

You won't hear a drill sergeant shouting 'Drop and give me 50' at these early-morning outdoor exercise classes. Rather, they are full of enthusiastic troops wanting more results-producing PT.

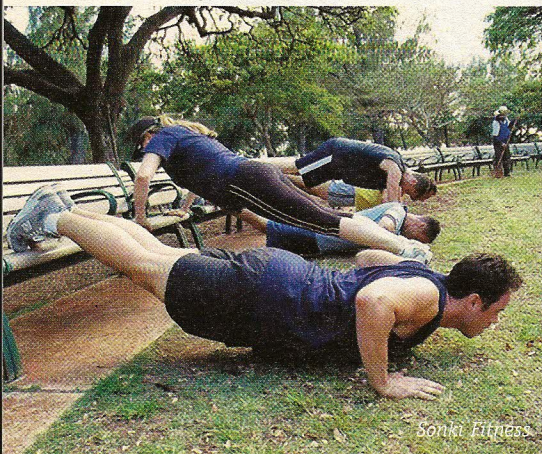


Beyond the Gym Fitness

Enlisting in BOOT CAMP

By Heidi Creed

You probably don't know many people who love the monotony and isolation of the treadmill, elliptical or stair climber. In fact, one of the quickest ways to drop out of a workout routine is to force yourself to do something you thoroughly don't enjoy.



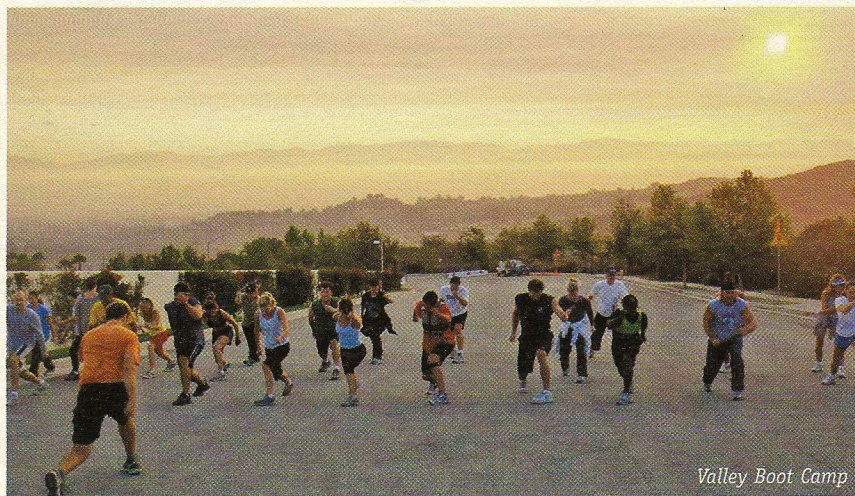
Sonki Fitness

Don't fret, if you are slaving away through an uninspiring and inefficient routine to get in shape, there are many enjoyable options out there. With the near-perfect weather year-round and the variety of terrain that SoCal has to offer, why not give an outdoor exercise class a try? We're talking drill sergeant-inspired, gritty, early-to-rise boot camp.

While what seems like shipping off to basic training may sound a little extreme, many boot camp instructors try to downplay the hardcore connotation and instead emphasize the fun and overall fitness that can be found for all levels while participating in their programs.

"We try to inspire and motivate people through positive reinforcement. And for every exercise, we encourage everyone to push just a little harder than what they think they can, and ensure that they do - in a nice way," says Sonki Hong of Santa Monica-based Sonki Fitness Boot Camp.

In terms of testing limits he adds, "We use the West Point and Army discipline, which is my background, but without



Valley Boot Camp

any intimidation or punishment. That way, people eventually learn to motivate themselves internally as opposed to externally, which is vital to making this a lifelong habit."

The value of creating a lifelong habit can't be emphasized enough when talking about health and fitness benefits. When speaking with "campers" from various boot camps, one point was consistently repeated: Boot camp has created a lasting improvement in each person's overall quality of life in a way that "traditional" workouts never did.

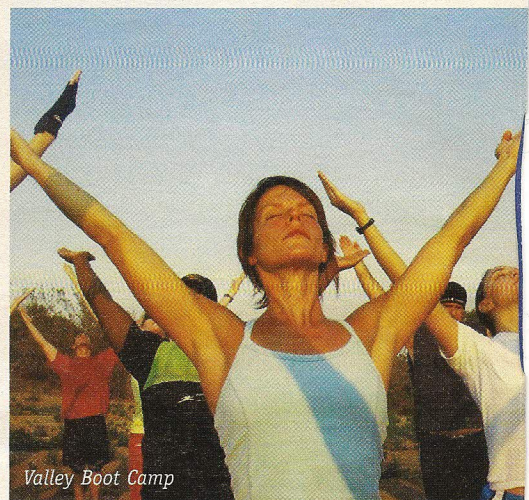
"I became strong enough to take up [many] outdoor activities I always wanted to try before, including hiking and camping. My stress level has completely decreased, and I have such a better balance to my life and mood," boasts Jessica Racioppo, 28, of West L.A.

Chris Nowers, 44, of Santa Monica, has always been active and involved in sports but says of his boot camp experience, "I can honestly say I feel like a transformed person, both mentally and physically. My energy level has increased out of all recognition, and I feel much happier with myself and my desire to keep going down the road of improvement, something I have never experienced before."

Nowers is roaring down that road, dropping 17 percent body fat, 24 pounds and two minutes from his one-mile time, down to a speedy 5:40.

You certainly don't have to be a track star or experienced weightlifter to excel either. Tim

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