



# PERFORMANCE ENHANCERS

Kick-start your healthiest year yet with these hot tips from Hollywood's elite trainers **By Julia McEwen**

When January rolls around, we tend to set our sights on self-improvement. Studies show that the top New Year's resolution among Canadians is to get more exercise – a seemingly simple goal that can look far out of reach, especially as we spend more and more time at home. The good news is, once you've got into the habit of incorporating more activity into your life, you'll see all sorts of benefits, from boosting energy, building strength and reducing stress levels to fitting into your pre-pandemic jeans!

But how do you even begin to get fit when most gyms, studios and fitness centres are closed? We've got you covered! Our four celebrity trainers have expert tips and foolproof strategies to help you realize your fitness dream – or mix up your existing routine.



## Astrid Swan

**NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS** Julianne Hough, Shay Mitchell, Alicia Silverstone  
**SWEAT SPECIALTY** The L.A.-based personal trainer and former model, 38, is known for her innovative and dynamic approach to fitness, mixing various techniques according to her client's specific needs and goals. When she's not training her A-list clientele you'll find her at celebrity fitness hotspot Barry's, where she works as a senior instructor. The hour-long class, a favourite with Jake Gyllenhaal, Kim Kardashian and Victoria Beckham, combines interval cardiovascular exercise (on the treadmill) and strength training (on the floor with dumbbells).

**MOTIVATIONAL MANTRA** This fitness expert believes exercise goes way beyond the body. "My motto is 'Sanity first, vanity second.' If you're feeling stressed or sad, after a workout your energy will pivot, giving you clarity and calmness." We can thank those feel-good endorphins for that much-needed mindset shift!

**MOM MOVES** A mom herself, Astrid is well-positioned to advise new

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: ISTOCK; ELAINE FANCY; STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID CROTTY/GETTY IMAGES; GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES; RYAN FORBES



Dancer Julianne Hough is a longtime client, while Canadian Shay Mitchell (*Pretty Little Liars*) kept Astrid on call during her recent pregnancy.



## Brent Bishop

**NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS** Sangita Patel, Tara Spencer-Nairn, Adrian Holmes  
**SWEAT SPECIALTY** Owner of Toronto's Think

Fitness Studios, Brent helps *ET Canada's* Sangita stay in tip-top shape with a combination of performance-inspired conditioning, strength-training and high-intensity workouts. With more than two decades in the industry, he's worked with Olympians, high-level athletes and various film and TV personalities, though he doesn't train and tell. "I typically don't share much in the way of who I've worked with for their confidentiality." As well as working behind the scenes with his clients, Brent is often seen lending his fitness expertise on camera to lifestyle shows like *Cityline* and *The Marilyn Denis Show*.

**MOTIVATIONAL MANTRA** Feeling a little blah about working out? Brent says if you're new to fitness – or if it's been a while since you followed any kind of exercise regimen – it's important to set realistic goals. "Make a plan to dedicate time to exercise at least three times a week for 20 to 30 minutes. This is a good starting point that will allow you to progress further." Another important strategy is to track your fitness, because

there's nothing more motivating than seeing your body change and get stronger.

**WFH TIPS** Brent's favourite style of at-home workout is a blend of functional strength and high-intensity interval training. "This approach to home workouts is very time-effective and incorporates strength, conditioning, joint stability and core all in one. Not to mention the positive impact this approach can have on your metabolism."

**WELL-EQUIPPED** You don't need much to get an effective workout at home. "Dumbbells, strength bands, mini-bands and a fit ball are a great and inexpensive place to start." If you want to get fancy, he recommends levelling up with the Lebert Equalizers and a TRX Suspension Training System.

Everlast Pro Grip Fitness Ball, \$25, [sportinglife.ca](http://sportinglife.ca)



Lebert Equalizer Total Body Strengthener, \$138, [lebertfitness.com](http://lebertfitness.com)

'I don't even call fitness a priority, it's just part of my schedule,' says Sangita Patel, who's always red-carpet-ready thanks to Brent.



mothers how to get back into the swing of things. First and foremost, she recommends starting by reconnecting with your core. "That does not mean crunches. Instead, start with breath work and pelvic floor exercises," she advises. New moms can even bring their little ones into the mix. "When your baby can hold their neck up, they can be used as a weight," says Astrid. Think of it as playtime!

**WELL-EQUIPPED** Astrid's at-home workout essentials are a pair of 10-lb. (or higher) dumbbells; rubber mini-bands "for glute work, hamstrings, core, biceps, triceps and [arm] rows"; and sliders – small discs that can be used to modify exercises and further engage your muscles. "If you don't have sliders," says Astrid, "you can use socks on hardwood floors." ▶



Synergie Core Sliders, \$13, [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca)



Bala Resistance Bands, \$26, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com)





A-listers like Halle Berry (left) and Gwyneth Paltrow make Harley's client list as buzz-worthy as any awards show.



Harley Pasternak

NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS

Halle Berry, Ariana Grande, Gwyneth Paltrow

SWEAT SPECIALTY

The 46-year-old Toronto-born trainer, nutrition specialist and motivational speaker has lent his considerable talents to high-profile clients as well as daytime talk shows like *Good Morning America* for decades. While the father of two loves to incorporate moves like Bulgarian lunges and plank variations into his routines, *The Body Reset Diet* author repeatedly emphasizes that factors like sleep, steps and nutritious meals are just as important to your well-being as any fitness regimen he can dream up.

**STEP TO IT** Harley recommends clocking 12,000 steps a day, which may sound daunting considering that most of us are currently working from home but he promises it doesn't have to feel like a marathon. "I don't call it cardio, I think of it as simply moving," says the fitness expert, who's based in L.A. "It doesn't have to be super-intense, you don't need to run. Whenever it's possible to stand on your feet and move around, do it. It's good for your mental health, it's good for your immune system and it's good for your metabolism."

**KEEP IT SIMPLE** "You don't need a gym and all of its equipment to be healthy. Strength training sculpts, tones and tightens and can be done at home." Harley advises working at least one exercise a day into your schedule and



TRX Strong System, \$180, sportchek.ca

Fitbit Versa 3 Smartwatch in Midnight/Soft Gold Aluminum, \$300, bestbuy.com

switching it up each day to correspond with a different body part, like sit-ups one day and pushups the next. "Having to figure out a routine at home has helped us in some ways to become more self-motivated and innovative when it comes to getting fit."

**WELL-EQUIPPED** For a well-rounded fitness routine, Harley advocates a few simple but effective pieces of equipment. "Dumbbells aren't new or sexy, but as far as strength training goes, they're essential and can give you a lot of variety in how you use them." Almost as versatile is the two-handle TRX suspension system, which hangs from a ceiling or door frame and uses your body weight and gravity to build balance, flexibility and strength. Finally, he recommends using a FitBit. "It's key these days because it keeps track of how much you're moving or not moving during the day. And the goal is to just move every single day, however you can."



HARLEY PASTERNAK INTERVIEW: BIANCA TEIXEIRA. PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: DANIELE VENTURELLI/GETTY IMAGES; RACHEL MURRAY/GETTY IMAGES; NO CREDIT (9); NEIL MOCKFORD/GETTY IMAGES; ERNESTO DISEFANO/GETTY IMAGES; INSTAGRAM

Sahra Esmonde-White

NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS

Lily Cole, Sarah Gadon, Naomie Harris

SWEAT SPECIALTY

Sahra is renowned for a unique program called Essentrics. Developed in 1997 by her mother, Miranda Esmonde-White, a former National Ballet of Canada dancer, "it's a dynamic stretch workout that's a combination of stretching and strengthening, without using any equipment," Sahra, 44, explains. The goal is to increase joint mobility, lengthen muscles and improve flexibility and posture.

**AGING GRACEFULLY** Even the fittest of folk start noticing changes after 40, which means you should consider changing up your workouts. "There's a lot of science behind using exercise to prevent and even reverse aging. But as you age, you get tighter faster, so you really need to work on your flexibility and mobility to feel better and stay healthy," she shares. Incorporating Sahra's full-body routine uses all 650 muscles and activates all 360 joints in a single low-impact workout, making it an ideal style of exercise for all ages. (You can also stream age-specific classes at [essentricstv.com](http://essentricstv.com))

**POSTURE MAKES PERFECT** "During this period of time when we're confined to our homes, moving less and sitting more, our posture is in trouble," says Sahra. But fixing your posture is not as simple as sitting up straight. "Pretty much every Essentrics class works on the posture with a lot of rotational movements and diagonal stretches." When we have good posture, the muscles surrounding the spine are balanced and support the body equally. Superficially, having good posture makes us look taller and slimmer.

**WELL-EQUIPPED** The beauty of this workout is you don't need much! It's designed to be done shoeless; all you need is a good mat and a riser if you have tight hamstrings. However, you might as well look good while you're sweating! You'll likely find this Montreal-based trainer wearing something from luxe British activewear brand, Lucas Hugh, whom she first discovered when she travelled to London to train model Lily Cole. "That's when I met the designer and fell in love with the brand!" **H**



Lucas Hugh Axis eggings, \$299, lucashugh.com

Sugarmat Montreal Dream Catcher Red Yoga Mat, \$128, sugarmat.com



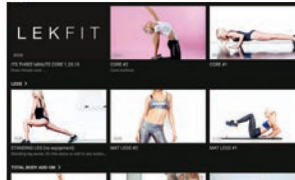
*Skyfall* star Naomie Harris (far right) is a big fan of the dynamic stretch program. Canadian actress Sarah Gadon (right) has been a devotee for almost a decade.

SWEAT ON DEMAND

Break out of your at-home exercise rut and try one of these workout offerings that's guaranteed to have you panting for air and sweating from every pore!

LEKFIT

**COST** \$28 a month (with a seven-day free trial)  
**TYPE** Strength training, cardio and sculpting  
**LENGTH** 11 to 60 minutes  
**EQUIPMENT NEEDED** Hand weights, ankle weights, mini trampoline, resistance bands, fitness glider, gloves, mat



This L.A.-based workout – a favourite of Busy Philipps and Rooney Mara – went digital long before the pandemic started, posting new classes each week (plus, making the entire library of classes available) in three different styles: Boost and Hype (cardio and sculpt) and Define full-body sculpting.

ORANGETHEORY LIVE

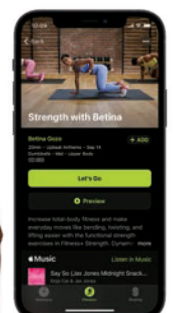
**COST** \$10 to \$25 per class depending on membership and usage  
**TYPE** Cardio, strength, high-intensity interval training (HIIT)  
**LENGTH** One hour  
**EQUIPMENT NEEDED** Orangetheory heart rate monitor, mat, mini-bands, weights



With real-time classes virtually led by a coach and only 12 to 20 people per class, this energy-packed interactive fitness experience keeps you accountable! Just like in the studio, members can connect using their OTbeat Burn heart rate monitor, which shows personalized results in real time on the screen. Every day offers a new mix of endurance, strength, power bodyweight and resistance exercises, combined with heart-pumping music.

APPLE FITNESS+

**COST** \$13 a month or \$100 a year  
**TYPE(S)** HIIT, yoga, strength, core, cycling, dance, treadmill, rowing and mindful cooldown  
**LENGTH** Five to 45 minutes  
**EQUIPMENT NEEDED** Apple Watch, weights, mini-bands, treadmill, stationary bike, rower (vary depending on workouts)



The Fitness+ app is tightly integrated with the Apple Watch, so whether you're using the app on an iPhone, iPad or your Apple TV, you'll get cues on your wrist that synch up with the workout and the watch will beam stats like heart rate and calories burned to the screen. With a lineup of 21 elite fitness trainers, nine different styles of classes and new weekly content at your disposal, you'll never run out of ways to sweat.