



'I'd rather be out with friends'

Sindiso Khumalo, 28

textile designer | single

EXERCISE CHOICE: Strength training

TRAINER: Bronwen de Klerk at Chi-Netix Health Studio

overview of strength training

One-on-one strength training sessions are great for targeting problem areas with maximum impact. A personal trainer will first assess the client's fitness and strength, including body fat and blood pressure measurements. Then a tailor-made training programme is drawn up. Because Sindiso wanted to be able to work out at home, Bronwen designed the program in a way that required her to use little or no equipment. Much of the routine was built around Therabands (elastic bands used for strength training) as they're easy to store and transport, which meant Sindiso could use them at the gym or at home. Isometric exercises (contracting the muscles without any joint movement) to increase muscle strength without bulking up were also included, as well as tips on how to improve Sindiso's running. 'Some of my clients see me once or twice a week, decreasing this as they become more confident doing the exercises on their own,' says Bronwen. 'I find many of them still prefer the focused exercise provided by the one-on-one sessions.' During each session, Bronwen offers clients constructive feedback as well as a step-by-step update of their programme.

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My exercise history: I've always been very active. I used to run long distance, played tennis and netball, and did ballet for 14 years. When I lived in London, exercise got pushed out of my daily routine. When I first moved to Cape Town, I joined the gym for a while, but it became more of a social event than a work-out. Now I constantly feel I should be out there doing something.

I find it hard to fit in exercise because... My job is very demanding. I'm under enormous pressure to be creative, working long hours at a manic pace. I'm constantly racing around town, meeting with contractors and managing people. When I finally clock out, I meet up with friends to unwind. Drinks usually spill over into dinner or DVDs and suddenly it's another day I didn't get to the gym.

My doubts? I wondered if my trainer and I would have the same goals. I didn't want to gain muscle, I just wanted to get fit again. Bronwen was great, she asked me what my goals were and tailored a programme to suit my needs. I didn't want the work-outs to encroach on my lifestyle and she understood that. I've maintained my social life, but now fit in exercise.

My goal? To get fit and to stay healthy.

The hardest part? Keeping it up. When I first started, I was in the middle of a huge project at work, so I found it hard to keep up with the routine Bronwen had worked out for me. I'd only get to the gym once a week instead of three times, and would be too tired at the end of the day to train. But that's the beauty of a personal trainer – you're answerable to someone. I knew I'd be grilled, and that made it harder to slack off. So I started fitting sessions into my lunch break.

What surprised me the most: The progress I made with my running. At first I could only manage 15 minutes. But soon, Bronwen pushed me to 20, then to 30 and last week I ran for 40 minutes and felt like a power machine when I was done.

The end result? I feel like I've achieved my goal. I know what my body is capable of. It's great to discover that. Bronwen taught me how to look after my body, the importance of stretching and how to avoid cramping. The strength-training routine she worked out for me involves a very basic setup, so even when I can't make it to the gym, I can still get a work-out at home: tricep dips off the edge of my couch, bicep curls holding a bottle of water in each hand and squats with a broomstick resting on my shoulders. I use my time on the treadmill to meditate – with my iPod switched on, I find it easy to escape the stresses of my day, even if only for 20 minutes. A personal trainer is the best option for my needs. I love the fact that there is someone on call willing to bring out the best in me.