Fitness And Its Power To Heal

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Written by Alexandria Fe

“Addicted. Obsessed. Cultish.”

SoulCycle proudly describes itself through these adjectives. Loyal riders will use these words when they try to get others excited to jump on the SoulCycle bandwagon. Many times, it’s the popularity and notoriety of a fitness fad that draws in new members, but for SoulCycle, it’s the fitness culture it creates that keeps people coming back on a daily basis.

“Warrior. Cardio Party. Community.”

I first started SoulCycle about a year after college. My glory days of high school sports were far gone, I was 20 pounds heavier, and I was thinking about getting back into a fitness routine. After deciding on joining a spin class, I realized I was unprepared to be in this class. This experience felt like being a new kid in school on the first day of school. Every rider was sporting SoulCycle branded clothing (I didn’t get the memo) and everyone seemed to know each other. Someone who worked at the studio helped me get on my bike by clipping my cycling shoes into the pedals and then all of a sudden, I couldn’t move. I couldn’t help but wonder what I got myself into.

Then, the music starts.

“We Aspire to Inspire. We Inhale Intention and Exhale Expectation.”

When someone asks me about SoulCycle, I catch myself talking a mile a minute, explaining how great of a workout it is, what the class is like, and more importantly, the experiences these classes create for the riders. Of course SoulCycle has changed my body, but it has also changed my life. I never had much confidence and I have struggled with my body image my whole life. I was even diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in college. However, in the room, in the dark, I’m able to connect with a new me. In my first ride, I was reminded that the one thing in life I control is my breath and only I have the power to do that. So when I am feeling overwhelmed, I hop on a bike, and breathe. I find strength in the resistance and the struggle of a fast pace. I feel the confidence from the amazing instructors who remind me and everyone else that we all have the potential for greatness and that our bodies can do so much more than we give them credit for. In the darkness, I can be my own person without judgment supported by the energy of 60 other incredible

individuals.

The room heals me.

SoulCycle gives something different to everyone but I think anyone who rides regularly would agree that it is a sanctuary. I have been a rider at SoulCycle for two years and I am always surprised. Some days I feel great on my bike and get recognition, whether it's getting to ride on the podium with Julie D. or shout outs from Marvin. Other days I really struggle, but I find encouragement and wisdom from those same instructors who remind me to let go and trust myself.

So whether you're struggling with body image, battling HIV, or working through something difficult in your life, keeping a healthy mind and body can make a world of difference. I know for myself, no matter what condition I'm in when I enter the room, I always leave having grown a little.

Alexandria Fe is a Manhattan gal from Long Island who's working on her MSW at New York University. She's been a SoulCycle rider for two years and is now working at SoulCycle Chelsea, the studio where The HIV League is hosting its Charity Ride event. Alexandria is an HIV-Negative member of the HIV Community by acting as support system for her friends living with HIV.

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