

MY WAKE-UP CALL

How One Woman Left a High-Stress Job and Turned to Fitness

By Crystal Reia

For the first time in my life, I finally feel like what I do is making a difference. Not just for the people I train, but also for myself. Every time I come home from a session, I have a huge smile on my face. I love what I do.

But it hasn't always been like this. In December of 2009, I was still working in the financial industry. I worked at a few high-profile brokerage companies during my last 15 years, but the last position I held had taken a lot more of my life than I had asked for!

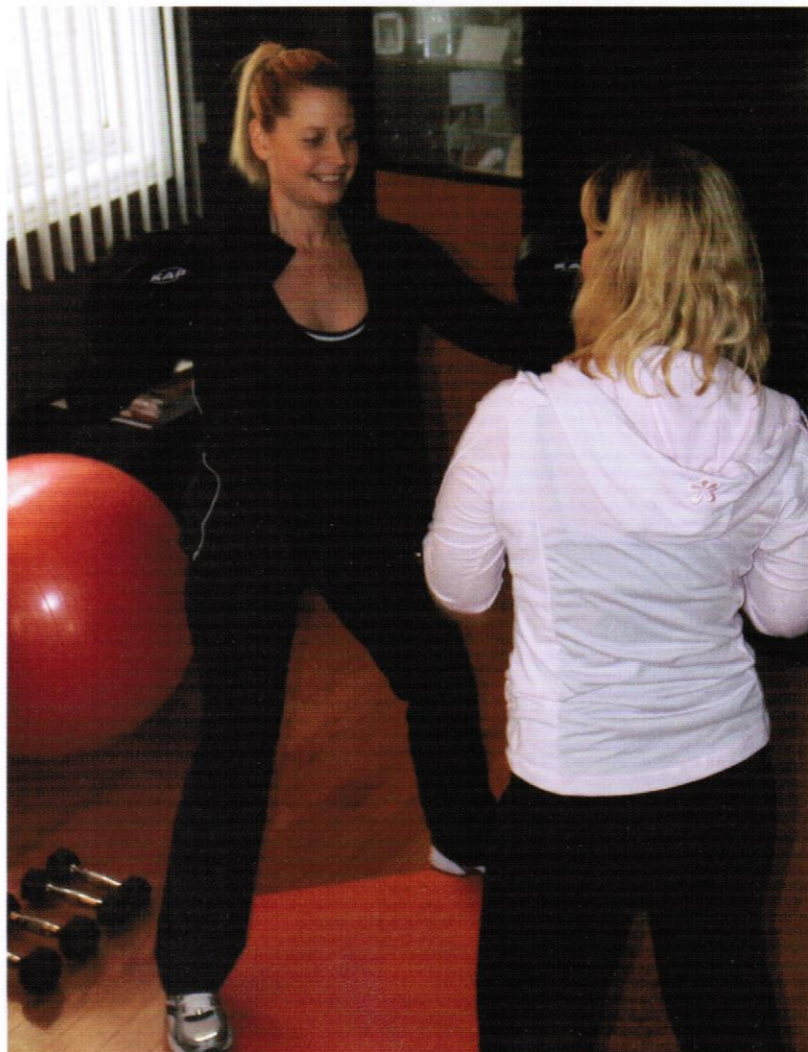
I would go to work every day and do my best to keep up with the busy pace that my job demanded. I did more than just keep up, I exceeded expectations and beyond! As a reward, more and more responsibility was piled onto me. I had asked for more help for our team, but sadly was declined repeatedly. As you know, you can only go at such a crazed pace before your body says "no more". I guess you could say that is exactly what happened to me!

Unfortunately, I was so into my old job that the important things in my life – family, friends, dance, and my own health suffered greatly. Simply put – I just wasn't "Crystal" anymore.

I hadn't realized how much stress I was actually internalizing, until I was on my way to the hospital emergency room. This actually happened on more than one occasion. Apparently, my blood pressure had decided to work itself up so high, that at first, I didn't notice any of my symptoms. But it wasn't long before that the dizziness started to get worse, that I lost feeling in my limbs, arms, hands and even my face.

I went through extensive testing with a cardiologist and my family doctor had told me I was very close to "stroke" territory! Can you imagine? At 32 years of age? My doctor said that it was my dancing that had saved my life. My blood pressure was running high during the day at work, and then from the physical activity of dance at night, it would bring it back down again (somewhat). I wasn't severely overweight at the time, but my eating habits were poor from working all day and skipping lunches to keep up with the volume.

This was my wake-up call. My husband forced me to go on sick leave until I got better. I wasn't even able to drive at the time, as they were trying different medications to get my blood pressure back under control. During these three months, I did some major soul searching and decided that enough was enough. I was now 33 years old, and I needed to get healthy again and find my true passion. My husband supported my decision to change my career, so I signed up at the gym and decided that I was going to get myself healthy again and turn things around.



"With my dance and teaching background, I had always thought about opening my own business and becoming a personal trainer."

With my dance and teaching background, I had always thought about opening my own business and becoming a personal trainer. The thought of working with others and making a difference in their lives was what drew me to that decision. So I went signed up for the PTS course in April of 2010 after I was feeling better. I studied for about six months on my own while training myself and I haven't looked back since!

I became certified in October 2010. I have lost over 20 pounds and look and feel better than ever! My blood pressure is under control and I have brought my own resting heart rate down to 63 from 100!

Since then, I have been fast tracking, signing up for courses and reading as much as I can. I have also become a certified Pre & Post

Natal Fitness Specialist and most recently, have completed the Older Adult Fitness Specialist Course (OAS).

Rather than working for a gym, I decided to venture out and open my own business, "Your Health-Your Choice", doing mobile personal training.

I'm not going to lie—it can be a tough go at first getting clients from the ground up, but I find if you market yourself properly, you can be successful at spreading the word on your new business. I only had my name out for a few weeks when I managed to sign up my first two clients! have also connected with other health professionals in my city who I can refer my clients to and in turn, they will refer their clients to me. Some great advertising venues also include a personalized website (free through weebly.com), a Facebook page, a Linked In profile, tear-off sheets on mailboxes in many of my surrounding neighbourhoods, and business cards.

I know that it will take time; but in the end, nothing worth doing is easy. I may have given up a high paying job, but I know that with hard work and successful clients, my business and pocketbook will grow.

In starting up a new business, my advice is to specialize in what you are passionate about! I have made my main focus on women's health and fitness. For those women who just cannot be forced into going to the gym, I bring the gym to them!

The beauty of in-home training is that you really do not need a lot of equipment to provide wonderful workouts for your clients. You just need a lot of creativity and imagination! I did invest in some minimal equipment (stability ball, dumbbells, medicine balls, boxing gloves/pads, resistance bands, adjustable ankle weights, Bosu ball) which I bring with me to my clients' houses. My big hockey bag on rollers does a nice job of allowing me to bring this equipment from my car into their home.

With my extensive dance teaching skills, I have also launched

a new FIT4DANCE program at my own dance studio and hope to share it with some of the other local dance studios in my area. In the spring, I plan on launching a new program for older adults called HAPPY FEET – a fun dance/fitness inspired program!

Showing women how they can fit physical activity into their lifestyle, so they can feel better about themselves and cope with daily stress is so important to me. I don't want anyone to feel how I felt a year ago! Stress can be so dangerous, but regular exercise provides numerous mental and physical benefits.

Best of all, this career change has given me a second chance to feel more like "Crystal" now than I have in a very long time. □

~A big thank-you to the PRO TRAINERS I have worked with thus far – Sara Nasato, Sandra Gibson, and Gerri Lambert!



Crystal Reia, owner of Your Health-Your Choice, is a new entrepreneur in the fitness and health industry. Crystal is a canfitpro Certified Personal Training Specialist (PTS), Certified Pre & Post Natal Fitness Specialist (PFS) and Certified Older Adult Fitness Specialist (OAS). Located in Cambridge, ON she provides mobile personal training to clients residing in the Cambridge, Guelph and Kitchener/Waterloo area. She has an extensive dance background of 26 years as well as 10 years of teaching experience.

Crystal is excited to be offering her services to women of all ages and strives to inspire and motivate positive changes in her clients inside and out. Mind, Body, Spirit! For more information, visit www.yourhealth-yourchoice.weebly.com.

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