

# BUSINESS

## TECHNOLOGY

# Where fitness finds a fit

Stow company seeks to motivate health-conscious crowd

By Bob Tremblay  
DAILY NEWS STAFF

Bad knees. They provide a ready-made excuse for would-be exercisers everywhere.

### SMALL BUSINESS

Work in Progress:

Consider it the ultimate knee-jerk reaction.

Holly Kouvo, a certified personal trainer and an aerobics instructor, has frequently heard this excuse during her 24 years in the exercise business. She has just decided to do something about it. In November, she released the "Easy On" the knees DVD, the first in a series of "Easy On" DVDs, designed to deal with problem body areas. Up later this year is a DVD for the lower back and in 2008 a DVD for the shoulders. About the only thing "Easy On" isn't easy on is excuses.

The 30-minute DVD requires no special exercise equipment, just comfortable clothes.

"I developed this series to make it easy for people to exercise while protecting the most vulnerable body parts," says Kouvo, founder and owner of Fitting Fitness In, a Stow-based fitness company. "The key to success when you have a problem with a certain body part is to strengthen the surrounding muscles, and these videos target how to do it."

The idea for the DVD actually came from a Fitting Fitness In client. "She requested that I do one," Kouvo recalls. "She said, 'If you go on vacation, we still need to see you to get motivated to exercise."

"So I did one, but I didn't want to do just a general exercise video because of the clientele I work with about 90 percent of them have knee issues."

Before making the DVD, Kouvo polled her clients of their top concerns. Knees came in first, followed by lower back and shoulders. Democracy in action.

The DVD, which retails for \$19.95, is available on the company's Web site. "It's done well and sales keep increasing," says Kouvo without getting into specifics.

Customer demand will decide whether more "Easy On" programs follow the knee, back and shoulder DVDs. The next one could focus on obese children. "That's a big issue now," she says.

As its name implies, Fitting Fitness In is all about helping people fit exercise into their lives. This can be accomplished through the DVD, one-on-one personal training, group personal training, group weight-loss clinics and virtual training.

Most of the one-on-one training takes place in a client's home. "If you haven't been exercising in a while, you may feel shy about going to a gym," Kouvo states on her Web site. "I understand, and that's why I'll come to you. I'll show you how to use the stuff you already have in your home (from lifting gallons of milk to creating your own 'circuit training' area in the basement).

"If you're interested in purchasing weights or other equipment, I'll guide you

through the process."

The hourly rate for one-on-one training is \$75.

Group training classes, which typically take place in a gym setting, have a minimum of three people. The hourly rate here is \$45.

The weight-loss clinics take a maximum of six people for each eight-week session. "We've found that this number creates the perfect synergy," says Kouvo. The last 13 participants in the clinics lost a total of 149 pounds, she says.

Three clinics start next week. See the Web site for the schedule. The clinic costs \$345 per person. Participants receive an exercise program, an exercise program for when the client travels and "a perfect portion diet dish" used to control food portions. "It's like Weight Watchers with exercise," says Kouvo.

The virtual fitness program is established after Kouvo meets with the client and sets up a personal training exercise regimen. Clients work out independently. Once a week, they fax or e-mail Kouvo their logs, and then participate in a 15-minute "fitness coaching" phone call.

This program costs \$85 a month for four 15-minute phone calls.

The company's additional services include home gym design, gift certificates and speaking engagements. Kouvo is available to speak at private or public workshops on a variety of topics concerning exercise, weight loss, nutrition and motivation.

While it works with all types of clients, Fitting Fitness In focuses on helping people who want to lose more than 100 pounds.

"A lot of my clients who want to lose that much weight are not going to go a gym so I come to their house," says Kouvo. "I work with them mostly once a week, sometimes twice a week, but my goal is for them to start exercising on their own without me there. They need to make exercise part of their lifestyle."

"A typical trainer normally works with their clients three times a week. I want the clients to be on their own. I'll be giving them guidance and motivation, but they need to make the changes in their life because to lose 100 pounds takes about a year and to keep it off, you need to make sure you maintain that lifestyle - be active, eat healthy and control the portions you're eating."

Different tools get utilized, such as a pedometer. "For people who need to lose a lot of weight, a pedometer is very motivating," says Kouvo. "It deals with how many steps you are taking per day vs. walking two miles."

"The portion control dish is designed to understand what a true portion size is. Part of the problem with eating today is the portions are just out of control."

"After they reach their goals, we do the virtual fitness program to keep them on track."

Fitting Fitness In has about 60 clients, with roughly 70 percent in personal training classes.

The remainder participate in the clinics,



DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY MIKE SPRINGER

Personal Trainer Holly Kouvo, right, and client Debbie Bruchez work out last week at Bruchez's home in Hudson.

though some overlap exists.

Kouvo started her company in 2001 after working in the software industry for 18 years. During that period, she also taught aerobics on the side.

"I wanted to stop working full time because I had two young daughters," she says. "I also wanted to work with people more one on one so I could help make a difference."

Kouvo has always liked to exercise, teaching aerobics classes in college and continuing to teach on and off throughout the years. "I knew that exercise always gave me energy," she says. "Although sometimes at 5 in the morning, I don't want to get up and exercise either. I tell my clients, I'm not much different from them."

She notes that after her second pregnancy she gained 40 pounds and also had to work to fit fitness into her busy life.

The biggest challenge clients face is getting motivated to work out, according to Kouvo. A personal trainer can't be at a client's home 24/7. That is unless said client has a hefty bank account. A trainer can point the client in the right direction, however.

"It's better to work with a trainer because they're going to give you effective exercises," she says. "I started working with a client in October and she exercises all the time, but she wasn't getting results so I gave her the appropriate exercises and the results were unbelievable."

"The best thing about working with a personal trainer is you have someone other than yourself to be accountable to. A personal trainer will push you beyond your comfort zone. We're also the clients' biggest cheerleader. When they accomplish something, we're going to let them know about it. And if they're slacking off, we're going to let them know about that, too."

"One of the worst things about being a personal trainer is that you know your clients are not always looking forward to

your visit. You have to get passed that. It keeps you motivated.

"One of the most critical things to remember for people who are working out is you need to change your exercise program every four to six weeks for it to be effective. After that time, your body gets adapted to the program. Change also reduces the boredom factor."

The company's Web site documents its success stories. "After working with Holly for 10 weeks, I lost 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches overall," writes Robyn Bradley of Framingham. "Holly helps me to focus, but she also doesn't 'beat me up' if I have a setback. She's real - I don't feel intimidated when I'm around her. She tries to find exercises that I like to do, and she's always willing to change something if I get bored."

For Kouvo, satisfaction comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, all preferably smaller after a period of time. "I love working with people," she says, "and I love to see the transformation that exercise does for people. Their energy level is increasing. Their mood is much better. When they start fitting into their clothes better, they're all excited about it, and I get to share in their success."

(Bob Tremblay can be reached at btremblay@cnc.com or 508-626-4409.)

### PROFILE

#### FITTING FITNESS IN

Owner: Holly Kouvo

Number of employees: 2

Industry: Fitness

**Background:** Based in Stow, Fitting Fitness In is a company that helps its clients get motivated to exercise, eat healthy and increase their energy level. Its Web address is [www.fitting-fitnessin.com](http://www.fitting-fitnessin.com).