

GETTIN' DOWN & DIRTY:
GO MOUNTAIN BIKING

BACK A YARD'S
JAMAICAN JOY

EXPLORING HISTORIC
UNEXPECTED PRESIDIO

PUNCH

SPIRIT OF THE PENINSULA

so sweet



APRIL 19



INSIDE GUITTARD'S CHOCOLATE FACTORY
SPRING CLEANING FEVER: PURGE AWAY
CREATING THE PERFECT CUSTOM KITCHEN

FITNESS

smart moves

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As a self-described former champion cardio junkie and calorie counter, Erin Paruszewski grew up embracing the beliefs that “more is more” when it comes to exercise and “less is more” when it comes to food. That translated into being a three-sport athlete as a high school student in upstate New York and charging hard through a steady stream of marathons, triathlons and century bike rides in her 20s. Coming of age in what she calls the “fat-free era,” Erin fueled herself with a processed “fat out, sugar in and lots of chemicals” diet. “When people saw me from the outside, they’d think ‘She’s in good shape,’” Erin reflects, “but things started coming off the rails on the inside.”

Along with personal records and race medals, Erin piled up injuries: an ACL tear, shin splints, plantar fasciitis and shoulder and hip pain. Meanwhile, her food choices resulted in her being doubled over with debilitating stomach cramps. “I was falling apart,” she says. “I was only in my early 20s at the time and I felt terrible.”

After graduating from Georgetown University, Erin moved to San Francisco for a job in investment banking, working on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park, before transitioning into product development for a healthcare company. Outside of work, Erin got pulled into teaching fitness classes—ranging from barre to cycling—which launched her on a transformative journey. “I started realizing that if I changed the way I ate and the way I move, I would just feel better,” she says.

Erin went on to found Alkalign, a boutique fitness movement with local studios in Menlo Park and Los Altos and two franchises in Southern California and Michigan. Today, Erin defines herself as a “functional fitness guru” and we stopped by Alkalign to learn more about her mission.



What drove your decision to exit corporate life and open your own business?

I was completely unfulfilled working in corporate America. On paper I was helping people, but I felt like a cog in the wheel. I realized that teaching classes at 6AM before work or 7PM on the way home was the best part of my day. I knew it was time to harness my passion and turn it into a profession. My dad

is an entrepreneur and I inherited my entrepreneurial spirit from him. I was very newly married at the time and I told my husband, 'I'd like to open a studio,' and he said, 'You're absolutely crazy!' Through a lot of conversations, we decided it was important for me to do something I loved as well as something that would give me the flexibility to raise a family. I opened the Menlo Park studio in March 2009 and the Los Altos studio in January 2010. We opened as The Dailey Method because that's what I knew at the time.

How did the transition to your own unique fitness program come about?

I loved owning studios and connecting with individuals in the community, but something was missing. There was a lot that I loved about a traditional barre class but there was a lot that wasn't resonating with me. Through significant soul searching and coaching I came to the realization that I can, A. Do this on my own, and B. Do it in a way that

better represents my preventative and long-term approach to health and wellness. I wanted to offer more to our clients, and I knew fitness was only one piece of the puzzle. Clients would say, 'I've been coming here five days a week for five years and I still have x, y & z issues.' I'd say, 'This is 4% of your day. What else is going on?' I wanted to dig into nutrition and other lifestyle choices. Movement. Sleep. Stress management. I wanted to offer something that was more holistic and something that would start from the inside out. I wanted it to be more than a workout—I wanted to inspire a lifestyle that was sustainable, effective and safe. I decided at the end of January 2015 that I was going to pivot and Alkalign opened seven weeks later.

What is functional fitness and how do you incorporate it into your classes at Alkalign?

Functional fitness is all the things you need to be able to do so you can move better in life. There are



seven specific functional movements: squatting, lunging, hinging, pushing, pulling, rotating and walking. You can break down pretty much any movement you do in a day to those seven things. Some of them are really obvious, like squatting to sit down or reaching to the back seat to give your kid a snack. We've developed our classes so that we practice all these movements in different ways so you're getting a whole body workout in every class. It's a blend of strength, cardio and mobility and incorporates elements of barre, yoga, Pilates and physical therapy, which is both restorative and rehabilitative.

What is the mindset you're trying to change at Alkalign?

We are conditioned by marketing and our environment to believe that more is more and harder is better. We want to re-educate people on the fact that it doesn't have to hurt to work. We have this belief that if I'm not burning this many calories or sweating profusely or if every

bone in my body doesn't hurt, I haven't done what I need to do. It's okay to be sore, it's okay to awaken muscles, but you don't have to feel like you've been run over by a truck after every workout. The great thing about Alkalign is that it's good for you now and it's good for you later. It's a deposit in your health bank instead of a withdrawal. Our goal is to be able to share this philosophy and expand this movement beyond the Bay Area and to help more people feel better.

If you had to pick a top fitness tip what would it be?

Rolling! In the last 10 years, I haven't had any pain, especially since we introduced a myofascial release class called 'Recharge.' It's like self-massage. Everybody knows that you need strength and cardio but the thing that's really missing for overall health is mobility. Mobility is the foundation for everything. You can't build strength or improve flexibility without it. Our bodies are comprised of muscles, tendons and

ligaments as well as a soft tissue webbing called fascia that connects everything. Knots and adhesions form and act like little roadblocks that eventually lead to immobility and immobility leads to pain. When you consistently roll, it basically acts like WD-40 for your body. It keeps things sliding and gliding. When things are moving the way they're supposed to, you perform better, avoid injuries and can enjoy pain-free living.

How much do classes cost?

We have two new client specials—three classes for \$45 and 30 days unlimited for \$99. After that, there is an option to either purchase a class package or a membership. A lot of people also enjoy other activities—cycling, tennis, golf, etc. Alkalign gives them the foundation and conditioning they need to do all of that better. **P**

Find out more at alkalignstudios.com