PERFORMANCE ENHANCERS

Kick your healthiest year yet with these hot tips from Hollywood’s elite trainers By Julia McEwen

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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 move less 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! Get four celebrity trainers how expert tips and foolproof strategies to help you realize your fitness goals and beyond.

Astrid Swan
NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS: Julianne Hough, Shia LaBeouf, 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 lift, giving you clarity and calmness.”

MOM MOVES: Astrid is well-positioned to advise new mothers on 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 15lb. (or higher) dumbbells, rubber mini-bands — for glute work, hammerings, 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.”

Brent Bishop
NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS: Sangita Patel, Tara Spencer-Nairn, Adrian Holmes, John D’Agostino
SWEAT SPECIALTY: Owner of Toronto’s Think Fitness Studio, 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 a decade 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 CTV’s 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 30 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.

WELL-EQUIPPED: 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-efficient 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 investing with the Lebert Equalizers and a TRX Suspension Training System.
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 slider, gloves, mat

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

ORANGE THEORY LIVE
COST $10 to $25 per class depending on membership and usage
TYPE Cardio, strength, high-intensity interval training (HIIT)
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. As a plus, the studio members can connect using their Offline Buddy heart rate monitor, which shows personalized results in real time on the screen. Every day offers a new mix of endurance, strength, power and weightlessness, combined with heart-pumping music.

APPLE FITNESS
COST $13 a month or $100 a year
TYPE(s) HIIT, yoga, strength, core, cycling, dance, twerking, rowing and mindful sculpture
LENGTH Five to 45 minutes
EQUIPMENT NEEDED Apple Watch, weights, mini-bands, treadmill, stationary bike, rower (very depending on workouts)

The Fitness app is tightly integrated with the Apple Watch, so whether you’re using the app on your iPhone, iPad or your Apple TV, you’ll get cues on your wrist that sync with the watch 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 need to take a day off from your fitness goals.

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

NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS
Lily Cole, Sarah Gadon, Naomie Harris

SWEAT SPECIALTY
Nauna is renowned for her unique program called Essentrics. Developed in 1995 by her mother, Miranda Esmonde-White, a former ‘National Ballet of Canada’ dancer, it’s a dynamic stretch workout that is a combination of stretching and strengthening, without using any equipment," Nauna, 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 says. Incorporating Nauna’s full-body routine uses all 600 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 essentrics.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 Nauna. But fixing your posture is not as simple as sitting up straight. "Pretty much every Essentics 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 that you don’t need much! It’s designed to be done anywhere, all you need is a flat mat and aifter 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 her 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."

"A fitness like Harley" Barry (left) and Gimynn Pahlwos make Harley’s diet all that buzz-worthy as any award show.

Harley Pasternak
NOTEWORTHY CLIENTS
Halle Berry, Ariana Grande, Ginnifer Goodwin

SWEAT SPOT
The Week-end
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 hangers and plank variations into his routines, The Body Beast Dot 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 IT UP! Harley recommends clocking 12,000 steps a day, which may sound daunting considering that most of us are currently working from home but his promise 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 strenuous; you don’t need to run. Whenever it’s possible to walk 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 switching it up each day to correspond with a different body part, like six-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-sufficient and innovative when it comes to getting fit."