

We went to mum and daughter bootcamp

Mum and daughter Debbie and Claire spent a gruelling week at a fitness bootcamp – and found more than just body confidence.

'I've lost weight and found my soulmate'

My daughter Claire and I are like best friends. I had her when I was very young, at 15, and we've always been close.

So when she told me she was going to do a fitness bootcamp, I decided I'd give it a go too.

I wasn't happy with my weight. About five years ago I was a size 10 and weighed about 10st, but I'd put on more than 3st and had gone up to a size 16.

The pounds piled on after I came out of an abusive relationship. My partner was violent towards me and pressurised me into staying slim. I was always boxing and working out to stay as thin as possible, so I looked good for him.

When I left, I think I subconsciously wanted to rebel, so I stopped exercising and ate badly. I thought if I stayed looking perfect I'd end up with another idiot who'd just want me for my body.

I'd started to try and lose weight at the beginning of last year, faddy starvation diets such as just drinking detox drinks. I'd lose a few pounds and then put it back on.

Before the bootcamp I was petrified, thinking

'what have I let myself in for?' I'm asthmatic, and have been hospitalised with it a few times. I really thought I'd be the most unfit one there.

Claire and I went off to the Kent countryside for the bootcamp last August. It was the most intense week of my life.

We had to get up at 5.30am every day and then line up for drill 15 minutes later. If you weren't standing

right you had to do press-ups!

Then there was a four-mile run before breakfast, followed by weights or an exercise called iron soldier, which was really hard and involved running up and down hills. We did Boxercise

and other activities like netball and circuit training until 4.30pm in the afternoon.

It worked out at about ten hours of exercise each day.

At the beginning I didn't think I'd be able to make it through the week. I was tired out and missed my other daughter, who is 13.

But by the last day of the week I completed an assault course that no one else taking part was able to finish. I was on such a high after that!

When bootcamp finished I'd lost 7lb and I've gone on to drop 2st in total, shrinking from a size 16 to a 12. I go to the gym about three or four times a week now and eat six small meals a day, whereas before I'd miss breakfast and then pig out in the evening.

I'm a sales rep and I used to snack on crisps and chocolate in the car, but I'll have nuts or yoghurt instead these days.

I'd like to be a size 10 again, so I'm going to keep going and aim for that.

While I was at bootcamp, I realised I was getting fit for me, not anyone else. I'm finally overcoming my demons from my abusive relationship.

People kept telling me I was glowing and I could feel my confidence growing.

Last November I met a new partner and because I'm much happier with myself it's all going really well.

I think I've met the person I'll probably spend my life with, and Claire and my younger daughter think the world of him.

Without a doubt, the bootcamp changed my life.

My asthma is so much better now I'm exercising again, I'm so much stronger emotionally, I've found my soulmate and I look better than I have in years.

Debbie Paul, 46, Rochester



Me in 1989



With my new partner Nicky



Before starting bootcamp



'My baby weight shattered my confidence'

Looking at my reflection in the mirror, I sighed.

I've battled with my weight for a long time, but after having my daughter Olivia last January I was more down about my size than ever.

I'd had a caesarean and, being at home with a baby, the pounds had crept on.

I'd ended up being a size 16 and weighed 12st.

It was eight months since I'd given birth, but I was still wearing my maternity clothes. My confidence was shattered and it was starting to affect my marriage.

When my husband Sam got home from work I complained he wasn't giving me enough attention, but looking back it was just because I wasn't feeling good about myself.

Then I heard about the GI Jane Bootcamp. I thought it would give me the kick-start I needed to get fit. My mum and I are best friends, so I asked her to come along to support each other.

The week at the camp was the hardest thing I've ever done. Not only was it physically draining, but I'd left Olivia for the first time. I had a lot of time to think and

got really cross with myself for getting so unfit and having such an unhealthy lifestyle.

I cried every day. My lowest point came on the Sunday when I had a

stomach upset and nearly passed out. I just wanted to go home and be with my daughter.

Mum helped me through it and I pushed myself to carry on. I also hurt my leg, but was determined to finish the week. While the others ran I did activities that wouldn't aggravate the injury.

The exercise regime was intense. I found myself jogging around a cabbage field wearing a heavy Army jacket! It was unlike anything I'd ever done before, but I ended up loving it, especially the assault course.

When it was time to go home I'd lost 7lbs. The weight just

carried on falling off me after that and since the bootcamp I've lost about 21lbs. I'm just over 10st 7lb and a size 10 now.

The biggest thing I took away from the camp was portion size.

When they first served up the food there I thought, 'I'm never going to survive on that', but it showed me that you don't need to eat loads in one go.

I only snack on oat cakes and raisins now, rather than chocolate, and I choose healthy

options like brown bread, skimmed milk and wholegrain pasta.

I used to live to eat, but now I'd say I eat to live. I've started running in the evenings again and I just feel much better about myself. I'm back in all my normal clothes rather than maternity things. I feel like the old me again.

Bootcamp was never going to be an overnight solution, but it gave me the shock I needed and I'm going to carry on losing weight.

I feel so much more confident now and Sam loves the new me. He's always telling I look beautiful.

Mum and I have continued to spur each

other on, and whenever she comes to stay she brings her gym kit and we exercise together.

The change in her is amazing. Health wise, she's like a different woman, I'm so proud of her. She's met a new boyfriend and just seems so positive now.

Being GI Janes for the week did us both a world of good.

Claire Keating, 30, Billericay



Before having a baby in 2006



Toughing it out at bootcamp



With Olivia in March last year



With Sam last year

Stays at GI Jane Bootcamp are available from £399 per person, including accommodation, food and drink, activities, fitness and dietary advice. Places are limited to 14 people to ensure maximum results for all women who visit GI Jane. See gijanebootcamp.co.uk for details.