



Leg pulls

instructors are better quality. And as we've opted in, we're more fired up when we arrive.'

Boutique studios are now kitted out so that all our focus is on the star. The theatre-style layout means you focus entirely on them. And the lighting is dark, creating 'more intimacy', according to Dr Segar.

It even goes as far as the website. While exercise class timetables used to just have the instructor's name next to their class, now gym websites boast full profiles of their stars, complete with professional photoshoots.

And just as a revealing celebrity interview makes us think we're bonding with the star, so gyms divulge personal details of their instructors, in an attempt to make us feel closer to them. At one of London's newest studios you can even order your instructor's favourite shake at the smoothie bar. 'The personal connection is enhanced by social media,' says Helen O'Connor, a chartered psychologist, specialising in sports and exercise. 'Fans are now able to peek inside their lives, as carefully curated as those "private" lives are.'

Inside the tribe

It amounts to what Dr Segar calls a 'tribal effect' – that to be part of these gyms is to feel accepted, included. 'We call it

the "everybody's doing it" principle,' reveals Dr Segar. 'Research by psychologist Dr Robert Cialdini shows that when we're told our peers are doing something, we're persuaded to do it too. Whether that's recycling or SoulCycle.'

And when your instructor congratulates you publicly via Instagram or Twitter on a job well done, you know you've made it into their tribe. 'We encourage our instructors to interact with individuals after the sessions,' reveals Talilla Henchoz, marketing manager at London gym 1Rebel. 'Whether it's post-session group selfies, setting fitness challenges, or a recovery lunch. This personal touch is crucial as it's a positive acknowledgement that the instructor has noticed and is connecting with that individual.'

I am forced to confront the fact that Tom probably likes every Instagram picture that plugs his gym or class. I am also aware that I'm probably being sweet-talked into handing over almost double what I used to pay for my gym membership.

But so what? I used to do two classes a month; now I do two a week. Unless my wide-eyed worship morphs into me trying to steal Tom's discarded gym towels, I'm just going to roll with it. I'm fitter and happier, and clapping along like an eager seal is good, sweaty fun. **WH**



Ask our expert

The expert:

James Duigan

Who: PT and founder of Bodyism (bodyism.com)



Q I went to bed late; should I skip my morning workout?

A If your body needs sleep, then sleep. Interrupting your circadian patterns too often means you'll feel tired during the day, struggle to fall asleep at night and alter your body's levels of the hunger hormones leptin and ghrelin. Translation: cravings will sabotage your workout. Aim for a minimum of seven hours' sleep. Missing out on 30 minutes of shut-eye is okay, but if it's much more, try shifting your workout to later in the day. Lunchtime is ideal as research shows it can boost afternoon energy, meaning you might perform better *and* see results faster.

Q When it comes to strength training, is body weight enough to make a difference?

A Body-weight training is uncomplicated, inexpensive and effective. While cardio exercises are great for fat loss, combining a 30-minute run with a set of bodyweight exercises, such as pull-ups, squats and lunges, will add muscle definition and tone. Tweaking the angle of an exercise can also take it to the next level. Try an elevated push-up. Putting your feet on the lowest step of a staircase (with your hands on the floor) increases the load on your upper body and abs.

WHOA! WHEN THE LOVE GOES TOO FAR

Sometimes it's less hero-worship, more Single White Female. These instructors reveal what not to do if you want to avoid that restraining order...

'One class-goer figured out I had a son from Facebook photos. He bought me a model aeroplane kit as a gift for him. It was well meant, but creeped me out.' **SAMANTHA**

'I Instagrammed that I love celery, cucumber and apple smoothies. Someone from a class made one and left it outside. I never found out who it was.' **JASON**

'There's one class-goer who Snapchats me pictures of nearly every meal she has, selfies of her out running and "inspirational" quotes; about four every day. When she sent me one of her hungover (seemingly naked) in bed, asking for recovery tips, I stopped opening them.' **KATIE**

'I was doing a pigeon stretch on the floor of the studio after a class, thinking I was alone. Then I noticed the door was ajar and saw a female member taking sneaky pictures of me with her phone. She ran off when I saw her.' **ELLA**