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Fitness Tips From 5 Inspiring NYC Athletes

By Annie Georgia Greenberg – December 10, 2013

On Sundays, you can nearly always find us sitting on our sofa (or, okay, in our favorite gastropub) wearing our hometown team's football colors. But, we don't really care about Eli Manning's workout tips or favorite practice outfits (sorry, Eli). It just doesn't seem relevant. Instead, we turned to our own backyard and found five incredible female athletes who kick ass in NYC on the daily. We tapped these strong, inspiring movers and shakers (and weightlifters and boxers) to help us create a go-to guide for all kinds get-in-shape goodness.

There are at-home ab-tightening tips, lessons on what to eat while training, and even the top songs to blast to while getting your heart rate up. Plus, as we're wont to do, we styled these gorgeous women in equally standout looks, relying on designer styles from Norma Komali's new fitness line. As for those football players? It's safe to say these ladies could take them any day — in both a walk-off and an arm wrestling contest. Click through and Bring. It. On.

Fana Tesfagiorgis, Professional Dancer

Tell us about your weekly workout regimen.

“Working at Ailey is a workout in itself, but I do enjoy cross-training outside of dance. A few times a week, I train with Clifton Brown and Renee Robinson in Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis respectively, which helps me to use my energy to lengthen and strengthen my muscles throughout my joints. Four to five times a week, I do a swimming session that was introduced to me by Lisa Johnson-Willingham, incorporating kick-board laps as cardio, and a water-ballet barre with floaties around my ankles. It helps with my balance, kinesthetic awareness, and other discoveries that I can bring to ballet on land.”

How do you keep yourself motivated when you're tired?

“The opportunity to do what I love for a living is overwhelming motivation for me to keep pushing. Even when I'm exhausted, I try my best to give everything I can, because that's what our job will call for on those lengthy tours. Each audience deserves our best — mind, body, and soul. I may as well practice that way.”

What's your favorite part about your job?

“Performing is my favorite part of my job. To share my spirit with others, along with experiences, emotions, and thoughts undiluted by words is an honor. I also love that we can be artists and athletes, both to the extreme and that they complement one another differently each day.”

Tell us about your most memorable day at work.

“There was one piece that I got to learn that I absolutely loved, but just couldn't pick up. It took me forever to get the style, sequence, and coordination and to understand the music. It felt like a foreign language to my body in a way I had never felt in dance. A few of my friends in the company were extremely generous and coached me for hours during our off time. With their experience and advice — and many more hours of living room rehearsals — I finally started to get it. The first time I performed it felt like such a victory!”

What is your biggest accomplishment? And, what do you hope to accomplish in the next year?

“My biggest career accomplishments so far have been graduating from Ailey/Fordham's BFA Program and joining the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. I will remain focused, open, positive, and constantly seeking what's beyond my maximum, and trust God in His plans for the future.”

How is being an Alvin Ailey dancer different than dancing anywhere else?

“This company demands versatility in ways I never imagined. The numerous choreographers and genres of dance that we experience are an exciting challenge, and require an ability to switch gears instantly. “





What is some advice you'd give girls looking to dance professionally?

“To anyone looking to dance professionally, I'd encourage them to value each part of themselves equally: mind, body, and spirit. All of these elements will endure stress in some way before any growth happens, but if you remain focused, healthy, humble, and hopeful, anything you want to do is possible.”

Do you ever get stage fright? How do you combat it?

“I often get nervous before I perform, but once the curtain goes up, I don't notice the nerves anymore. The best way for me to prepare for a performance is to walk through the piece on stage while visualizing my movement. I also pray before each performance, keeping in mind our purpose to share what the audience needs to receive.”

Any memorable moments/funny stories you can tell us about being in the company?

“I once got a note from a friend and senior dancer to make sure I wasn't lip-synching on stage. She could see me from the wings! Sometimes I sing or hum in rehearsals because I'm really feeling the music, but I couldn't believe I'd done it during a performance! Embarrassing, but hilarious!”

What is your favorite song to dance to both on stage and off?

“On stage, I love dancing to Duke Ellington's music, both in “The River” and “Night Creature.” Off stage, I love dancing to Beyoncé's hits.”

What's your ideal on-duty outfit? What's your off-duty look?

“I love to wear Yumiko leotards and leggings when I'm in rehearsals. They give me clean and visible lines with colors that pop. Outside of dance, I like to dress for the occasion. Sometimes that means simple, comfortable jeans and sneakers. Other times, I like to mix elegant and fly styles, unique patterns and colors with simple accessories.”

Who did you look up to growing up? What about now?

“I always looked up to my family growing up. My mom and dad worked extremely hard and made many sacrifices for us to have the opportunities we've had. We were raised to keep love and family first. My brothers are the most creative people I know, I think because we were encouraged to always be ourselves and speak our minds. I still look up to my family — they're the reason that I'm here!”

What are two moves you love that readers can do at home?

“I love to pirouette (turn on one leg)! I also love a Horton Lateral-T, which you can find in every Alvin Ailey work!”

What's your guilty pleasure?

“Chocolate and peanut butter.”

What's your motto or theme song?

“‘Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’ — Matthew 17:20.”