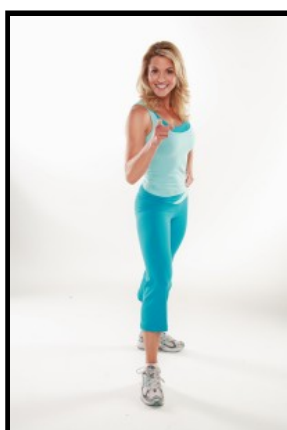


Review of START FITNESS NOW with Kim Lyons

By: Gary Rudoren | January 11, 2010

Categories: Book Reviews, Exercise, Featured | Tags: biggest loser, Kim Lyons



You probably remember that November was American Diabetes Month. I'm sorry, I didn't get you anything. Then December was declared National Awareness Month – okay, that declaration was by [The Onion](#), but my take away on these two months is that we should at least be spending 1/6th of the year focusing on our health. And now with January and the new year upon us, Kim Lyons, a former trainer on NBC's show *The Biggest Loser*, wants you to focus 12/12ths of the year on creating a better you. That's just one of the goals of the new series of exercise videos she's created called START FITNESS NOW (heretofore to be called SFN). The series also claims to have a solution targeted to type 2 diabetics and includes information on the disease and its treatment by Dr. Shaila Singh, MD.

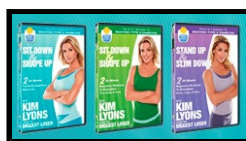
This is the first time I've ever reviewed an exercise video. It's also pretty much the first time I've ever tried to follow one, but I hope that doesn't disqualify me from having an opinion. I believe, after all, that I'm the exact market Kim Lyons is looking

to attract. The overweight type 2-diabetic-who-should-diet-but-doesn't-make-the-time-although-they-know-they-are-being-stupid market.

The skillful marketing elements on SFN catch you right away. The box of three DVDs pictures Kim Lyons (very attractive). Big font that she is "From the Biggest Loser" (very popular TV Show). Smaller font that these are 20-minute workouts (Geez, you can spare 20 minutes-can't you?). And right at the top the claim that this is the "2 in 1 Solution to Beating Type 2 Diabetes" (a growing targeted market). It all comes together in a very nice package, although, one quick tip to the producers: the DVDs, while color-coded, don't seem to have any graphics on the box noting the order of the videos ("1", "2", "3"), and that would help.

Beyond her All-American girl persona and looks, Kim Lyons is upbeat, positive, engaging, enthusiastic and if you are going to sweat through 20 minutes, she's the coolest workout partner you could imagine. From my admittedly limited exercise video experience, and being old enough to remember the heyday of Jane Fonda and everyone wearing leg warmers (I rebelled, actually), I believe that much of the attraction of a video and thus, a program, comes down to the spokesperson. SFN is all about believing that Kim Lyons truly wants you to be healthy and she's willing to subject herself to doing this series JUST FOR YOU. And she pulls it off.

Kim is with you the entire time, working through exercises from the simple sitting-in-a-chair movements in the first workout, to the more difficult cardio and weight training in workout 6. She talks throughout the whole series, which for me was very helpful. She cajoles, she chats and she exudes an optimistic – and realistic – attitude towards the working out process you are both going through. She embodies the "Yes, I Can"-era of the Obama Nation (polarized as it is, can't we all agree that being healthy is a good thing?). You really feel like Kim is your partner on the journey.



Kim's DVD Set

The journey, at least in the SFN world, takes place in a "living room" with a couch, a comfy chair and two stylish end tables with lamps. It's not a big sweaty gym. It's not all about a big piece of space-age exercise equipment that will work every muscle you think you have – and some you didn't know you had – and then fold-up to fit in your wallet. SFN implies, very smartly, that you can just get up from the comfy couch where you were watching *Top Chef*, jump into a quick 20-minute workout, and then collapse back down. Of course that's not what you should do, but the simplicity of the workout location helps make it easier for you to imagine yourself making the effort. Even though almost anyone could see through this idea, it's still a great idea.

But back to Kim. I liked Kim's manner as she cheers you on. She explains what muscles the movements are affecting and pushes you forward with phrases like "make new goals" and "stay

movements are directing and pushes you forward with phrases like "make new goals" and "stay positive" and "keep breathing." As I mirrored her movements, I felt like a supportive friend, not a brutal personal trainer, was gently pushing me. I've watched The Biggest Loser off and on since it started and it's one of the most heart-rending shows on television. I applaud every brave contestant, but between the crazy challenges and the trainers that yell at you, I just can't always watch the show.

SFN's exercises are not great challenges, which makes you feel like you can set goals and reach them. SFN 1, called The Beginner's Workout, starts simply: you and a comfortable chair. Kim starts slowly with isometrics and small resistance exercises, all while sitting down. Movement increases with a 10-minute cardio walk in both of the beginning workouts. Kim introduces the use of a towel and light hand weights to help with strength and muscle training. It wasn't too difficult to do, although when she starts mixing in some simple arm movements you begin to question your coordination a little (at least you're at home and not in a class looking like you've got three left feet). All in all, it's a good introduction to the system and not very difficult. A little sweating, but not so much that you get to really offend people yet.

Kim's patter in SFN2 – Sit Down & Shape Up, the Intermediate level – continues with the positive reinforcement along with increasing resistance, weight training and longer cardio walks. She is still using the chair, but also more weights. I started to find it a little more difficult, and using the weights definitely contributed to some soreness the next day, but it still seemed deceptively simple to do. The Healthy Cardio Walk and Super Cardio Walk in the two routines on this disc were all about increased movements, but also included even more of her discussion on nutrition and setting goals. I don't know if she's copyrighted "march it out" yet, but she loves that phrase. I definitely noticed that I was breathing heavier on the Super Cardio walk in workout 4 because of the addition of the weights.

SFN3 – Stand Up & Slim Down (the Purple box – did I mention she has outfits in each video that match the box color?). More weights, more varied resistance. More legs, and no chair for the last 2 workouts in the series. More focus on legs. The last workout called the Mix It Up Cardio Walk incorporates a lot of what you've done before and I think was a good wrap-up to these six routines. Kim emphasizes that you should keep trying to incorporate these simple work-outs into your every day life. She also mentions that you shouldn't eat Fruit Loops, which was a tiny blow to what I thought was our blossoming relationship, but in my heart (and pancreas) I know she's right. I was sweating even more, but it was a good sweat.

After completing the entire routine, I can say that I think it's just right for someone like me. Kim's positively cheery attitude is infectious and definitely made me want to keep going through all the levels. Here's my free idea to the producers, though: I wonder if it would be possible for her to record the same exercises with a variety of different chatty patters, so every day you work-out with her, you could select other conversations with new stories – what did she do last night? Is she having romantic troubles? Her thoughts on whether or not "Up In The Air" deserves that much acclaim, etc.

Now let's talk Type 2 diabetes. Finally, right? The major issue I have with the whole series is that its approach on diabetes doesn't add much information to what I believe is typically laid out by physicians to patients who have already been diagnosed. Perhaps the producers sincerely think that the information doled out by Dr. Singh (who certainly appears reputable) and which mostly boils down to "eat sensibly and do this exercise program" is a way to reach out to a segment of the market – the Type 2 diabetic – who is looking to change his or her health and bad habits. However, calling it a "2-in-1 solution" comes off as if it is some major advancement in this area while really it just a reinforcement (albeit positively) of a game plan typically well known to Type 2 diabetics. It's all in the execution, though and that's on the individual. Dr. Singh's segment is also listed as a "Bonus Feature" which makes it feel more like what it is – an add-on to a fitness video.

My problem, and in this way I feel very typical, is that I know I have a problem with my health, yet I'm not taking care of myself the way I should be. I have failed relationships with Jenny Craig and Seattle Sutton and Mrs. Nutrisystem. I realized a while ago that I don't feel like I'll ever be successful following a pre-planned diet. I do walk a lot (hey, I live in Brooklyn and have twins), but a sensible regimen with achievable goals would certainly be better. I need something that works for me, but I realize that I still have to work to make it work. The videos are a good start. I lost a few pounds. My sugar numbers are good, but not great. Most importantly I feel like it's something I can follow for a longer-term lifestyle change.

I think the combination of easy-to-accomplish exercise goals, along with the extra reinforcement that I need to find a healthy diet that works for me and most importantly, the pushing of my new friend Kim Lyons, makes the Start Fitness Now series a worthwhile venture – no matter what the month.

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2 Responses to "Review of START FITNESS NOW with Kim Lyons"



Catherine Price says:

January 11, 2010 at 12:56 pm

As someone who went through a stage of obsessively doing a video called "Thin Thighs In 30 Days" when I was 13 years old (it's all a lie! don't believe the hype!) I always appreciate candid takes on workout videos. Sounds like this series is a good one. Thanks for such a fun review.



Jessica says:

January 11, 2010 at 3:38 pm

Obsessed with thighs at 13! I didn't get there until at least 15. The series does sound good... thanks, Gary.

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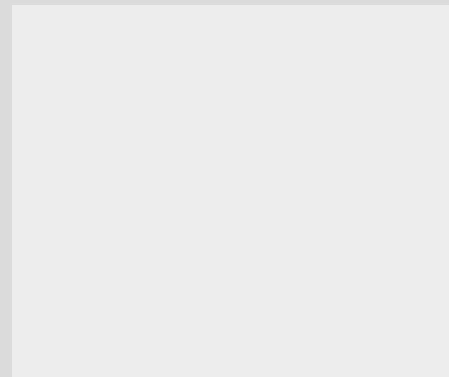
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