

“The ladies in Beverly Hills go to yoga and run, but they can’t lift a grocery bag into the car,” claims Jerzy Gregorek.



Body Language

Two hard-core trainers are shaping up—and slimming down—Silicon Valley.

Photograph by ANDRES GONZALEZ

The residents of Silicon Valley, California, that leafy stretch of towns south of San Francisco, are no strangers to fame and fortune. The region is flush with microchip money and home to music legends like Neil Young and Joan Baez. But when eternally stunning actress Michelle Pfeiffer and her megaproducer husband, David E. Kelley, settled there three years ago, they did bring about one big change. The Pfeiffer-Kelley clan’s relocation inspired their longtime personal trainers, Jerzy and Aniela Gregorek, to move north from Hollywood too. The married, Polish-born former world weightlifting champions opened the Happy Body fitness studio in the sleepy suburb of Woodside in 2004, and abs in that part of the Bay Area have never looked tighter.

“We have about 150 training clients now in Woodside,” says Aniela, 48, who gave birth to the couple’s only child, Natalie, when she was 45 and still has no trouble wearing snug, white spandex pants. “Once they see those positive changes, they start bringing their families in. We have kids, teenagers, in the gym every day.”

Because of the Gregoreks’ background as competitive lifters—Jerzy, now 53, came to the States as a political refugee in 1985, and Aniela joined him soon after—their approach to fitness is distinctly different from that of the average crunch-and-run trainers. For one thing, they’ve taken an unusual stance on cardiovascular exercise. “The original treadmills were used to punish prisoners,” says Jerzy, whose short and slim frame is overwhelmed by muscle. “Exercise should not be punishment. The more you run, the weaker and less flexible you become. The ladies in Beverly Hills go to yoga and run, but they can’t lift a grocery bag into the car. They’re wearing out their joints, their muscles, and aging themselves.” And it’s not just the treadmill that rubs him the wrong way: Jerzy discourages all endurance workouts aside from the occasional recreational walk, hike or swim.

New clients undergo a 90-minute evaluation with the Gregoreks before getting with the Happy Body program. Body composition is analyzed, the strict eating plan is explained, and a customized exercise routine is developed based on three sequences of anaerobic exercises chosen from a series of 18 trademark moves. The Gregoreks advocate no more than 30 minutes of exercise a day,

Left: Happy Body founders Aniela and Jerzy Gregorek



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Happy Body's star client,
Michelle Pfeiffer

seven days a week. Most clients work out with Jerzy or Aniela only once a week and perform the exercises on their own, either in the studio or at home, for the remaining six.

Many of the moves feel familiar: a standard squat with light hand weights, for example, or the old-school "bicycle" floor exercise for abdominals. But according to the Gregoreks, their signature breathing technique (inhale before a repetition and exhale after) and slight tweaks to form add subtle benefits. After a workout, clients meditate for five minutes while listening to relaxing music with a dab of lavender oil under the nose. "In balance is wisdom," says Jerzy. "Anxiety burns muscle tissue."

While the exercise plan sounds easy to master, the Happy Body diet is far from moderate. The Gregoreks' goal of 13 percent body fat for their female clients and 10 percent for males is shocking by most standards. Most registered dietitians and fitness professionals set the ideal female fat number closer to 18 percent and caution that dipping below this level can halt menstruation and imperil the reproductive system. "It took us years of research and work to come up with these numbers," counters Jerzy. "When Aniela was competing, her body fat was down to about 7 or 8 percent, and then up to 13 to 15 percent in the off season. Our thinking is that the average person on her best day should be as lean as an athlete on her worst."

To achieve such svelte standards, clients are instructed to eat only two low-carb, low-sugar meals per day. Almost no dairy fat and only limited fruits are allowed, and the three daily snacks—half of either a Clif bar or Kashi Go Lean bar, or a piece of hemp bread with a choice of two ounces of soy cheese, turkey breast or nonfat cottage cheese—bear little resemblance to real food. The Gregoreks do account for dietary lapses. "If you go to a party and have a glass of wine, that's fine," says Aniela, who retains about 40 loyal clients in Los Angeles, with whom she and Jerzy work during their monthly stays at a Santa Monica hotel. "But then you eat only

protein that night, like a skewer of chicken or fish, and no vegetables."

Still, says Adrienne Youdim M.D., medical director of the Cedars-Sinai Center for Weight Loss, in Los Angeles, "to achieve 13 percent body fat you have to be drastic." According to Youdim, most elite female athletes are in the 14 to 18 percent range. "General fitness is considered anywhere up to 24 percent body fat for women," she says. "To expect the general population to achieve 13 percent is unrealistic, and when you start nearing or exceeding that goal, it can also be dangerous. Fat does serve a protective function in your body. When you get to a very low percent body fat, you can have menstrual irregularities and fertility problems."

These potential downsides don't seem to faze the Gregoreks' clients. One Woodside woman, who prefers to remain anonymous, says that she and her husband were so happy with their results that they put their three children—ages nine, 10 and 13—on the Happy Body program as well. The kids eat three meals a day but have learned to love scrambled egg whites and turkey on hemp bread instead of sugary cereal and PB&J. ("They're kids," she says. "They eat cake and ice cream at birthday parties.") At 47, she has 12 percent body fat and has maintained that number for more than a year. The 30-minute exercise routine, she says, came as a huge relief after years of running three to five miles a day, doing yoga and Pilates, and lifting weights. "I had been running for 30 years, and I quit cold turkey," she said. "I'm stronger than ever, and I exercise a fraction of the time I used to." And the diet doesn't seem particularly restrictive because she'd given up sugar years ago anyway.

"Our clients love the excellence," says Jerzy. "We were at a competition in Melbourne [Australia] watching 80-year-olds lift more than their own body weight. If I ask people to be as strong and as lean as one of those 80-year-olds, is that too much? No, I don't think so." —CHRISTINE LENNON

HAPPY BODY'S NOODLE-FREE TURKEY LASAGNA

- 1½ lb ground turkey breast
- 4 large zucchini
- 1 lb mushrooms
- 2 green bell peppers
- 1 lb spinach, chopped
- 1 yellow onion
- 5 garlic cloves
- 16 oz nonfat cottage cheese
- 5 egg whites
- 16 oz tomato sauce
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tbsp grated parmesan or soy cheese
- Garlic salt to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. Preheat a grill or grill pan. Wash zucchini and remove both ends. Cut zucchini into long, thin diagonal slices. Brush both sides of the slices lightly with olive oil and sprinkle with garlic salt. Grill the slices for 2 to 3 minutes per side until grill marks appear and moisture is reduced. Blend the mushrooms, onion, garlic and bell peppers in a food processor until finely chopped. Spoon the mixture into a large bowl. Add the turkey, spinach, cottage cheese and egg whites and stir until well combined. Cover the bottom of a 9" x 13" baking dish with half the zucchini slices. Layer half the turkey mixture on top of slices. Repeat these steps. Pour the tomato sauce evenly over the layered mixture. Sprinkle with grated parmesan. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes. Cool slightly, slice.



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