

The Cool Down: Health and fitness

Zoom Webinar 29 May 2020

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THE COOL DOWN

FRIDAY 29TH MAY 1-2PM ZOOM



Jaimie Chin-Dickey
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 BIGCAT |  |  | 

On Friday 29th May 2020, Big Cat launched the Cool Down, a Zoom Webinar series featuring some of the biggest names and brightest minds from across health, fitness, and wellness. The Cool Down is a series of online panel discussions that will give audience members an opportunity to learn more about a range of topics related to health, fitness, and training in these unprecedented times.

Key questions were put to guests Jamie Chin-Dickey and Steve Orton about their experience of doing health and fitness in lockdown, their opinions on COVID-19's impact on the industry including lessons that can be learned from emerging trends, and their predictions for the future of the health and fitness industry.

Jaimie Chin-Dickey is Head of Studios at Frame which has seven locations in London. Jaimie is also a boutique fitness consultant and co-founder of ThreeSixty Retreats.

Steve Orton has been part of the fitness industry for 13 years and has been integral to the success of the UK's biggest fitness expo, BodyPower.

The lockdown has led to less healthy lifestyles and minds

The outbreak has already had an impact on various personal and health-related behaviours. Just over 3 in 10 internet users across the U.S. and UK say they're working less, with a quarter also noticing a reduction in the hours of sleep they're currently getting.

Overall, 45% of internet users in the UK and U.S. report that their mental health has worsened during the coronavirus crisis, with the majority (37%) saying it's slightly rather than greatly worsened. Although the two markets have an equal rate of self-reported mental health conditions, the outbreak has had a bigger impact on the UK in this respect (54% report worsened mental health vs. 44% in the U.S.).

The fact that two thirds of those concerned with their diet and fitness also report worsening mental health (21 percentage points higher than the average) shows how interlinked our physical and mental wellbeing are and that our psychological wellness should be treated with the same seriousness as our physical health.

What is important for the health and fitness industry during and after the COVID-19 lockdown?

Three things: brand identity, digital, and community.

Jaimie says that Studios Frame has started to ask questions such as "*How is our brand perceived and accessed by our audience?*" and "*How do we make fitness fun?*" Lockdown has changed many things about the way society works, and has had a massive impact on the health and fitness industry.

Six in ten (62%) gym-going Britons say they would feel uncomfortable returning when lockdown comes to end, compared to 30% who would be willing to work out there.

The numbers are reversed for younger British gym users. Among 18 to 24 year olds – the group most likely to be exercising more at home too – 56% would be comfortable returning to the gym, with 36% being uncomfortable.

Therefore, "it is crucial to adapt our approach", says Jaimie. Understanding how people are now engaging with the health and fitness world – be that working out at home, using items in an everyday home in place of gym equipment, or keeping up to date with their fitness community online instead of meeting at the gym – is important to inform how we should interact with our audience. For many people during lockdown, health and fitness has become more about having fun than necessarily being totally drilled and goal-oriented. Digital platforms providing

on-demand content such as live classes have been a big hit with our community! Steve adds that brands looking to generate and facilitate online community hubs for customers can keep the momentum going for those people who thrive on competition between members to stay motivated while working out at home.

Peloton and other digital fitness brands have found themselves in a more fortunate position than their brick-and-mortar counterparts. This is because they are already equipped to offer remote fitness to customers, and have naturally seen an uptick in demand as a result of people being prevented from working out in-person. Taking Peloton as an example, the company has understood the new emphasis on the human need for “of a supportive community and a way to clear your mind” now more than ever. Based on this and also new fears over financial concerns for many people, they extended their free trial to 90 days..

What is the ‘new normal’ and what has changed?

In truth, the barrier between ‘exciting’ and ‘survival’ is constantly shifting. The current situation has forced brands’ innovation and creativity. It is important to maintain the digital landscape after lockdown restrictions have been lifted enough for people to return to the gym. Both Steve and Jaimie believe that brands that introduce more fitness classes outdoors and provide content for people doing workouts from home will recover better. Brands that adopt a framework that pursues a hybrid existence between the physical and virtual delivery of health and fitness services will see quicker improvement than brands that only focus on one of these aspects.

How do we deal with these changes in the health and fitness industry?

There is a shift toward lifestyle pieces. One emerging trend is the ‘multipurpose gym’ experience. For example, boutique fitness brands are on to a winner if they can show how their customers can wear boutique leggings in the gym but also wear them out to lunch so that the leggings are not just a one-use, one-activity item, and instead prove a good investment with multiple uses.

During lockdown, people are getting back in touch with their mind set and their body’s needs. Developing the mind-body connection is something that brands can do to help their customers. While some individuals are good at maintaining their daily routine and are able to set goals to challenge themselves during lockdown, many others are losing focus in their fitness. Being a brand that is less goal-oriented would benefit the broader audience that is consumer drive. Steve believes competitiveness between members will be one of the main drivers for getting people back into the gym; however, he also says that a brand needs to acknowledge different kinds of gym-goers to bring back the market.

How can brands make their customers comfortable when coming to the gym?

In addition to the essential physical care gyms will have to provide for their customers, such as high standard washing facilities and anti-bacterial stations across the gym, "mental health is also a vital piece of fitness", says Jaimie. "We need to unite this with physical and community elements."

Steve points out that the health and fitness market is moving from body building and aesthetics to feeling great too. Both Steve and Jaimie stress that the following elements should be considered in order to survive during lockdown and beyond: clothing, health (mental and physical), aesthetic, understanding what training does (science), sub-communities (that empower people), and accessibility.

How do we keep mentally strong through fitness?

Jaimie and Steve offer their tips on how to stay maintain mental strength during lockdown. Number one: build a routine that introduces new challenges. And why not include your family in the process? Get the kids outdoors in a family activity.

Two: Jaimie has been listening to podcasts as a way to motivate herself to get up and go on a regular basis; while resting the body while listening, it is working out the mind. Some of the podcasts she recommends are: 'How I built this' by NPR where business people are sharing their stories and it automatically makes me feel a lot better, because we are all a community. Another is the 'School of Greatness'."

The SoG pod is described as a pod to "share inspiring stories from the most brilliant business minds, world class athletes and influential celebrities on the planet to help you find out what makes great people great." with one review stating "Every episode is filled with something new to learn and always inspires"

Three: Variety. Doing the same thing over and over again may work as a drill for some people, but for others it gets tiresome and dull. Changing up your workout routine can help keep that fire burning. It will shake up your day and provide a welcome refresh from your day at work (with many of us using online social platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, staring at the screen takes up a large portion of the day). Now is the perfect opportunity to try some new things. Pick out a new workout that you haven't done before and give it a go. You may find something you really enjoy! Finally, focusing on your health (and not your looks) can go a long way to improving your mental strength. Remember, though, that 'health' involves both body AND your mind. The two work in tandem. So Jaimie and Steve recommend members get on the bike and join the ride to better mental and physical fitness while keeping in touch with the fitness community.



Speaking of riding a bike, the second webinar of the Cool Down series is Friday 5th June at 1-2pm with guests Andy Tennant, Professional track and road racing cyclist, and Ollie Armstrong, Psychologist at Track Elite in Birmingham.

Brands should take some time to cool down during lockdown

With the health and fitness industry running hot before lockdown, it has taken a hit. However, Jaimie and Steve encourage the industry to seize this opportunity as a chance to cool down and reflect on the essence of what health and fitness is, what it means to be people, and how this can be implemented and improved for when the gyms are back up and running again.

If you want to know more detail about what was talked about at the first Cool Down webinar, it is now up on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/304MNNe>.