

INTERVIEW BY LAUREN DOUGLASS

FRANCI COHEN

Personal trainer, certified nutritionist and exercise physiologist Franci Cohen talks with me about her total-body cardio resistance workout SPIDERBANDS®, discusses her passion for health and fitness and shares her wisdom on staying safe while getting fit in the cold.

What is SPIDERBANDS and how does it work?

SPIDERBANDS is a unique total-body cardio resistance workout that leverages gravity and your body weight with many intense exercise modules such as rebounding, kickboxing and indoor cycling. It is unlike any other program or fitness equipment in the industry and offers a fun and innovative twist to the group exercise community, while providing a kick-ass total body amusement park experience!

What kind of approach do you take towards health and fitness?

My approach is definitely more of a "tough love" type. In my life, I always jump at the chance to do anything that others deem "impossible," and I foster that behavior at home with my own children and in the gym with my clients. "Say you can, and you will!" "If it doesn't challenge you, it will not change you." "Nothing worthwhile comes easy." These words hold true to my beliefs and are near and dear to my heart.

What is your favorite part of being a fitness coach?

I enjoy making people happy – always have. In a world where people are struck with tragedy and even simple worries on a daily basis, I feel blessed to be able to uplift people's spirits and improve both their physical and mental well-being. Additionally, I am a bit of a science geek and use many scientific-based theories when designing my classes in order to achieve optimal results. When my theories translate into reality, it is really very cool.

What advice do you have for someone who is afraid of being judged at the gym or in a group fitness class?

There will always be someone prettier and someone uglier than you. There will always be someone skinnier and someone fatter than you. If you spend your life worrying about how others perceive you, you'll live a very unhappy life. You will never please everyone all of the time, but as long as you live your life the way you see fit and you can be proud to look at yourself in the mirror each day, that's all that matters.





When exercising in the cold, are there any health concerns we should look out for? What can people do to prevent getting hurt or sick while working out outdoors?

Layers are best. Often, people overdress prior to an outdoor workout because they anticipate extreme cold, but exercising generates a ton of heat. Dressing in layers is key. Your first layer of clothes should consist of a moisture-wicking fabric to draw sweat away from the body. Cotton tees are the worst. On top of that, you can add your sweats to keep you comfortable but not too warm – no puffy down jackets or heavy sweaters. During your workout, simply add or remove layers as needed.

Protect your extremities from the cold by keeping ears, hands and feet covered and warm. In cold temperatures, bloodflow is concentrated near your organs and away from your extremities, putting them at risk for frostbite. Also, be aware of your terrain! Don't go running at night in the dark on unfamiliar, uneven ground. Choose running paths that are smoothly paved and designed for running. If you are running in the daytime, protect your eyes with a hat or sunglasses and your skin with sunscreen; sunscreen is not only for the summer. When running at night, run in well-lit areas such as parks or streets with street lights. One uneven piece of ground can lead to a devastating fall.

What's the importance of a warm-up before a workout?

Warming-up gives you a better workout. When you go outside in the cold, your muscles are tight and bloodflow to the extremities is diminished. Warming-up with either static or rhythmic-limbering stretches will increase blood flow to the muscles, making them more elastic and more receptive to growth. Beginning your morning jog without a proper warm-up can reap havoc on the body and possibly cause an abrupt tear to your muscles or ligaments.

Why do you think group fitness classes are a great way to get motivated?

Exercising alone or with a personal trainer definitely has some perks, but nothing can compare to the amount of energy that erupts in a group fitness class. With group exercise, the energy and drive by others around you can push you to work harder and soar higher. The music, the sweat, the people ... It's like a rock concert for your body and nirvana for your soul. I am definitely a little biased, as I am a HUGE group exercise advocate, but truth be told, when you're dragging your tired self to the gym at 8 a.m., you're definitely going to "bring it" when you have a herd of fitness gurus cheering you on.

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