

TRAIN THROUGH WINTER

With Gabby

Women's fitness expert and *Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins* star **Gabby Allen**, 33, shares her motivational tips for staying fit this season

Words: Joanna Ebsworth Photography: Anna Fowler

Staying active all year round has been a way of life for women's fitness coach and reality TV star Gabby Allen since she started dancing at the tender age of three. Combine this fact with the news that the author and exercise entrepreneur has been wowing the British public with a dazzling display of physical prowess and mental resilience on the new series of *Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins*, and we couldn't think of anyone better to ask for advice on how to stay fit during the cold, dark days of winter. So, just what is Gabby's secret to staying motivated when factors such as a lack of daylight and a decrease in serotonin levels make it harder to find the

energy and enthusiasm to get out of bed, let alone commit to a thrice-weekly training regime?

'I think the thing that always drives me to train when I don't feel like it is knowing I will always feel a thousand times better once I've moved my body,' explains the professional dancer-turned-personal trainer who first shot to fame on the third series of *Love Island* in 2017. 'For example, I woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning, and because I'm so busy right now, I only had 15 minutes to go for a quick run. But that is all it took for me to feel better because I did something for myself and released some endorphins, which are scientifically proven to help you

feel better. Of course, there have been times in the past when I haven't trained because I've been hungover or due on. But then I've exercised the next time I've been hungover or ill, and thought, "Why did I not just do this the last time?". Ultimately, exercise always makes you feel so much better - you just have to remember how good it makes you feel so you can remind yourself to train the next time you feel rubbish!'

Feeling good

Regularly reminding herself about how much better she will feel after exercise is just one of the tactics Gabby uses to boost her own motivation and training consistency,





especially when she's on holiday or when the weather is so miserable that it makes her feel like swapping hamstring curls for curling up on the sofa with a box set.

'I always get people messaging me on social media saying things like, "Why are you working out on holiday? Get a life!". But I know I always feel so much better in myself when I've moved my body, rather than being a couch potato all day, and it's the same thing with training during the winter,' she continues. 'Don't get me wrong, I really do know how much harder it is to get outside when it's dark and cold, and I find I also have to put so much more energy into motivating my online fitness community during this time of year because people barely want to get their steps in when it's bloody Baltic. I mean, I absolutely love running these days because it's my time to just zone out, listen to some drum and bass, and find some peace on my own, but I'm definitely more of a seasonal runner. I can't tell you I'll be outside running when it's bucketing down or snowing, because why would I? I'm not mental! But that's okay, because the key thing to remember is there's so much you can do to stay fit and strong at home, as long as you've got some dumbbells and a bit of space in the living room.'

Find the joy

As an exercise professional famed for her unbridled energy, infectious enthusiasm and endorphin-boosting classes, Gabby says another key to sticking with a regular fitness routine over the winter is to find an activity you feel excited about doing so you always want to go back for more. 'If you dread doing something, it's statistically proven that you'll be less likely to do it again. Whereas, if you can find enjoyment in a particular form of movement, you'll be more likely to find the fire in your

belly and return to it again and again – and that's when you're going to make real progress.'

After winning the second series of *Love Island: All Stars* in 2025, Gabby tells us she had many new clients sign up for classes and training programmes on her women-only online fitness platform, Shape Up with Gabby (shapeupwithgabby.co.uk), which she set up five years ago during lockdown. And the best part, she says proudly, is that many of those women have since got in touch with her to say they never realised working out could be so much fun, or that exercise could

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be an enjoyable and consistent part of their lifestyles.

'I'm all about having a giggle while getting sweaty, burning some calories and releasing some endorphins, and that will always be a part of my training ethos,' enthuses Gabby. 'I mean, okay, the workouts are still going to hurt sometimes, but you'll always have me in the background acting the fool to make you laugh. Obviously, I'm very into weight training myself and I offer various strength-training programmes on my platform that you can follow at home or at the

gym, but I'll never stop doing my classes because I was born into the fitness industry teaching up to 40 hours of classes a week, and it's where a lot of people fall in love with my training style.

'Of course,' she continues, 'some people might not like training with me because they might think I'm a bit of a loose cannon, and that's fine. The good thing is, the fitness industry has seen so much change in recent years, and that means there's never been more choice in terms of finding something that works for you. Personally, I think finding the fun in fitness – and finding your people – really helps you to enjoy the process, stay motivated and show up consistently, and that's the most important thing when it comes to making real change.'

Stronger together

As someone who is dedicated to helping women feel confident and strong from the inside out, it's clear the one thing Gabby is most proud of when you ask about her fitness platform is the 'incredible community' she has managed to build over the past five years. 'It's been so rewarding to watch all the amazing journeys my clients have been on, whether they've become super fit, lost stone after stone, or gained muscle mass. There are women from all walks of life, and it's so lovely because everyone is just so supportive of each other,' she explains. 'It doesn't matter what you look like, what you do or what fitness level you are: everybody is there to get fit and have fun while doing it, and I even have women who have been bridesmaids for each other, or they've gone on holiday together, which is so cute. It's such an inclusive space, and I feel I really thrive when I host my retreats and events, because I truly believe what we do at Shape Up can serve a purpose for everybody and help

women to feel happy, healthy and more confident.'

'We do three six-week "shred" challenges at pinnacle points during the year - one in January to get you back on track after Christmas, one in May to get you ready for the summer, and one in September to get you back on track after the summer - and they're really all about helping you get your body moving again after a break, so you can find your momentum and enjoy working out without putting too much pressure on yourself to be this perfect person in the gym,' continues Gabby. 'Once we're all feeling good, that's when we put the work in to getting really strong before we go into another shred. So, we have peaks and troughs, and the Shape Up community all tends to be working on a similar journey together, but I think that's what helps us to all keep going. It's very much about women supporting women and everyone inspiring and motivating each other. Not everybody's at the same fitness level, but when you see other people training, it inspires you to do more. Like, "I see Mary's just done her workout, so I'd better do mine!"'

Food for thought

When it comes to training during the winter months, Gabby suggests you should aim to keep your fitness ticking over, rather than going big on goals and potentially setting yourself up to fail - which could ultimately affect your motivation to train. 'January and February can feel pretty miserable, especially after having time off over Christmas and the new year, so I really think you should focus on finding your feet and getting back into a routine instead of going for a personal best or trying to lose weight,' explains Gabby. 'Your goals should be about staying on track and just making it through the darker times, and I think

the best way to do that is to be kind to yourself and start small rather than trying to do everything and giving yourself a hard time. You want to make life as easy as possible by setting a routine. I recommend you do that by focusing on four things only: exercising three times a week, drinking lots of water, getting in your steps and meal-prepping at least one meal for each day of the week.'

'People say to me, "But meal prep is so boring",' continues Gabby. 'And I say, "Oh, grow up". Because things

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Find your momentum without putting too much pressure on yourself to be this perfect person

in life are boring. But when you have one of your meals prepped for the day, at least you know that's one meal where you've got something really nutritious going into your body and you know exactly how many calories you're eating. I eat the same meals week in, week out when I'm looking for results, and while people often tell me that's boring, I know it's the most efficient way for me to eat healthily and fuel my body. Don't get me wrong, I've got hundreds of recipes saved on Instagram by these amazing nutritionists, but do you think I have

the time to be making all these elaborate meals? I do not. That's why I stick with what works for me, which is porridge, salmon and veg, and chicken, veg and rice. If it isn't broken, don't fix it!

Tough enough

When we ask Gabby if she takes any extra supplements to support her health and fitness goals during 'flu season, she reveals there are three non-negotiables she takes all year round to keep her in top shape, including magnesium, protein and creatine - the latter of which she calls her 'absolute go-to, because it improves everything from cognitive function and menstruation to building strength and fighting fatigue'. Indeed, Gabby reveals she's 'a bit of a nerd' when it comes to taking supplements, because she loves to feel as fit and healthy as possible so she can take on any challenge, any time.

'But most of all, I really want other women to feel the same way as I do, because feeling fit and healthy is such a blessing,' says Gabby, who, after being diagnosed with severe scoliosis at the age of 12, had to learn to walk again following corrective spinal fusion surgery. 'That's why I was so excited to be asked to do *Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins*. I knew it would give me the chance to show that a tiny little 5'2" person is capable of doing so many extremely gruelling things. It's funny, because when I went into *Love Island: All Stars* last year, Curtis [Pritchard] called me "a unit", and I was like, "Is that a compliment?". But I really did feel like a unit doing *Celebrity SAS*, because I am super strong. I do burpees all day long, so I loved that stuff. Whereas constantly living on the edge, knowing that you're going to get called out on parade for not filling up your water bottle to the top, was a different challenge altogether!' 🏋️

