



Working for Health

Unemployed health gym

Presenter

A series of recordings taken at the Unicorn Health and Fitness Centre in Sheffield. The gym is part of the Unity Centre, a facility set up to meet the needs of unemployed and disadvantaged people. First Tony Bevis, a manager of the centre, describes the establishment of the gym and the rationale behind its activities.

Tony Bevis

I was with the organisation when it first started sixteen years ago. Then we were located in the city centre. It was in those days a police operation that was set up for problem users in the city centre. And it's since then grown into an operation whereabouts we have a multiplicity of facilities on site. Like the gymnasium, the nursery, and the main thrust of what we do is in fact also to set up small companies. We help start up businesses, get on the road. And since 1989 we've helped something like thirty six companies get started. But the sport and the gymnasium is a very, very important facet of the whole operation. It's where people come to relax, it's also when they've had a hard day's work. In the many companies that we actually (door bangs) have on this site, they come and do a workout and they get rid of their frustrations of the day. We try to create here a gymnasium that's in inverted commas is more a sort of family orientated gym. And this is why of the actual membership types that we offer the family membership is very, very advantageous both financially and in the things that it actually has to offer. Because a lot of people feel intimidated. They come into a gymnasium, they see weights, they see chains, it's a little bit something, out of Dante's Inferno. It's a torture chamber. So what our staff are trained to do basically is to tell them that each piece of equipment is not something from the Inquisition. It's here to help you. And the one (big crash), the one to one personalised programmes that we have with our customers where actually a member of staff is actually seconded to look after a particular group of individuals actually is designed to overcome the initial fears that many people who have been out of exercise for some period of time and who are prepared to take that effort to get back into that role, to a great extent it smoothes it. If you're unemployed it's a long time between getting up and going back to bed. And to be able to come to a gymnasium where the people know you and whereabouts you can actually meet and make friends and then to use a portion of your time in something that is positive, something that's creative is bound to go and give yourself, self-esteem. Plus the fact that you have targets to meet. Targets which possibly if you, if you're long time unemployed you wouldn't have. You just you know – basically you'd just get bored. But at last you can come to a place whereabouts you can actually say right I have achieved that, I have attained that target and you then get the self-satisfaction of actually having achieved something.

Tamara King

Myself I do aerobics, step, I come to the gym probably three times a week and I do a mixture of cardiovascular work and weight training. It really depends what I feel like on the day. I do a lot of dancing. I do ballet, tap and modern odd times I do yoga and just to vary stuff. I sort of, I arrive at the gym at seven o'clock in the morning before I go to university. And then I train sort of in an evening as well. But I don't know, I just make time for it. You see people that come into the gym literally day in, day out and they will do two, three, four hours of the same thing, I probably am to some sort of level obsessed. But I would class it more as just – to me it's the same as like eating breakfast or having lunch. It's something I do and I have done from being very young. ...I'd rather be healthy and overweight than stick thin and unhealthy. It doesn't really bother me to – so – which I think is an odd attitude to have. For myself, it's to increase my strength. So I can go to two aerobics classes in a row. I can do four hours of dancing in a row and still be able to do it without sort of collapsing. I know for a lot, most

people it is I've got fantastic abdominals and pectorals. To look really good. But actually for me it isn't.

Anthony Scanlon

Health is fitness of the mind for me. As much as me body. if I don't train I get depressed. there's a lot of people out of work at this point in time (bang). And I think if they can't get some form of employment, they're well advised to do some sort of exercise. I've done many jobs, – steel works, rolling mill forge, brick work, Many, many different things., and obviously over the years most of these jobs are the – all been heavy work., most of them have took their toll on me and so as things have gone on I've obviously disfigured me body in so much as I've got a bad spine, I've got a bad leg and it's impossible for me to do that kind of work. I'm not academically minded as to do anything else or so I believe. My wife seems to believe I could do better. But we'll see as time goes on. But for the moment from a personal point of view I've gone through a bad patch of torment in me head by being out of work we'll say and not being able to find the right kind of work, and this is my salvation if you will. You know, training. It's basically weights, you know. it's not power lifting, it's body building although I don't get the diet that I should have to do this. But we have to do what we can do with what we've got. I've recently started doing more cardiovascular which is in the form of sitting, rowing, a little bit of leg work, although I'm limited, and long walks at night, to actually bring me breathing and me lungs and heart to work a bit better.. There is supplements at the market, some of them I wouldn't use at all. Some of them are also dangerous. But there is some good supplements out there. Some people are naturally big built. Some are very minute and they need a lot of help i.e., you build them up to a heavier weight. Build them up to eating more of the quality food., it's a science, it is a science. And if like myself if you fall by the wayside because you've had a lot of pressure and torment, you'll find that your training's naff. It's hard work going (crash). Sometimes you don't feel like coming and I think I've got to give myself a pat on the back because I really do force myself to come. At this moment in time I don't even look at myself. I'm a bit disappointed but what can I do. If the disappointment turns to lack of interest I won't be here any more and it suddenly at one point, it got me like that a few weeks ago because I hadn't been sleeping at all and I've had two or three really good nights' sleep and I feel happy. But I'm not as strong as what I could be. I want to look good for as long as I possibly can, it's not for big headedness, it's not to prove a point to anybody else. It's for me personally. And I have had a few comments in days gone by that made me feel good, and I still get one or two comments to say that I don't look very bad for me age and I look quite good and all this business. Which gives me a leg up. I was helped with me training be one or two lads that I knew at the time. And later on I got interested in wanting to grow quicker. So I used a steroid and, and it was a testosterone steroid. And I had as little as fifteen shots. And that is a joke in the body building fraternity. Which means that some people have as many as that within a fortnight. So I took one shot per week for ten week, and then one shot every five days which worked out at fifteen shots. And I must admit I grew rapid and me shape were absolutely fantastic. It actually made me sex drive unbelievable, and I felt so fantastic about meself, I felt great, nobody could hurt me. I felt so strong, but the only problem was and anybody that knows about testosterone it can give you acne. If you've ever had it before it can bring it back. And it did. So I had to actually stop that but in all fairness it gave me a size and shape that I kept up until four or five years later which is unbelievable from what I've heard from other body builders. It's supposedly there when you stop it's not long after that you look pretty crap again. But that weren't the case with me because I kept training and learned a bit more about diet by then and I put everything into it and to be quite honest the only reason why I think I lost most of the size is possibly me age that started to show some signs. But I've had some personal problems for the past five and a half year which you wouldn't have a tape long enough and it would probably upset a few people and that's where my size has gone. I should say that, that the training that I've been doing over the past few years has probably made me have more confidence in myself. I've met more people so it's easy for, easier for me to speak. At one time I couldn't you know I wouldn't be able to speak to you as I am now. it's given me some self-confidence and I've gotten to find a lot of friends within, these circles, and not only have I learned about weight training and er food supplements and foods itself. I've learned a lot about people and their lives that's channeled off in different directions completely different to weight training.