

# ageless, not aging

Get to know *New You's* new fitness expert, the inspirational, inimitable Kathy Smith.

BY MARILYN DEMARTINI

WHAT “BABE” DIDRIKSON WAS TO THE OLYMPICS, Esther Williams was to swimming, and Martina Navratilova was to tennis, Kathy Smith is to fitness. Over her three-decade career, Smith’s accolades include a Lifetime Achievement Award from IDEA Health & Fitness Association—the world’s largest organization of fitness professionals—as well as Woman of the Year from the Los Angeles County Commission for Women, and she acted as a spokesperson for the International Council on Active Aging. Smith is also a member of the Founders Circle of the Women’s Sports Foundation, the nonprofit founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, dedicated to advancing the lives of girls and women through physical activity. Smith could also be its poster woman, proving its mission by building a successful life and business around exercise.

Smith’s iconic status is built on her long multimedia career, which includes appearances on *Oprah*, *The Today Show*, *The View*, and *Larry King Live*. Of course, nearly every health and fitness magazine has featured her. But most of all, Kathy Smith is recognized for her ageless beauty. The hot, young talent behind *Kathy Smith’s Aerobic Fitness* record album in 1980 blossomed into the mother who created the award-winning *Kathy Smith’s Pregnancy Workout* on VHS in 1989, who eventually transitioned into the instructor of the *Moving Through Menopause* DVD. Today, she oversees the Kathy Smith Lifestyles brand, which has sold over 18 million workout videos and generated \$500 million in revenue.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE WAYDA



Now 61 years young, with two grown college-age daughters, Smith is a role model for aging gracefully. She is also now *New You's* fitness expert.

Smith starts her day with a lengthening, breathing exercise and wakes her system up with a cleansing cup of hot water, lemon, and ginger, followed by 20 minutes of meditation to quiet her mind.

"It's my favorite time of day," she says. "I practice gratitude. The older we get, the more important it is to be grateful for what you have instead of disappointed in what you don't." She encourages women to adjust to the changes in life, to problem-solve, and ask, "What's in the way of my being the best person I can be? What's good about the process?"

Smith operates on a few basic tenets—exercise, flexibility, eating sensibly, and sleep. "Stretch every day," she emphasizes. "Flexibility helps stress reduction and balance. Try Pilates or yoga and different instructors. It's like music—find what you like!" She advocates doing some kind of movement seven days a week, emphasizing strength training as paramount for women. "We lose a quarter of a pound of muscle each year after the age of 30 if we don't strength train, so we have to spend *more* time lifting weights to stop that progressive loss." She suggests



Kathy Smith and her daughters scuba diving in Poipu Beach, Kauai.

a minimum of three- to five-pound weights, plus basics like squats to strengthen legs on a regular basis.

"Six-pack abs are a young person's game. Now, we train for a strong back, for functional movement—how you use your body," she says. Something as routine as picking up a suitcase and placing it in a plane's

overhead compartment illustrates the need for bending, turning, pressing, pushing—all the movements addressed in her workout programs. "Women won't build bulk lifting weights, but will build bone density and stop muscle deterioration over time." She also recommends walking for cardiovascular exercise, raising the heart rate, burning fat, and finding inspiration—to open your mind to "a new light."

Smith thinks of "dieting" as creating a "healthy home environment" through shopping with nutritional goals in mind. The idea is to adhere to a shopping list that meets these goals and surround yourself with only healthy options. "If you don't buy it, you won't eat it," she says. Her diet consists of morning green shakes, lots of veggies, and protein like fish, chicken, nuts, beans, and legumes. She eats every three to four hours, and may have a salad with salmon or a turkey burger for lunch, with hummus and veggies or peanut butter and an apple as snacks—all beneficial choices combining essential nutrients.

Smith notes we need more sleep as we age. She tries to get to bed by 11PM to relax and read before drifting off. While sleep greatly affects our energy, so does our emotional well-being. "If you have no energy, you don't look good," she says. "People feel old because they have

wrinkles—you can get rid of those. But look at your posture, how you carry yourself—that's more important!" She stresses movement, which increases energy and makes you want to move more. "We need to make adjustments, not excuses," she says. "'You've aged' is an excuse. You have to keep moving. Exercise helps prevent back pain, builds your core, keeps you nimble and capable. We need to think functional—working your body as it works in everyday life."

Smith understands that at every life stage, strong time-management plays an important role in a woman's fitness and health goals. You may only have five minutes to spend with yourself, she says, but you need to find peace throughout the day, be present and mindful, and know how to handle the ups and downs that are outside of your control. The profound importance of this time, as limited as it may be, can not be understated. "Sometimes, you have to take a step back and say, 'How many things can I do?' Life is alignment with core values—family, health, wellbeing, caring for the environment, giving back. I wouldn't sacrifice those. This is the most positive, empowering, and exciting time of my life!" she exclaims, "It's a shift in mind set—don't focus on a body part, focus on your mind and the body will follow." ●

**The Best of Kathy Smith on DVD**

- ◆ [Ageless with Kathy Smith: Staying Strong](#)
- ◆ [Ageless with Kathy Smith: Total Body Turnaround](#)
- ◆ [Matrix Method Ultimate Sculpt](#)
- ◆ [Timeless: Step Aerobics Workout](#)
- ◆ [Kathy Smith Kettlebell Solution Kit](#)

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**smith's guide to soulcycle**

SoulCycle began when Julie Rice and Elizabeth Cutler were looking for a way to squeeze a great cardio workout into their hectic workday. They believed that combining upper- and lower-body exercise into a cycling routine, while offering top-notch customer service in a beautiful atmosphere, could create an enduring, inspiring, and addictive 45-minute workout. Following their first small studio in New York, they now have 16 SoulCycle studios across the greater New York City area and six in and around Los Angeles.

HERE'S SMITH'S TAKE: SoulCycle reminds me a bit of what Johnny G. started in the 1980s with spinning. It was his ability to encourage participants to achieve goals, to get to the finish line, that catapulted spinning into a national fitness craze. The ride became a metaphor for life and it created unbelievable energy.

SoulCycle brings that full circle. It's gym exercise with a motivational feel, and it has created a new cycling community. Understand, it is a very young, edgy, and hip workout, so if you decide to give it a try, go into it with the knowledge that you are entering a whole new atmosphere and just go with and be a part of it!

Immediately upon entering, you feel welcomed, and I love that personal attention. Greeters get you registered and situated on a bike that is adjusted to the right height for you. If you don't have clip-on cycling shoes (They recommend Look Delta clips, but the pedals are SPD compatible.) There are no cell phones allowed and because the bikes are very close to each other, talking is discouraged. You are asked to follow SoulCycle's "etiquette" of respect for your neighbors. It is a complete culture of kindness there—I call it the "Disney effect." Then the lights go down and the music comes up. It can be

really loud, so be prepared, but the music is great and you are transported into a progression of exercises that have specific body and hand positions.

Light weights are clipped under the seat that you use for upper-body work. There is some controversy in the fitness community about the benefit, but I see it as a way to wake up the upper body while you are feverishly working your legs; it is not a replacement for weight training, but it helps move you through a class—which seems to pass quickly because there are balanced segments with a lot of diversity, plus a warm-up and a cool-down. You sweat a lot, so it's

good to drink water.

The whole atmosphere is very friendly and as in yoga, you set an intention for the class, bring it into your workout, then out into the world. It's a message that permeates the whole company and its philosophy, and it is carried through in each studio.

SoulCycle classes are big on experience and choreography, but light on cycling instruction. If you are new to cycling, you may want to get some instruction on spinning-style techniques prior to attending—or get there early to familiarize yourself with the equipment. Spinning is a fluid motion—a pull and a push with each leg (rather than a full transfer of weight

to each side) that you learn with time and practice. Thinking quad-hamstring-quad, 360-degree motion, staying balanced over the pedals, and not dropping into your shoulders and hands. It's a lot to think about if you haven't done spinning before.

If you're ready to "Find Your Soul," then

experiment with some cycling shorts for comfort. Everybody likes different styles with or without padding, but sitting on a cycle seat for 45-minutes can cause a bit of soreness. Make sure your seat is properly adjusted, and if you need to re-adjust during the class, you can—just be careful to



stop completely and unclip your shoes first.

If you don't like loud music, use the disposable earplugs. I like to find a bike that is not directly in front of the speakers. Let's face it, as we get older,

really loud music isn't as pleasant as we might have once found it!

SoulCycle has a full line of branded gear, so if you plan to buy workout wear there, expect comfortable but

chic options detailed with trendy skulls, bright colors, and strong messaging.

Most of all, have fun! SoulCycle may be today's newest inspiration, but cycling is ageless!