

THE **FINE LINE** —

#RealTalk | 02.16.2018

CrossFit: Smells Like Team Spirit

CrossFit, by definition, is not a team sport. It is won for yourself, by yourself. Yet ask anyone involved and you will hear “community” is embedded in its ethos.

Sure, some critics say it's the collective insanity to forge through brutal workouts day after day, while risking injury they jeer, which creates the CrossFit unity. But as a four-year Crossfitter, I can tell you it goes beyond dynamic athletic challenges. Crossfit may be solely equated with weightlifting and high intensity interval training, but the heart of the sport is vulnerability.

When **CrossFit** began in 2000, it was exercising at its finest. Healthy, like-minded people fatigued of treadmills and aerobics were attracted to the “jack of all trades, master of none” approach. Over time, as women realized its merits for burning fat while building muscle, developing physical preparedness that aids everyday life (carrying groceries and children often come to mind), and curbing chronic diseases, our gender showed up. In droves.

What women have found amid superior fitness is friendship. Genuine relationships founded on equal adoration for and admiration of one another. Not just everyone will throw their body upside down to learn handstand push-ups or climb ropes over and over to improve. We are a unique breed but never an elitist tribe. In a world where female friendships often suffer when women degrade others to feel better about themselves, this authenticity is refreshing. And oh so liberating.



Women build trust within the concrete walls of CrossFit Boxes (aka gyms) as we are witness to each other's strengths and weaknesses daily. We bring our souls to the workout, because digging deep to perform is how we  through. When I am  suffering, I do not suffer  alone. On the glory days when I am achieving PRs (personal records), my gaggle of cheerleaders is deafening. There's no better feeling than hearing, "You can do it!" as you dare to push press a 135-pound bar overhead for the first time. It's the essence of vulnerability, yet you feel safe.

When I summoned the courage to walk into CrossFit, I was uncertain of the sport, but more so of myself. I had been flailing with fitness for years. I was spinning, running, swimming but going nowhere. I lacked motivation. Enthusiasm. Strength.

Then I met them: the women of **Crossfit North Atlanta**.

Like any friendship of value, there was not an immediate intimacy but a great respect. Early on, a woman approached me with ideas of how to progress. This included **nutrition advice**. CrossFit women are not offended by these conversations. Just the opposite, in fact, as our relationship is void of jealousy and judgment. As CrossFit focuses on performance rather than appearance, and we are gaining security and empowerment along with physical strength, our confessionals are discussions between confidants versus accusations of shortcomings. We don't need to compete, compare, or undermine each other to feel good.

As we strive to **age gracefully**, cope with menopause, even enter a new realm with parents' passing, our spiritual connection deepens.

Eat your heart out, Taylor Swift. We CrossFit women are #squadgoals.

PHOTOS: RYAN J. LANE

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