

SBLS

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FRESH START



start with sage

NATASHA CALEEL'S WOMEN'S GYM SAGE SOCIETY IS
BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS—ONE BARBELL AT A TIME—WITH
A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO FEMALE FITNESS

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Though fitness is a popular New Year's resolution, it can be challenging to know where to start—especially without a personal goal, like-minded community, or wise guidance. Enter Sage Society, a by-women, for-women fitness studio designed to empower its members on their fitness journeys through personalized care, small group classes, and expert instruction.

A respite from “gymtimidation,” Sage Society and its founder, Natasha Caleel, are creating a much-needed space for women at any stage of their fitness journey. From CrossFit lovers to ex-athletes to beginners, Sage Society fosters a community of uplifting support that extends beyond the studio.

Entering any gym for the first time can be nerve-racking, yet when I enter Sage Society, I'm greeted by a smiling Natasha—and the striking scent of energizing eucalyptus—and I find myself immediately at ease. I gasp at how incredible the space smells, and Natasha, sensing my shock that a gym could smell this fresh, says that's *exactly* what she wanted, “I want women to walk in and be like, “This feels good. This feels like somewhere I want to be.”

She nailed it—Sage Society immediately is somewhere I want to be and somewhere I'd love to stay. I'm stunned by the tranquil and airy space, as Natasha encourages me to snap photos in what has been deemed the “Instagram mirror.” Feminine touches of greenery, luxe mirrors, and a retail boutique in the newly renovated studio create an aesthetic that's equally comforting and motivating. I take in the sight of shining cardio machines, organized weight stations, and flattering lighting, but what strikes me most is the quiet satisfaction, and even joy, of the small group of women exercising before me.

“Because it's women only, women can show up as they are. There's no expectation to wear your fancy yoga pants, have your hair done, or have a full face of makeup,” Natasha explains. The only expectation at Sage Society is that you give your best.

A women's fitness expert, postpartum corrective exercise specialist, and occupational therapist, Natasha's extensive knowledge is evident throughout her studio and is embraced by her clients. She absolutely glows from the inside out, even more so when she speaks about Sage Society.

“A Sage is somebody that will empower people with knowledge so that they can help themselves... I'm here to give you the knowledge and support so that you can help yourself,” Natasha says. As the Sage of Sage Society, Natasha provides women the tools to navigate their own fitness journeys with confidence and agency.

Since opening in January 2024, Sage Society has provided a space for women to prioritize themselves in an industry that often leaves them behind. Natasha intentionally designed Sage Society to holistically support women and mothers. Individualized instruction, small group classes, community events, and on-site childcare (a “non-negotiable” for Natasha) are distinctive aspects that eliminate barriers to fitness and make Sage Society a place to focus on *you*.

“After I had my daughter, I had been looking for somewhere to go, somewhere that I could bring her with me and focus on strengthening my body and get back to a place where I could do all the things that I was doing before,” Natasha recalls. Unable to find a place that fit all her needs as an active mom, Natasha took matters into her own hands, becoming a Sage for women like herself.

Sage Society offers a variety of classes for all fitness levels, taught by an expert team of female instructors. Though each class has a separate focus, strength training, injury prevention, corrective exercise, and prenatal and postpartum fitness are the core intentions. Natasha has Sage Society down to a science—literally. Even women's cycles are taken into consideration, as movement alternatives are given to accommodate the phases of the menstrual cycle. “Most fitness programs are created by men, for men, and that's something I've been trying to change,” Natasha explains. “We're doing the things that are going to best benefit a woman's body.”

Unlike larger classes, where participants battle for trainer attention or can injure themselves without proper instruction, Sage Society's classes range from one-on-one to 1-4 semi-private to 12-person-max groups, ensuring each woman receives personal attention to guide them to perform their best. By building strength with individualized instruction, Sage Society empowers women from the inside out. "Having a solid foundation of muscle as we go into our late 30s, 40s, and 50s is going to help so much when it comes to not just staying fit and looking good, but also from a functional perspective," Natasha points out.

Despite its overwhelming benefits, Natasha acknowledges the intimidation that comes with strength training's masculine connotations. As her Sage duty, Natasha's mission is to impart that strength training is an essential part of ensuring wellness and preventing injuries in daily life—especially for women. "People all the time will be like, 'Oh, I don't want to use more than the five-pound weight because I'm going to get bulky,'" Natasha says. "I'm like, Okay, how much does your kid weigh? 40 pounds? You pick up your kid all the time, so let's focus on doing that the right way and building strength, so that when you go to pick your kid up, you're not going to throw your back out."

Client stories like these and Natasha's personal experience as a mom inform much of her practice at Sage Society. The perspective on strength she instills in her clients also extends to her 10-year-old daughter. From going on runs with a stroller in tow to bringing her along to fitness classes, Natasha has always framed exercise in a positive light for her daughter and for the women at Sage Society. "Exercise is something that we get to do, not something that we have to do," Natasha emphasizes.

I walk into Sage Society, excited to *get* to do my one-on-one personal training with Natasha. She expertly corrects my form, attentively alters my movements, and firmly encourages me through tougher circuits. Her sparkling conversation and pro tips and tricks make the workout fly by—though, by the end, heavy breathing and heat make me realize that she didn't go easy on me! Still, I'm proud of what Natasha showed me my body was capable of.

Natasha's mantra of exercise and female strength breaks the toxicity that can come with female-focused fitness. Stressing the significance of function and overall well-being, Sage Society is leading by example, creating the next generation of strong women who are able to feel at home in the gym. "Everyone starts somewhere," Natasha says. "We end up holding ourselves back because we're scared to just get started."

I leave Sage Society sore, smiling, and stronger. This new year, don't be afraid to just get started—especially if you have a sage (society) to guide you along the way.*

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