

Get Fit

BY LAUREN A. GOLT

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Johnny Gillespie, 33, is the owner of both Johnny Fitness and Empowered Yoga, which promotes such unique exercises as vinyasa and Thai-yoga. A firm believer in both the physical and mental aspects of exercise, Gillespie first gained an appreciation for physical fitness in middle school. He started weight training in seventh grade when his track coach suggested lifting weights to improve his strength and speed. Gillespie immediately fell in love with strength training, and later discovered that yoga was ideal for toning and strengthening the body. In 1999, Gillespie started Johnny Fitness. In 2002, he opened

Wilmington Yoga, recently renamed Empowered Yoga. He now has two yoga centers -- one in Wilmington and one in Newark. Each year Gillespie organizes a retreat in Costa Rica that allows his clients to experience a strength training program at a more intense level. Gillespie, a resident of West Chester, Pa.,

also does his best to promote a healthy lifestyle. He doesn't adhere to a strict diet, but he tries to limit unhealthy foods and eats everything in moderation. When Gillespie isn't training, teaching, practicing or running his businesses, he enjoys snowboarding and spending time with his family.

What prompted you to start exercising?

I was a high-level runner in grade school. My coach started me on weight training and I fell in love right away. As I continued with weights, I noticed how my performance was enhanced and that made me a believer in the importance of weight training.

What are you hoping to achieve?

I am hoping to achieve longevity and happiness. Exercise for me is about my mind, spirit and body. The ultimate goal is about achieving balance and enjoying my life.

What's been the best part?

My health and overall awareness of my body has been a positive effect of physical fitness. Also, creating a business and developing a career based on my passion and core values. I love helping people and getting them to believe in themselves.

What's been the toughest part?

I would have to say injury, although since I have begun practicing yoga, my injuries have just about become extinct. Yoga is the only system of exercise that balances the muscular skeletal system. This brings the body into a more balanced state which equates to less injury.

What keeps you motivated?

The way I feel about myself when I am exercising and the feeling that I am doing something good for my health.

How do you find time?

It is a priority, like brushing your teeth. It's that simple.

What advice do you have for people considering a fitness program?

If you don't make time for your health, then don't expect your health to make time for you. My dad always says crawl, walk and then run. Start off with something easy and just get moving. Slowly build and realize that fitness is a lifestyle. A fitness-conscious person realizes it is about the journey not the destination.