



SWING TIME

THE POWER OF THE POLE DRAWS STUDENTS TO A COCONUT CREEK STUDIO FOR ITS CIRQUE-LIKE FITNESS REGIMEN

Women often ask **Evette Leib** where she used to “dance.” “Mm-hmm,” she says with an eye roll, imitating their disbelief. Yes, she teaches pole dancing classes but, no, she never was a stripper.

Before opening **Evette’s Dance Fitness Club** in 2009, she was the manager of a bank—17 years in the business. Today, the former gymnast and one-time off-Broadway performer, who’s a trained martial artist and personal trainer, stages classes that aren’t exotic—but they’ll kick your butt.

“I am known in the pole industry as being a fitness facility,” she says. “You train here and people know you’re going to get gymnastics-good within a few months.”

Leib, 40, took her first pole class around the time the bank industry was crashing (on the hearsay that it was toning the bodies of celebrities such as Britney Spears). She was as unconvinced as some of the women who enter her pink studio for the first time. But even though she was toned and fit, Leib was sore the next day—it was like gymnastics for adults, and she was hooked.

When her branch closed and offered a severance, the mother of two teenagers took it and opened her “big-girl monkey gym.” There wasn’t anything like it in Broward County, and she wanted to make it different from the classes she took in Miami, focusing more on strength conditioning and stretching.

“I transform bodies here. You’re going to be strong. You’re going to do some crazy stuff,” she says. “I always say you’ll look like this in a gym, but

you won’t be able to do what I do. Even I used to look like this and was not able to do what I do now.”

Her Coconut Creek studio (5901 Lyons Road)—which has poles, aerial silks, lyra rings, a weight room and an infrared sauna—looks like a training ground for Cirque du Soleil, which influences her teaching style.

“It’s a wonderful art if you can look past the stigma,” she says. “Because of all the strip clubs in our country, it is a little harder to come around. Internationally, they’re already competing on a level that is just like Cirque. It’s awesome.”

High heels are optional—“We all have that inner sexy,” she says—but most women can be found barefoot, and in shorts and tank tops, although the shorts get shorter the more they train, she quips. The best way to grab the pole is with bare, dry skin, which sometimes leads to bruises and pinches, adoringly called “pole kisses.” Sweaty palms? No problem: Leib swears by a grip aid that controls her hyperhidrosis, or excessive sweating.

As suggested by some of the mothers she teaches, Leib started a program for kids 5 and up. Her youngest students, it turns out, are the most fearless. Most do aerials, but a few do pole (“It looks like gymnastics in an ice skater’s suit on the pole,” she explains), which they performed at a recital last month.

They’ll be closer to Cirque-ready in no time, she says. It’s not the goal for her adult clients, but Leib wants them to leave with more than a toned tummy.

“I’m all about empowering women,” she says. “When you start feeling good from the inside, I like to say the outside is just the bonus.”

—ALYSSA FISHER