

It happens every year. In January, people flock to the gym. “This year, things will be different,” they tell themselves. “This year, I’ll finally get into shape.” A few months later they’re back on the couch, watching series marathons and eating junk. There has to be a better way.

Enter Cape CrossFit (CCF), which isn’t your typical gym. (Like 11 000 CrossFit affiliates around the world, it uses the term “box.”) This isn’t a place where you swipe your card, dump your kids in the play area and have breakfast or watch TV. It also isn’t a place where you spend an hour on a stationary bike, cycling your way to boredom without breaking a sweat over your weekly magazine. This is a place for people who want results.

“In our CrossFit classes, we combine gymnastics, weight-lifting and metabolic conditioning in workouts that are constantly varied and very intense, but also universally scalable so that they’re always challenging, regardless of your level of fitness,” reads the website www.capecrossfit.com. It’s about working out in a way that benefits your everyday life – and about keeping things interesting with a different workout every day. (“Benchmark workouts” are an exception. Like hurricanes, they tend to have women’s names.)

Still, CrossFit isn’t without its controversy. “There’s no way



FIT FOR A *King*

CrossFit is the exercise phenomenon that’s all the rage right now – but its notoriously high intensity has created some controversy. Eugene Yiga has been doing it for six months and separates fact from fiction in this personal account

inexperienced people doing this aren’t going to hurt themselves,” wrote sports medicine specialist Wayne Winnick in a *New York Times* article published in December 2005. But is CrossFit really dangerous?

Yes and no. Sure, the classes

are intense and often end with people making sweat angels on the floor. However, the workout itself might only last a few minutes, with the rest of the hour dedicated to warming up, cooling down and developing specific skills.

To avoid injury, CCF is serious about proper form and good technique. New members spend two weeks on a basic course that covers the core movements (using PVC pipes instead of barbells) before they join regular classes, where limited attendance ensures individual attention. Coaches also go through a rigorous certification process, much like pilots clocking up thousands of hours in simulation before they’re entrusted with real lives on a real plane.

Yet there are still countless people who, perhaps put

off by a price that’s higher than traditional gyms, train without coaches or common sense and make YouTube “fails” that give CrossFit a bad name.

“People injure themselves and say it’s because of CrossFit, even though it might really be from sitting the wrong way at their desks for the past three years,” says one of the coaches. “And think of how many people get hurt at a normal gym because they go from one machine to the next, without any supervision or even adjusting the weights. That doesn’t happen here.”

CCF also places a lot of emphasis on recovery through proper nutrition and adequate sleep. (It promotes the Paleo “caveman” diet, which makes Banting seem like a piece of sugar-free cake.) Unfortunately, as someone who writes about food and attends late-night





industry events over 100 times a year, these two aspects of the fitness trifecta are things I don't always get right. At least I'm trying.

More than that, I'm focusing on tracking my own progress and not worrying about where I rank, compared with the group. At first, I often found myself coming away from a class feeling frustration and sometimes downright anger because I wasn't performing as well as everyone else. Never mind that they might have been doing CrossFit for several months or even several years; it was still tough not being where they were.

But then I reached a point where I realised that comparisons count for jack squat. (Don't even get me started on squats!) While you might think other people are scrutinising your every move and judging you for falling short, that's not the case. They've got their own stuff (and insecurities) going on. All that counts is your own performance, relative to yourself.

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“The number one reason people injure themselves at gym is because they're trying to do what the guy next to them is doing,” my yoga teacher said one Sunday morning. “So unless you're watching someone to correct your technique, focus on your own exercise.”

This wasn't the first time yoga

taught me a valuable life lesson. I'd been doing the same basic workouts for about five years after buying a beginner's DVD. I'd made great progress and was happy with where I was. Then I attended my first yoga class at the gym and pushed myself like never before. It's safe to say I could have made it through life without mastering a menagerie of complex poses. However, it's been amazing stretching myself (pun intended!) and seeing how much more I'm capable of.

At the same time, I'm not obsessing about mastering everything. I've accepted that there are some “pretzel” positions I might never do – and that's OK. I'm simply enjoying the experience for what it is, not trying to prove anything to anyone. I'm having a good time and that's more than enough. Success and failure don't exist, because I'm happy regardless of what happens. CrossFit is the same.

“Being physically fit is inspiring, feels good, gives you

more choices and adds both years to your life and life to your years,” declares the CCF website. It's about being and feeling strong, not just looking as if you are. No matter what fitness programme you choose, that's what matters most. Contact Cape CrossFit: ☎ 021 461 0243 ✉ @eugeneyiga ✉ info@capecrossfit.com 🌈



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