

Achieving a healthy body and mind can be a tedious task, but with the help of personal trainers, that journey can be a little easier. Ingrid “Liz” Pickering, a personal trainer in Big Cypress, has been helping people accomplish their fitness and health goals for six years.

After realizing her passion is helping people reach the best version of themselves, Pickering went on to receive her associate degree in exercise science. Her methodology focuses on establishing consistent exercise and nutrition plans for clients to help individuals transition into a healthy lifestyle.

The Tribune spoke with Pickering to get some insight of the personal training world.

What does the day in the life of a personal trainer look like?

“It starts off early in the morning. Usually we start around 8 a.m. and see clients about every hour or hour-and-a-half. We have times blocked off where we hold classes, like here in Immokalee we have boot camp classes. During the summer we spend a majority of the time with the children. Every day we incorporate a fitness workout for the kids. ... Personally, I like to focus on mainly helping with weight loss, but we pretty much work with every age range. Our main goal is to focus on lowering body fat in the weight loss area to get people healthy and as active as possible.”

What’s your process for creating health and fitness plans for your clients?

“When I first get a client I try to find out what their goals are and get more background on them to see how active they are. I pretty much just try to learn about the person and then assess them to find out where they’re at [health-wise]. When I assess them I’m looking for health issues that could be addressed. From there, I create their individualized program, but the main focus is always to improve the quality of their health and their body. For a lot of people, their goal is weight-loss and I will focus on that, but first, I want to assess their entire body and find out on a scale of one to 10 — 10 being in extremely good health — where are you? Then we work on the little things and build and keep in mind the goals. We’re going to get to [the patient’s goals], but we want to improve cardiovascular and all the components of fitness. ... We keep in close contact here with the nutritionist and are very involved in eating and dietary patterns. We always touch every area to try to keep that balance and try to keep patients motivated to continue living a healthy life.”

How do you go about keeping clients motivated?

“Through using new routines, we try to keep up with the fitness industry — like the hottest different styles of training and different techniques — so we do anything from weight lifting to circuit to high interval intensity training to community walks and we let that be our goal. We try to get a lot of feedback from clients and take suggestions to go on from there. What helps is when [the Health Department] has challenges and the patients are very gung-hoe about challenges. On our down time, we’re brain storming. ... I really love nutrition so I’m always thinking of new ideas to put together or something to incorporate on flyers that help with training, as well.”

How can people stay on track during the holidays?

“We try to let them know during the holidays that if they want to eat something unhealthy, remember the 80-20 rule: 80 percent of the time, try to stay on track Monday through Friday, and the times you feel like you need to splurge, don’t look at it as a restriction. We’re trying to educate and give options so that people don’t think, ‘I can’t eat this or I can’t eat that.’ The main thing is to look at the different things you can eat and try to get in more wholesome food in the natural state. Try to avoid prepackaged or junk food. We just explain to them that this will help them feel so much

better; they're going to look tremendous and they're going to feel great."

What's your favorite healthy holiday meal or routine?

"If it's whole, healthy and organic and is going to make you feel good, I love it. Anything natural I love. As far as a holiday workout, I love bodyweight [exercises] that you can do around the house, things you can do with others at a park. Just go outside and be active. There's not a particular thing you have to do. I believe in just having fun with your workout. During the holidays, just take a family walk outside after meals. Even if it's only 20 minutes, go and do it. If you're tired when you get off work, just go walk around the block for 20 minutes. It's better to have 20 minutes four or five times a week than to work out too hard for two hours two days a week. It's about emphasizing the lifestyle. If someone isn't able to make a session, I'll email them a workout they can do in the living room. It's not just at the gym, this is a lifestyle, and people generally love that."

What do you find to be the most rewarding part of personal training?

"Just to see someone actually implement the healthy ideas and stuff we give them and to see them get closer to their goals. When they notice how they feel different, they gain more confidence. It's the most rewarding thing."

What sparked your interest in personal training?

"I always had a passion to see people be the very best possible versions of themselves. That was the main reason. I always just loved the way you feel after you exercise and when you eat right. I wanted to share this with people. When I began to exercise daily and put good stuff in my body, I began to feel different and it was like a new person. It's my goal to get people who have chronic conditions or who don't feel good to change."

If you could offer one tip for success in health and fitness goals, what would it be?

"Adopt healthy habits and be consistent with them."

Ingrid Pickering is available at the Herman L. Osceola Gymnasium in Big Cypress Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information or to make an appointment with a personal trainer, visit seminoletriberecreation.com.

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