufficient evidence to be confident about neurotrophic factor and its direct contribution to exercise-induced brain health.

“That isn’t to say we can’t measure any positive impact of exercise on the brain.

What we can see and objectively measure ▶



PHOTO: @BROOM CYCLEURB

Left: By stimulating the brain, music can evoke strong emotions and encourage feelings of happiness

► – through eye tracking and neuroimaging of brain activity – are changes in networks within the brain, which affect how we respond to external stimuli. The stress response region of the brain, for example, is altered by exercise – mostly in a seemingly beneficial way – which could help explain why exercise helps us deal with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues.

“Scientists have already measured the short-term impact of a single session of activity, but the idea is that over time, a sustained exercise routine could lead to adaptations in the brain that make you more resilient to these stressors.”

How indoor cycling can help treat depression

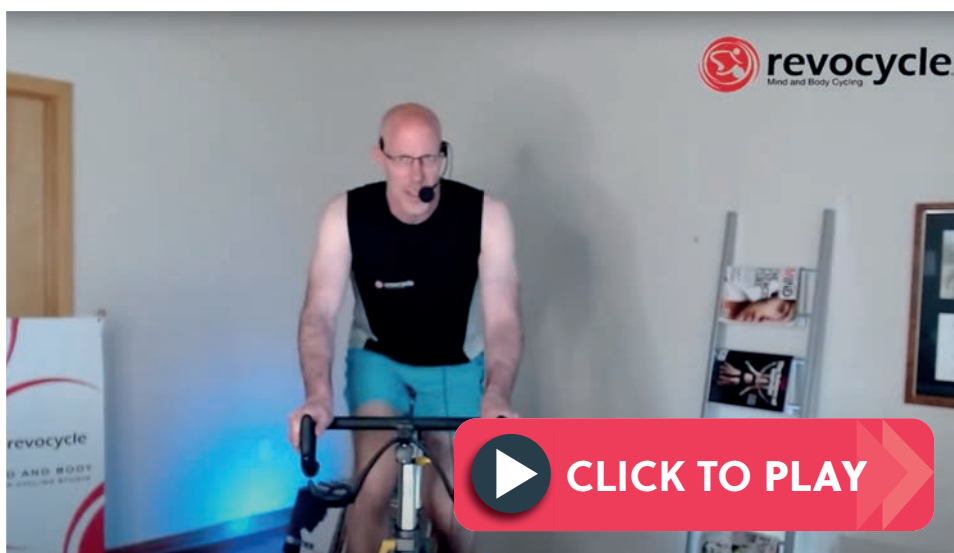
It is this interest in the causes and treatment of depression that underpins the work of Michael Hosking, Biology PhD, professor and founder of Revocycle Mind and Body Cycling.

Hosking’s fascination with the emerging science around exercise and the brain initially stemmed from his own period of intense depression and PTSD around 15 years ago, which he self-treated using physical activity.

He explains: “I started cycling again and feeling better. I then began to look into the research on exercise and depression/ PTSD and a couple of weeks later, told my psychiatrist I was going to stop taking

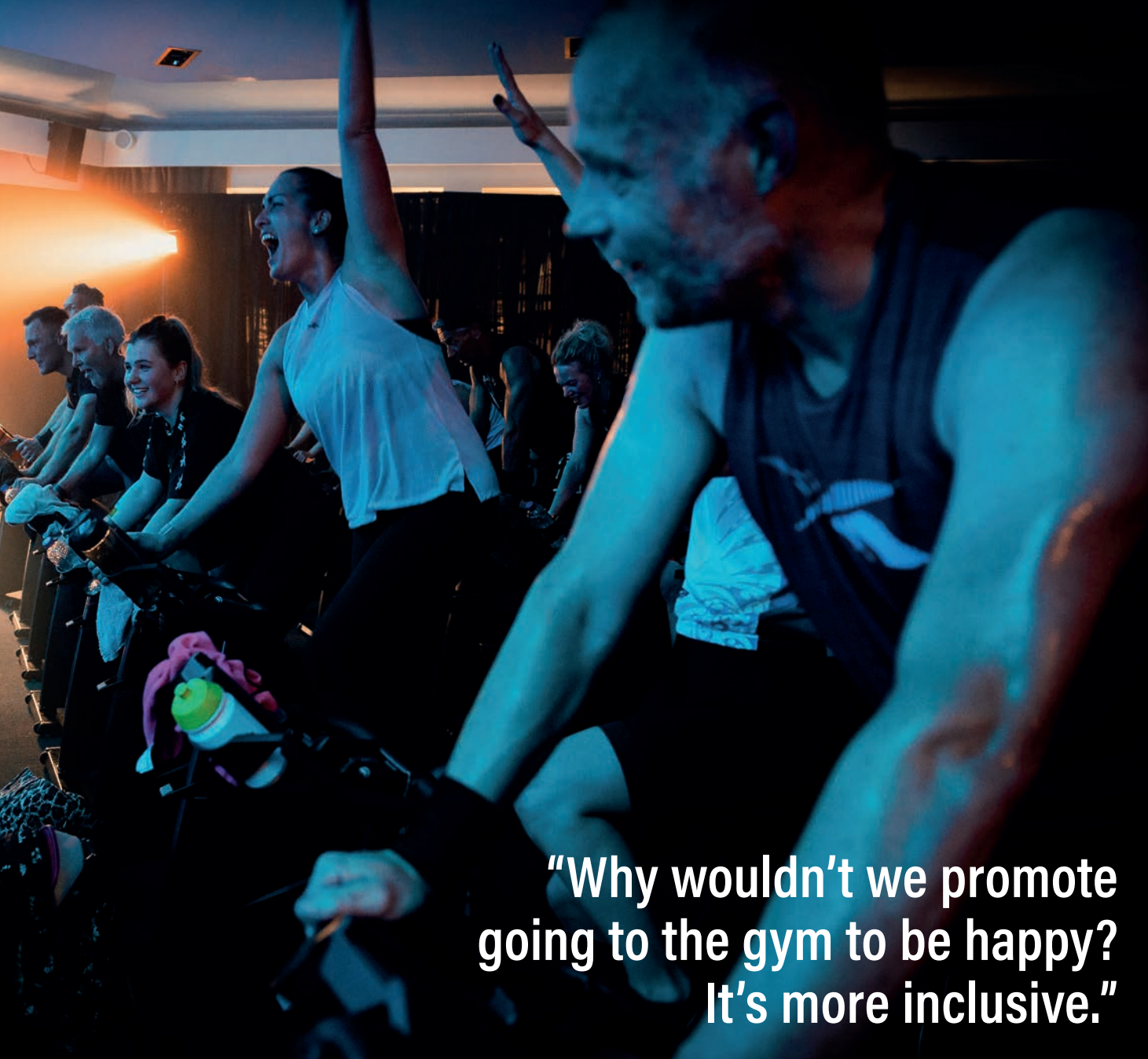


PHOTO: @BODY BIKE



Above: Gyms should change their marketing to focus on stress reduction and elevated mood, says Feller

Left: Click here to experience Revocycle Mind and Body Cycling for yourself



“Why wouldn’t we promote going to the gym to be happy? It’s more inclusive.”

medication. I was feeling so much better. She was shocked by the results I’d achieved and told me it would fundamentally change the way she treated patients with depression.

“When I then discovered Dr John Ratey’s seminal book, *SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, I contacted Harvard University and spent a week studying under him. I created Revocycle Mind and Body Cycling there and then – an indoor cycling programme where we talk about movement as self-care, stress relief, meditation. We focus on social connection and self-efficacy and we never, ever talk about changing the body or burning calories. The whole programme looks entirely unlike a typical

indoor cycling class in its delivery, the way we celebrate, even the way we greet people.

“We’ve also now launched Revocycle Mind and Body Education, to teach fitness professionals the science of exercise and the brain. Depression is a huge burden on individuals and society around the world. I just felt it was too important not to bring all of this together and spread the word.”

Exciting new findings as the science ‘explodes’

Hosking continues: “Exciting new findings are emerging all the time, too. For example, until the late 90s–early 2000s, scientists didn’t believe the brain could



PHOTO © SQUATCYCLE

► grow new neurons, yet now we know that neurogenesis – the creation of new nerve cells – can occur in the hippocampus.

“Scientists then began to investigate where in the brain depression lives, and they discovered that it lives in the hippocampus. Specifically, they began to notice that the hippocampus was smaller – with fewer cells and fewer connections – in individuals with depression.

“The next question, of course: Does depression cause the hippocampus to shrink? And can we promote neurogenesis to treat depression?

“Scientists found that if rats were made to run a lot, more new neurons formed in their hippocampi. The idea began to emerge that exercise might be a tool to promote neurogenesis and help address depression. Research in this field skyrocketed.

“The science is still evolving and exploding, but a meta-study published in 2023 reviewed research from the last 20 years and drew out four key conclusions. First, depression is almost always associated with reduced hippocampus volume. Second,

exercise can help with depression – this the conclusion of 76 per cent of studies. Third, exercise is as effective or more effective than medication, with fewer negative side-effects and lots of positive side-effects.

“And fourth, BDNF is the likely linchpin for the effectiveness of both exercise and antidepressants, with neurogenesis very likely the mechanism and mediator.

“Daniel [Callow] is of course correct when he says we have to be careful about drawing early conclusions about BDNF. However, we already know that people with depression have low levels of BDNF in their blood, and that one-off sessions of exercise increase those levels. We also know that aerobic exercise is better than strength training at increasing levels of BDNF in the blood.

“I very much appreciate a scientist who’s cautious and focused on what’s absolutely proven, but I guess I’m just willing to be a little more generous in my views of the emerging molecular and cellular models of BDNF and neurogenesis, which are highly complex and compelling.”

Above: “Being active is good for brain health, which sits at the heart of mental health,” says Patrick

“The sector has to be braver in the conversations it’s willing to have, encouraging people to keep an eye out for changes in how they feel”



PHOTO: ©SCLIPFOYLE

**We know what works.
Why not talk about it?**

Yet whatever we now discover as the science continues to evolve, as Callow himself says: “A precise mapping of BDNF levels in the brain isn’t what will elicit the greatest benefits for individuals. It might help develop therapeutics and drugs in the future, but what matters to the individual is the brain’s proven response to physical activity in terms of our behaviours, moods and cognitive responses.”

Patrick agrees: “If you’re on the field, you can’t deprive people by holding back waiting for a journal that empirically proves what we all suspect. You have to work with what’s available, and we know that being active is good for brain health – especially cardiovascular activity [see also page 24]. We also know that brain health sits at the heart of mental health.”

“And why wouldn’t we promote going to the gym to be happy?” asks Feller. “Not only does this encourage people to focus on the instant feelgood of being active, it’s also a more inclusive, supportive approach. It says you don’t have to look a certain way to attend the gym. It gives everyone permission to go purely for how it makes them feel.”

She adds: “I believe gyms should move away from marketing physical perfection to show people of all shapes and sizes, highlighting exercise benefits such as elevated mood, stress reduction, mental strength and better sleep.” (See also page 36 for more fascinating thought leadership on this topic.)

Left: We must help people understand the control exercise gives them over their emotions

“Asking ‘How are you feeling?’ can be a throwaway comment, or it can be the basis for your whole brand”



Above: We must start selling ourselves as feeling centres, not physical transformation centres



PHOTO: SHANE BRUNA

The brave new conversations gyms must have

But to support this new approach, says Patrick: “The sector has to be braver in the conversations it’s willing to have. Everyone’s scared of what they don’t know, but you don’t have to be a psychologist to ask someone how they feel, and to do so in a structured way.

“You can’t diagnose or promise specific results. You have to know when to stop giving advice. But you can ask the question, you can be empathetic, and you can say: ‘No matter what you’ve told me, I believe what we’re going to do will help.’ You can have a meaningful conversation and encourage people to keep an eye out for changes in how they feel.”

He adds: “In the end, if exercise is done in a quest for improved body composition, very few people will adhere to it at the frequency that’s required. But if we can attach coming to class to improving the things that are bothering people mentally, we will drive loyalty.

“So we need to start selling ourselves as feeling centres, not physical transformation centres, with a clear scope of practice to communicate and improve the way people feel. There is no product that comes close to exercise, sleep and nutrition for achieving this goal; upscale gyms and studios already have the facilities, people and interventions to alleviate most people’s problems.

“If we can now improve our quality of language and diversify our understanding a little bit, we can be the wellbeing antidote to a poisonous environment. Asking ‘How are you feeling?’ can be a throwaway comment, or it can be the basis for your whole brand.” ●

Above: Loyalty will come if people attach your classes to their improved mental state

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We believe even
the best can always
be better. We're
constantly creating,
which is what
makes my job fun

*Olesen originally joined
BODY BIKE with a
background in design*

Uffe A Olesen

As BODY BIKE marks its 27th birthday, its CEO celebrates his own milestone of 20 years with the company. He takes a walk down memory lane with Kate Cracknell.



Above and below: BODY BIKE Classic was the current model when Olesen joined the team 20 years ago. He was fascinated by its quality, but felt design changes could make it even better

What originally drew you to BODY BIKE?

Nowadays I'm hugely passionate about indoor cycling, but 20 years ago I came at things from a design perspective. I used to work in the furniture industry, and prior to that had been involved in the design of other products too, from textiles to fashion accessories and glasses. Design has always been my first love and forte.

At the time, the model was the BODY BIKE Classic. I was fascinated by its quality, but believed a few design changes could make it even better. That included fully enclosing the bike to protect all vital parts from sweat, making it even more long-lasting – an attribute BODY BIKE has always been famous for.

Since then, we've continued to push the design boundaries in pursuit of the perfect indoor bike. We believe even the best can always be better – an ethos that's kept me enthused and engaged over my two decades at BODY BIKE. We're constantly creating, which is what makes my job fun. ▶





I wanted to bring something to the table that would inspire our whole sector on to even greater things. I'm hugely proud of RIDE HIGH.



Top left: "I remember the first time I tried Les Mills' THE TRIP," says Olesen. "I had goosebumps."

Bottom left: BODY BIKE launched RIDE HIGH magazine in 2017

Right (all images): Every BODY BIKE is hand-crafted in Denmark for unparalleled quality and longevity



► **What's driven your product evolution?**

We've always given ourselves permission to innovate and experiment at BODY BIKE, which is ultimately what drives our product evolution.

But in terms of key themes over the years, I'd have to spotlight technology and sustainability – both things we couldn't have predicted 20 years ago.

Back then, cycling classes were screen-free. Now there's an interest in performance data, so in 2016 we launched the BODY BIKE app; we've never believed consoles to be the best approach, as we believe riders should own their own data.

Meanwhile, sustainability has become a mantra at BODY BIKE. Our sustainable BODY BIKE Smart+ siblings – OceanIX and Forest Green – blazed such a strong trail that we're now on a mission to make all our models sustainable, using recycled materials in their manufacture and working to further reduce each bike's already-low CO₂ footprint.

And now, in 2024, we're about to unveil our latest evolution: the new BODY BIKE Phantom, which launches at FIBO next month. With its magnetic braking system, Quattro resistance knob – four clicks per turn for precise gear changes – and inbuilt usage tracking so clubs can rotate bikes for even greater longevity, this fantastic new model continues to move the dial for riders and operators alike.

Has the company changed much?

The ethos and philosophy at BODY BIKE are essentially unchanged from 27 years ago. Each bike is still lovingly hand-crafted in Denmark, with quality, creativity and passion at the heart of what we do. The team is also only 20 per cent larger than it ►





Left: Olesen sourced recycled plastic fishing nets to use in the manufacture of BODY BIKE Smart+ OceanIX



► was at the beginning, with great continuity over the years. BODY BIKE was founded in 1997 by Jørgen 'Peiter' Petersen, who remained a mentor and brand enthusiast until he passed away in 2017. It is now led by his son Kim Hessellund, who joined the business in 1999. There's a real sense of family, with several team members with us from the very beginning.

But we have grown and evolved, of course. We now wholly own a 12,000sq m factory in the north of Denmark, including on-site metalworks, and you'll find our bikes in all corners of the world. In fact, although we're proudly Danish and have a strong local fan base, 80 per cent of our production is now exported. We also launched BODY BIKE APAC last year: our first investment

in establishing our company overseas rather than using local distributors.

Where else does your creativity shine?

We've become magazine publishers, launching *RIDE HIGH* in 2017 – a brand-neutral publication that champions and celebrates indoor cycling around the world. Anyone can promote their own products. I really wanted to bring something to the table that would inspire our whole sector on to even greater things. I'm hugely proud of what *RIDE HIGH* has become – the fascinating people we've interviewed and the great insights and perspectives we've shared.

We have a lot of fun with our FIBO stands too: from spaceships to forests, we create out-of-the-ordinary, crowd-drawing spaces. ►



We're on a mission to make all our models sustainable, using recycled materials and reducing each bike's CO₂ footprint.



Above: "Our long-standing relationship with Les Mills is one of my BODY BIKE highlights," says Olesen

Left: BODY BIKE Smart+ OceanIX and Forest Green are the company's sustainable siblings

- ▶ And in 2021, we launched BBCARGO: a sister brand to BODY BIKE. This best-in-class eCargo bike puts all our sustainability learnings and bike-building expertise to good use. It just felt like the right thing to do given all the environmental pressures on the world around us.

How has indoor cycling changed?

The arrival of the boutiques was a big one. These beautiful spaces, with their rockstar instructors and incredible music and light shows, took riders into another world, while ‘dancing on a bike’ programming brought a new element of fun to indoor cycling. All of this has driven a dramatic change in consumer expectations, forcing other operators to up their game.

We’ve also seen the diversification of programming generally. From the old days of fitness cycling to generic music, we now have everything from on-the-beat choreography to performance classes and everything in between. There’s something for everyone.

I’ve mentioned technology already, but its impact goes far beyond data. From spectacular AV to wraparound screens, the rise of immersive experiences has been transformational for our sector. I remember the first time I tried Les Mills’ THE TRIP. I had goosebumps.



Above: Olesen unveils BODY BIKE Smart+ OceanIX in 2019

Left: BODY BIKE Phantom will be unveiled at FIBO 2024. Take a look behind the scenes of the promo shoot!

Above right: “My simple advice: hire the people who will fill the room,” says Olesen

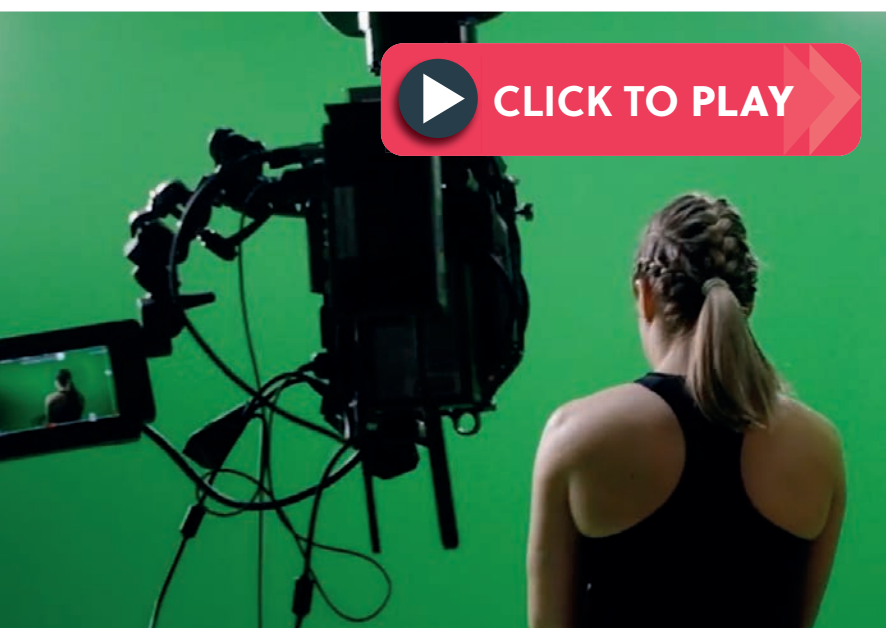




PHOTO: @ORBIKE

In many cases, operators cutting back on indoor cycling – quoting reduced member interest – haven't invested in creating experiences

It was a privilege to supply BODY BIKES for the global roadshow that introduced THE TRIP to the world. In fact, I'd highlight our strong, long-standing relationship with Les Mills as one of the highlights of my time at BODY BIKE.

What's the future of indoor cycling?

Right now, indoor cycling isn't as hot as it has previously been: reformer pilates is the big trend at the moment. I firmly believe indoor cycling is here to stay, though. It's arguably unique in the way it caters for all ages and abilities in one class, and it has and will continue to stand the test of time – provided it evolves in line with consumer expectations.

In many cases, operators cutting back on indoor cycling – quoting reduced member interest – are in this position because they haven't invested in creating experiences. It's understandable, so I'm not criticising: the last few years have been incredibly hard for everyone. But now, as investment budgets finally return, it's time to upgrade spaces, equipment, technology and most of all instructors. My simple advice: hire the people who will fill the room. ●

 @bodybikeinternational

 @ridehighmagazine

Kaleigh Cohen Fitness

From creating an online class for her mum, to full-time content creation and a community that's hundreds of thousands strong – Kaleigh Cohen shares her story with RIDE HIGH.





“I used to struggle with confidence; indoor cycling helped in amazing ways,” says Cohen

WHY DID YOU CREATE KALEIGH COHEN FITNESS?

In the 90s, mum and I went to fitness classes together, but ever since I qualified as an instructor – I’m Spinning-certified and also have Stages Beat, PT and weight loss certifications – I’ve lived elsewhere in the US and even overseas. It meant mum could never come to my classes.

In 2019, my husband and I were living in Dubai with our five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter and I was missing teaching. I’d given mum my old indoor bike, so I decided to create a workout video for her. The first recording was dreadful, so my husband – who was getting back into videography – filmed it for me and we uploaded it to YouTube.

Mum did the workout, but so did other people, so we decided to create more. We weren’t very consistent at first, uploading just one or two a month, but uptake began to grow organically from people searching YouTube for indoor cycling content. There was one video in particular, a cycling class for beginners, that did really well. Things took off from there. ▶

“We have 275,000 cycling and 100,000+ strength subscribers, allowing this to be a full-time job for my husband and me”



“My role is to make you feel glad you pressed ‘play’. Of the 110,000+ clicks we get each week, around half go on to do the whole class.”

Left: Cohen is a qualified indoor cycling coach who missed teaching while living in Dubai. Her online journey started by creating a workout video for her mum

Right (all images): All of Cohen's workouts are free for everyone to use. Each takes around 20 hours to create, with one or two uploaded each week



- ▶ We then launched a separate Strength channel two years ago. Cycling is a great stress-reliever and a fun way to sweat it out, but strength is also crucial if you want to change your body.

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY GROWN?

We've never really done any marketing, but we now have 275,000 indoor cycling subscribers and over 100,000 strength subscribers, many of whom are unique to strength.

For over a year now, this has allowed Kaleigh Cohen Fitness to be a full-time job for my husband and me: I do the workouts and Jason does the production and editing.

All our workouts are free for everyone to use, so the majority of our income comes from YouTube AdSense, sponsors and regulars who choose to purchase our US\$15/month Kaleigh Cohen Fitness membership. This gives them early access to all workouts posted on YouTube, a monthly Zoom ride, a private Discord session where we can discuss anything from goal-setting to nutrition, and free downloadable bundles of support material for all our Cycle and Strength programmes. ▶



“The community shapes what we do: we listen to what they tell us and gear our content around this”

► **TELL US ABOUT YOUR CONTENT.**

I used to struggle with confidence and self-image and indoor cycling helped me in the most amazing ways, so it's at the heart of what we do. I want to help others take that crucial first step, because you never know what will happen from there!

That's why, although I encourage people to challenge themselves – getting stronger on a bike to be stronger in life – I never want anyone to feel a workout is too hard.

My role is to uplift and motivate and make you feel glad you pressed 'play', and of the 110,000+ clicks we get each week, around half go on to do the whole class.

Most classes are pre-recorded and 20–30 minutes long; each takes around 20 hours to design, film and edit, so we upload one or two a week. We ride to the beat, although it isn't rhythm cycling: I include sprints, climbs and jumps and every song has its own focus.

However, we do have a 45- to 60-minute live ride every Saturday, with around 500 participants each week. People join from across the world, including a lady in New Zealand who's cycling in the middle of her night! There are lots of regulars, so people know each other and interact in the live chat; a US\$1.99/month YouTube channel membership gives you a badge by your name and unlocks special emojis to use in our live chats.

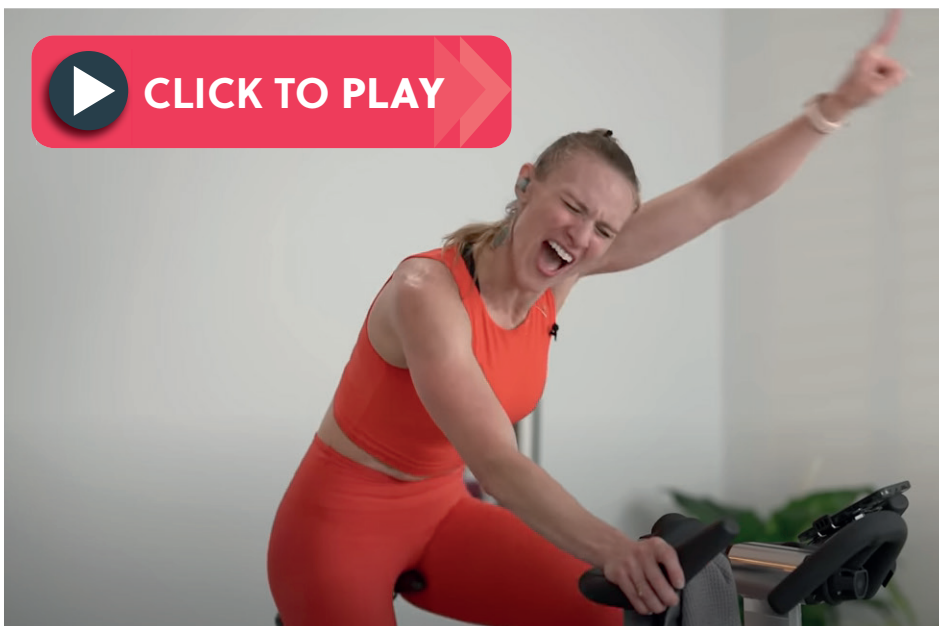
Our community really does make what we do so special, and it's also the community that shapes what we do: we listen to what they tell us in the live chat and on our social platforms and gear our content around this. ►

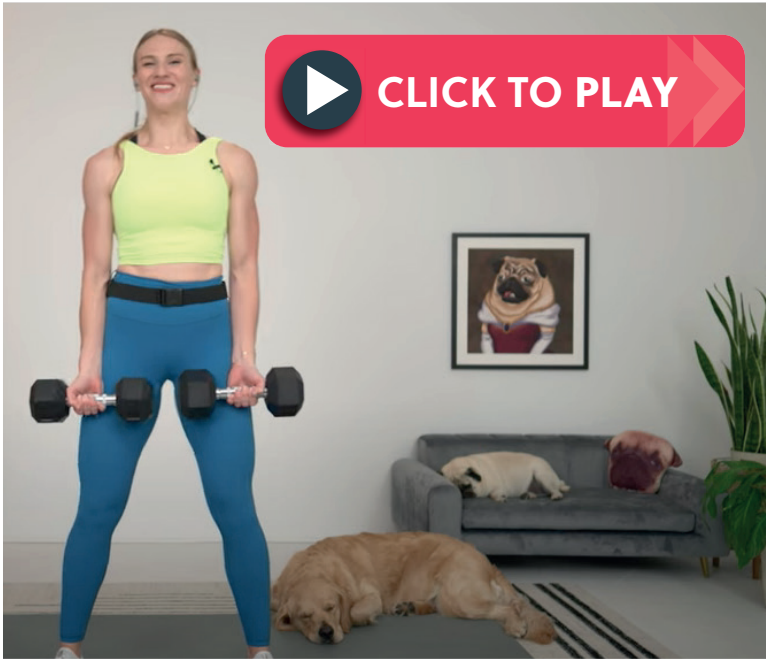


Above left: Cohen launched a dedicated Strength channel on YouTube two years ago

Above: Cohen is now a full-time content creator and influencer

Left: "My role is to uplift and motivate you," says Cohen. Get a taste of her cycling classes in this video





► **WHAT ARE YOUR USPS?**

I use non-mainstream music and really harness the lyrics to mean something in class.

I keep it real. If I mess up in class, I go with it. If you allow yourself to be vulnerable as an instructor – to just be yourself – you’re more approachable.

And I explain why we’re doing things, sharing the knowledge I’ve gathered over 15+ years to ensure there’s purpose in every workout.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

What really inspires us are the stories of how we’re changing lives. One lady who’s been with us from the beginning has lost 100lbs. One man broke his back, but he’s worked back up and can now cycle for 45 minutes. We’ve had people going through cancer treatment, telling us we’ve helped them overcome things they didn’t think they could.

We’re just so grateful to have almost fallen into this and to have so many people coming along for the ride. ●

 [youtube.com/@kaleigh](https://www.youtube.com/@kaleigh)

 [youtube.com/@KaleighStrength](https://www.youtube.com/@KaleighStrength)

 [@kaleighacohen](https://www.instagram.com/kaleighacohen)



“We’re so grateful to have almost fallen into this and to have so many people coming along for the ride”

Above left: “Strength is crucial if you want to change your body”

Above right: “What really inspires us are the stories of how we’re changing lives,” says Cohen

Right: Cohen “keeps it real” and aims to always be herself in class, so people find her approachable



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