



Kate wears: Mocha Side Tie Sweater (£18, F&F at Tesco), Mocha Relaxed Jogger (£18), Borg Cream Gilet (£29.50)

# 'I've entered my zen era'

TV personality, author and podcast host **Kate Ferdinand**, 32, talks to Joanna Ebsworth about the importance of exercising for mental health and being an active role model for her children



Kate wears:  
Black Sports Bra (£15, F&F at Tesco),  
Seam-free Black Animal Legging (£14),  
Black Jacket (£32.50)



**W**hen I sit down with Kate Ferdinand just a few weeks before Christmas to talk all things fitness, fashion and her new activewear collection with F&F, she's a world away from the frazzled mum-of-five you'd expect to meet, with a long list of presents still to order and plenty of festive feasts to prep. Instead, she comes across as a picture of serenity in her comfy cream tracksuit, chunky white trainers and cosy camel-coloured coat - accessorised only by clear, glowing skin and a hint of lip balm. She continues to radiate calmness as I grill her about her workouts, work/life balance and what she demands from her workout wardrobe.

Indeed, to say I'm surprised by her easy-breezy attitude would be an understatement. When Kate isn't caring for her six-month-old daughter Shae and two-year-old son Cree with ex-England footballer husband Rio Ferdinand, or being a step-mum to Lorenz, 17, Tate, 14, and Tia, 12, you'll find the former *TOWIE* star sharing her experiences of being part of a blended family on her hugely popular podcast *Blended*, or writing about them in the best-selling modern parenting guide *How to Build a Family* (Vermillion, £8.49) and the recent children's picture book *The Family Tree*. (Puffin, £7.99). In short, the juggle for Kate is real. But no matter how busy her life gets, the one thing she will never compromise on is her dedication to fitness, knowing full well from decades of training that an active lifestyle is the secret to helping her feel fit, strong and, most importantly, sane. Read on to discover how she's finally found balance.

**I've been working out since I was in secondary school.** My school was far away enough that I'd have to take a bus or train to get there, but if I went to the gym with my mum in the morning, I'd get a lift to school with her afterwards. I fell in love with swimming and training in the gym, and it's something I've done the rest of my life. I like the effects exercise has on my body, but I love the effects it has on my mind. I suffer with anxiety, and feel overwhelmed at times, but exercise is a time for me to think of nothing else other than what I'm doing. And, for me, that doesn't really happen often during the day with lots of kids. I'm always thinking about something!

**My attitude to exercise has changed over the years.** In fact, it's evolved since having Shae. Before she arrived, I was very regimented, training five times a week by going to the gym three times and doing Pilates twice, as well as walking all the time. And while I enjoyed doing

it, I would hold myself accountable and beat myself up if I didn't train. Now, I feel I'm much more relaxed about exercise. It's more about having some me-time, because there are a lot of kids in the house and we've all got very busy lives. If the baby's ill and I've been up all night, I'm not going to exhaust myself by going to the gym, because it's only going to make me feel even more tired and groggy, and I probably won't be as patient a parent as I should be.

**I have a completely different mindset to exercise now.** There's been a real shift in my relationship to exercise over the past five months, and it's become more about enjoying the time I get to exercise, rather than being obsessive about it. Don't get me wrong, I like to look good, and I'd love to get back to the shape I was in before, but I'm not in a rush and I'm enjoying the process. Being healthy and feeling strong is more important to me. And I find

that when I feel all those things, I feel better mentally. Having that hour or 45 minutes to myself really does help to calm me.

**In the past, my me-time would involve going out for the evening or seeing friends for lunch.** Now, I like doing the things that make me feel better, like being active. I'm kind of in my Zen era right now, and I'm loving it. I think my F&F collection reflects that, too, because it features lots of neutral, calming colours. I'm all about taking care of myself, and not having to be in the rat race or doing what everyone expects me to do. I'm just doing the things that work for me and my family.

**Both of my pregnancies were active with lots of walking.** During my pregnancy with Cree, I found training a bit more difficult because I had a really bad back, and with Shae, I had to stop my regular weight training as I found it irritated my back, and my bump was quite heavy. But I did Pilates the whole way through, right up until a couple of weeks before I gave birth. Don't get me wrong, though, the sessions did get shorter, and they moved on to a mat towards the end instead of on a reformer machine.

**To be clear, I didn't jump straight back onto the reformer after giving birth.** I had a C-section, which involved a long recovery, and I absolutely didn't do any exercise during that time. I listened to my doctor and I listened to my body. When I did finally go back, I was on the mat for 20 minutes thinking, "I can't do this, I've lost all of my strength, and everything's gone". But over the past four months, I've started to gradually build back my core strength. It's not been easy, but it's quite remarkable what you can achieve when you put the work in.

**I did a little bit of weight training a few weeks ago and pulled a muscle in my back.** I tore one of my traps,

*'Exercise is a part  
of our lifestyle,  
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LIMITLESS  
POSSIBILITIES

Kate wears: Limitless  
Grey Crew Sweater  
(£19.50, F&F at Tesco),  
Seam-free Black Animal  
Legging (£14)



*'I like the effects exercise has on my body, but I love the effects it has on my mind'*

Kate wears: Seam-free Teal Vest (£10, F&F at Tesco), Teal Waffle Zip-through Jacket (£22.50), Seam-free Teal Legging (£14)



Kate wears: Black Sports Bra (£15, F&F at Tesco), Animal Black Seam-free Legging (£14), Khaki Raincoat (£45)

a holiday and then stopping once I got back; I want them to see me being consistently healthy, in the hope it will rub off on them.

**I love F&F, so I'm delighted to be the new ambassador.** I got to curate my own collection of activewear and athleisurewear for the launch of its new ACTIVE range. And while I can't take credit for designing it, I had a lot of fun trying everything on, feeling the fabrics and picking out my favourite pieces. Most importantly, everything is affordable and inclusive – it's available in sizes 6-22, so there really is something for everyone.

**You need to feel comfortable when you're on the go.** I'm always on the move, going to Pilates or dropping Cree at nursery. Before I know it, it's bathtime and I've still got my gym gear or tracksuit on! I need my clothing to be made from good-quality fabrics that are durable – and if it holds me in a little too, that's a bonus! The performance leggings are high-waisted, seam-free and made from a thick stretchy rib fabric, so they're completely squat-proof. I love the black outfit with the matching bag because I love an all-black outfit for the gym.

**As a new mum, I want to feel comfy at all times, so I love the cream tracksuit in my edit.** It's made from Tencel, so it feels unbelievably soft and luxurious, and it has a real sports-luxe look to it. That said, my absolute fave is the Contrast Borg Jacket, £25, made from that teddy bear-like fleece fabric. I picked out lots of neutral tones that work well together, so you can just chuck things on and not think about it. The collection isn't just for mums, but for busy people who are always on the go, just like me! 🐾

The F&F ACTIVE collection, curated by Kate Ferdinand, can be found in selected F&F at Tesco stores. Available in sizes 6-22, starting from £10.

so I'm having a little break from the weights and sticking to Pilates for now. I think I need to strengthen my core more before I fully get back into it because my form isn't so great. But I do love weight training. It's very good for shaping the body, but it has the same effect on the mind. It makes me feel empowered. I also love working out with Rio. We're very fortunate to have a gym in our house, but you still have to put the time aside to train – just because the equipment's there, doesn't mean you will use it!

**I love the contrast between Pilates and weight training.** I lift heavy, so it's really intense and quick, whereas Pilates is calming, especially now I've learnt about the breathing. I like the way it's changing my body, too. I like feeling the pain of Pilates if I'm honest. I like to push myself and I like feeling that ache that lets you know something is working. I'm not someone who likes to miss a rep!

**I hate running and fast-paced cardio, but I love walking.** I know a lot of people don't see walking as cardio but I think it's amazing. I love being in the outdoors and being surrounded by nature. It calms me a lot, so I often head out with my dog and the baby in the pram – hopefully when she's asleep, as it's never fun when she's screaming!

**It's really important to Rio and me that our children see us being active.** We're quite an active family: the boys play football, Tia rides horses, and Cree is always in the gym with us. Every day, he asks me if we're going to do our exercise today because he sees us exercising, and I love the impact that it has on him. Exercise is a part of our lifestyle and we're hopefully setting the kids up to have healthy habits in the future. Don't get me wrong, we love a little takeaway and a bit of chocolate! But I wouldn't want them to see me exercising before