

## DROPPING THE DOHA DOZEN

# HEEDING EXPERT ADVICE

THIS MONTH IN MY ONGOING BATTLE TO LOSE WEIGHT IN DOHA, I TURN TO EXPERT ADVICE. I'VE INTERVIEWED FOUR OF THE FITTEST MEN AND WOMEN IN DOHA TO GET THEIR TAKE ON HOW TO STAY HEALTHY IN QATAR. HERE'S WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY:

BY CHRISTINA MARIA PASCHYN

## DAMIAN RUATARA 36, FROM NEW ZEALAND

**D**amian Ruatara is a fitness instructor at the Intercontinental Hotel. He teaches Kickfit, an intense martial arts cardio class, and Freestyle Step, a remixed version of the classic aerobic class. He will soon lead the Les Mills Body Pump classes at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

### What are your top tips for staying fit in Doha?

Mix it up! Traditional strength training or group fitness classes are great tools by themselves but can be even better combined! Continually changing your fitness regime will keep both your mind and body fresh!"

### What about nutrition?

Sugar is the enemy; as there is SO much sugar "hidden" in today's foods, you're already getting enough when you eat healthy foods (fruit, breads, rice and potatoes), without indulging in sweets and sodas.

### How do you eat healthy in Doha?

All in moderation – Friday brunch is almost a tradition in Qatar, so don't try to fight it, but know your limits! Every weekend at the W or the Ritz will show around the waistline regardless of how many calories burnt on the treadmill! Portion sizes will also help to stay fit, too big and your metabolism slows down.

Whole foods are key. The less processed the better: Chicken and beef, homemade vegetable soups (thanks to my wife), salads (minus the sauces) and lots of eggs! I'm also a nut-junkie; I always have dried fruit and nuts (unsalted – remember the less processed the better) in a jar wherever I go – instant energy and protein in one! But my favourite go to snack has to be peanut butter and banana on toast.... Hmm, maybe not for everybody.

### What's the big thing in fitness right now?

Functional Training is the new "buzz phrase" in today's fitness world. Using the body the way it was meant for not only increases your calories burnt, but will also help you in your everyday life, whether it be carrying the baby or the groceries. Functional Training imitates normal day activities while safely working at a higher, calorie-burning intensity. Using tools like TRX, Kettle bells, Swiss balls and Medicine balls to name a few. Functional training is a great new way to improve fitness and look good at the same time.

### What advice do you have for fitness beginners?

With so much contradicting information available nowadays, it's almost impossible to decide whom to believe...But remind yourself that everybody is different; what may work for Arnold Schwarzenegger or Lance Armstrong, may not necessarily work for you. The eating plan your best friend is on may make you fatter! The only way you will know for sure is to start somewhere. Only then will you begin to understand which path maybe the right one for you. So if you haven't already, Start NOW!! Good luck!



# VALERIE JEREMIENKO

## 46, FROM AUSTRALIA

**V**alerie Jeremijenko is a woman of many hats. She's the assistant dean of student affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, and the director and owner of Yama Yoga Studios. Jeremijenko has taught yoga since 1991 and is the author of *How We Live Our Yoga*, published by Beacon Press.

### What are your top tips for staying fit in Doha?

Practice yoga. Yoga can be done any time and any place and it grows into something much more than a fitness regime. What I encourage our students to do is to attend a yoga class at least once or twice a week and then slowly build up a home practice from there. I also suggest complementing yoga practice with walking and a mindful diet.

### What about nutrition? How do you eat healthy in Doha?

I am a big advocate of green juices, smoothies and a near vegetarian diet. There are lots of great fish in Doha and you can also find locally grown fruit and vegetables.

### Do you have any other fitness secrets or looking good tips you would like to share?

I am inspired by Ayurveda, which is a sister science of yoga. This focuses on diet and knowing your dosha type as the main principle of health and beauty. I am equal measure of pitta (fire) and vatta (wind), and for me this translates into making sure I use a lot of heavy oils on my skin and also stay out of the sun.

### Do you have a favourite healthy restaurant or supermarket in Doha?

I like going to the locally-run fruit and vegetable stores to get locally-grown produce. When I get time I like to go to the fruit and vegetable market.

### What is your greatest food temptation? And how do you overcome it?

Chocolate and coffee. And I don't overcome it, I just try to moderate it and find the darkest chocolate possible.

### How has Yama Yoga benefited the community?

When I first got to Doha I was one of the few yoga teachers. Now due to our teacher-training programme and the way Yama Yoga has fostered yoga in the community, there are many of us and we are teaching yoga all over Doha... We offer pre- and post-natal programs, corporate yoga programs, mindfulness and stress reduction programs...We are also now collaborating with Al Dana Club to offer a fully-developed ladies only programme that will address the needs of our Arabic sisters. Doha is changing so quickly and most of us here work so hard, so it is nice to find those peaceful moments in a safe and supportive community and this is what Yama aims to provide.





## JONNY PARR

### 28, FROM SCOTLAND

**J**onny Parr is a personal trainer, strength & conditioning coach and the manager of the personal training company Prime Fitness. He says there are a lot of misconceptions about fitness out there, and he wants to set the record straight: “For years, one of the most hotly debated topics in the fitness industry has been fat loss. Many people are completely misinformed pertaining to this topic. It seems the majority believe steady-state cardio methods of training, such as jogging or cycling, will reap the best benefits. Although this form of training can be used as part of a well-rounded program, it is most certainly not the best method for fat loss.

By far, the most important factor for fat loss is diet. No matter how intense or carefully designed your program is, no form of training can out train a poor diet.

You should engage in activities that promote an elevation in metabolism and EPOC (Excess Post-Exercise Oxygen Consumption). This simply refers to the number of calories you burn while at rest. Steady-state cardio burns calories during the session itself but has little effect on EPOC. You want to train your body in a way that your metabolism is elevated for 24 hours a day, not just one.

What’s the answer? Resistance training and high intensity cardio methods such as HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) will reap the best results as they raise your EPOC considerably for a long period of time

(24-48hrs) and also promote LBM (Lean Body Mass). The more LBM you have, the more calories you burn.”

#### What are your other fitness secrets?

Core training will be vital to matters such as performance, posture and well being. The primary role of the core is to stabilize the spine. You should not perform endless crunches to train the core. This puts your spine at risk of injury, particularly at the lumbar region (lower back) due to excessive rounding in this area. Movements as basic as the plank or more advanced variations such as ab wheel roll-outs are very effective at teaching you to stabilize your spine by correctly activating your core muscles.

#### Do you have a favourite place to work out in Doha?

I enjoy training at many compound gyms [and at] Aspire, the Corniche, and Education City. You do not need to be confined to the gym to get results. Certainly, a large number of clients enjoy the pleasures of the sun and a bit of green.

#### What is your greatest food temptation?

I actually love McDonald’s burgers. I don’t disregard this vice either, I simply only eat a ‘happy meal’ once a week as part of my cheat day. The other six days I try to eat as well as possible. This makes my cheat day all the more guilt free and satisfying.





## BECKY COOPER

### 25, FROM WALES

**B**ecky Cooper is a personal trainer and nutrition advisor in Doha who works alongside boyfriend Jonny Parr at Prime Fitness.

#### **What is one of the biggest misconceptions women have about exercise and fitness?**

Let me say right up front that I am a big fan of strength training. Unfortunately, a common falsehood exists in society suggesting that women will become bulky if they strength train.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Women do not produce enough testosterone to emulate the muscular structures of men, so rest assured you are safe from becoming 'The Hulk'. The positive effects of strength training actually have a hugely positive effect on every aspect of a female's performance. To name a few, improvements will be made in terms of bone density, a faster metabolism (providing the amount of resistance is challenging) and aesthetic appearance such as muscle definition.

#### **What role should nutrition play in a person's fitness regime?**

It is essential that you eat a well-balanced diet that will not only keep your mind and body fuelled but will also help prevent heart disease and obesity. I try to achieve this through including fruit and vegetables in every

meal.

My personal rule is "if it grows, eat it. If it doesn't, beat it." I ensure that I include plenty of leafy greens such as spinach, cabbage, broccoli and lettuce in my diet. I stay away from white bread and pasta, although I do indulge occasionally in wholegrain bread and pasta as a treat. I drink at least 2.5 litres of water a day as well as a couple of cups of green tea throughout the day...I limit red meat to once a week and try to include fish in my diet at least twice a week. I also try to eat organic wherever possible; however finding fresh organic produce in Doha can prove quite difficult at times. I never skip breakfast and always have healthy snacks readily available in case I become hungry in between.

#### **What is your greatest food temptation and how do you overcome it?**

I have a sweet tooth, so my biggest food temptations are cupcakes and chocolate. I try to overcome temptation by chewing sugar free gum when I'm craving something sweet. I also keep an icebox in the back of my car, which I always stock up with my favourite fruit and other nibbles such as nuts, cucumber, carrots and tomatoes, just in case I'm feeling peckish in between meals to avoid my body from going into 'starvation mode' or snacking on the wrong types of food. I do of course indulge in cake and chocolate occasionally, but I try to keep it at a minimum and as a treat only.