

Cultural Daily

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High Intensity Communities: An Overview of the Unique HIIT Exercise Culture

Tod Hardin · Thursday, July 20th, 2017

Many articles have been published lately about HIIT—short for high-intensity interval training—and the numerous ways it helps your body. Some even go as far as to discuss how these advantages extend well beyond those associated with achieving a lower weight and greater levels of fitness than those you'd ordinarily expect to obtain from a high-intensity interval workout program.

For instance, on May 10, 2017, U.S. News & World Report shared what they called “[eye-opening benefits](#)” of HIIT. These benefits included studies linking HIIT with healthier blood sugar levels, improved cardiovascular function, and the way it also works to keep aging muscles steady and strong instead of just watching them break down as the years pass by.

One study referenced in this article even found that a whopping 92 percent of HIIT participants actually liked this style of workouts more than they did consistent, moderate-intensity exercises. That's huge in a society that tends to dislike physical exercise overall.

HIIT Offers Something More, Community

Regardless of these benefits though, people who engage in this particular form of exercise know that this method of getting and staying in top physical shape offers something more. Yes, the health benefits may be considered good enough, but HIIT also offers its participants a truly unique culture that you don't always find in other workout programs.

A commercial for [Les Mills HIIT workouts](#) – one of the bigger players in the high intensity fitness scene

Shrink Tank refers to this culture as simply a “community.” What's notable about this is that it's something that this publication references as being “hard to find” today. In other words, engaging in HIIT training with others involves striking up new friendships. It's about creating a network of support from people with common goals and common interests. Some even compare the culture created in exercise programs like HIIT to religion because it's so strong and focused.

HIIT As a New Religion?

Case in point: One online piece published by the Independent calls the [workout program](#)

Bodypump (which is part of the “Body” workout series that includes Bodystep, Bodyjam, Bodyattack, and several others) a “cult.” It also refers to the people doing Body workouts as “millions of devotees.”

Think about that for a moment. Has HIIT really reached the level where it could be considered a type of religion sect? Has its culture become one where its followers are such strong believers that they could be swayed to do what most people wouldn’t do? In essence, the answer is yes because most people don’t like hard physical workouts, yet, HIIT still has a strong following.

Cults and religious sects also generally come with their own garb and HIIT fits that bill too as Body workout creator Les Mills has apparently partnered with another fitness giant, Reebok, to come out with a whole new clothing line. According to Australian Leisure Management, their goal in this joint endeavor is to provide HIIT practitioners workout wear that helps instructors and class attendees alike (people they refer to as “devotees”) maximize their workouts as well as “look good inside and outside of the studio.”

CrossFit Is There Too

HIIT isn’t the only type of exercise that is creating a culture which permeates all areas of life either as some could argue that CrossFit fits securely in this definition too. For example, on June 24, 2017, The Atlantic published an article titled “[The Church of CrossFit](#).” In it, the author discusses how gyms are not only fulfilling people’s fitness needs, they’re actually filling their spiritual needs to.

If you’ve ever performed grueling workout programs like HIIT and CrossFit, you may have been there before yourself. When you feel as if all of your energy is spent, like there is no earthly way you can possibly give any more effort, like you’re ready to give up, you start looking to a higher power for the will to keep going. You beg for some type of divine intervention, some bigger force to help you pull through.

Intervention Through Your HIIT Network

Sometimes this type of intervention comes at the hands of other class attendees. It only makes sense that going through this kind of body and mind-exerting experience with others could certainly create a unique type of culture. It’s like being on a reality television show like *Naked and Afraid* where you must learn to rely on those around you to help you succeed, to help you survive.

To be on the same journey, accomplishing the same things as other HIIT participants, sharing the same feelings and the same views, would definitely make you a community. A pretty strong one at that. Sounds like a good culture to be a part of.

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