

GET FIT FAST

Three women, three workouts: Bazaar editors put the latest fat-burning, body-firming classes to the test

HOT YOGA

By Elisa Lipsky-Karasz

I'M DOING JUMPING JACKS, dripping sweat, to Britney Spears's "Big Fat Bass." "Sprint! Fold! Chaturanga! Down Dog!" my teacher orders as he casually adjusts the thermostat. It reads 110 degrees. I wonder if I'm hallucinating.

This isn't your usual holistic yoga class. This is Pure Core Hot, an hour of non-stop cardio, one of several heated classes at Pure Yoga, a superluxe fitness emporium in New York City. And at Pure, "hot" means 98 to 110 degrees.

As oppressive as that sounds, "the hot classes are always our most popular," says instructor Kay Kay Clivio, Pure's reigning yoga queen. "People have limited time to work out. Hot yoga speeds up the process; it creates a sense of peace, but it's also an intense cardiovascular workout."

And I need drastic action. My back aches after six months of no workouts, my stomach is in knots, and I'm getting pudgy (thanks to sundaes with my husband).

WEEK 1: My first class is led by Karen, who plays a soothing soundtrack by Adele. I break a sweat immediately but combat the heat with Pure's cold eucalyptus-infused towels. The other students (including a number of buff guys) are all blooming into Bird of Paradise poses while I wobble in Warrior One. "I know it's hard for hot-yoga people to say, 'It's okay,'" Karen says. "You are all type A personalities." I try to be Zen about my tight hamstrings and immobile hips.

I fall behind on my promised four classes a week, so on Saturday I do a double. After the first class, as I break to get a coconut water, I pass a little boy balancing on his forearms. "I did yoga with him in my belly," says his proud mom. Oy.

Yoga Mom is in my second class, which is a boot camp led by Carlos, a smiley capoeira expert. Yoga Mom walks out after round three of Mountain Climbers. "Ha," I think. "You want to see type A?"

WEEK 2: The woman next to me is wearing a bathing suit with tiny shorts. Controversial, but I don't totally blame her. "It's like a sauna in here," says a guy who looks like a cute extra from *Dude, Where's My Car?* He turns out to be our teacher, and he has a following, including a friend who is a former ballet dancer. Maybe I'm in the right place?

In my eighth class, I have a breakthrough: I can do Crow Pose, balancing on my hands with my knees resting on the backs of my arms.

WEEK 3: Doing Pigeon Pose in my 10th class, I'm surprised by a strange sensation on my leg. Turns out it's my upper torso touching my thigh—the heat is helping me stretch. I can even do the Wheel.

"You look so skinny," my husband tells me. I don't believe him but I do believe my clothes, which all fall better. It also helps that I'm treating myself to Organic Avenue juices instead of ice cream sundaes (well, sometimes).

WEEK 4: I finish the month with a bonanza of classes. The first is "heated" Figure 4, a bar class. I figure I can take it, but 30 minutes later, my legs are shaking. "Just 40 more," our teacher trills as we do bottom tucks. Afterward, climbing stairs seems impossible.

I report for Pure Core Hot the next day, and each squat feels like someone is drilling into my rear. That night I take to my bed with heating pads because I have a private with Carlos in the morning.

"It takes a special person to do privates with me," he says. No kidding: We do an hour of intense cardio, including capoeira. By the end I can't walk, but at least there's a new gap between my upper thighs.

The following day I have a private session with Kay Kay. We work on my wobbly Warrior One, and she helps me do a headstand and a handstand. I'm so elated, I don't even feel the heat.

THE PAYOFF: After 18 classes, my back pain is gone, my posture is straighter, and my tummy is calm. For a gala, I slip into a small-waisted gown that was made for my grandmother in 1938, when she was 19. It fits like it was made for me. ►



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