

THIS IS WHAT FIT LOOKS LIKE

We speak to three women who are breaking down the fitness stereotypes

Fit comes in all shapes and sizes. It's not the numbers on the scales or the size of the clothes you wear; it's the personal bests and the miles you run. It's about mental wellbeing, future-proofing your health and the sheer, sweaty joy of working out like no one's watching. Here, we style three inspirational women in our favourite pieces from the new sportswear collections at Very, and ask them to share what fit means to them.



◀ SPORTS BRA, £27; LEGGINGS, £35, BOTH NIKE AT VERY

YANAR ALKAYAT

Commercial editor and weightlifter (@yanarfitness)

'To me, being fit is having a body that can cope with anything life throws at it,' says Yanar, 41, who got into functional fitness and Olympic lifting in her mid-thirties. 'As my 40th birthday approached, I wanted to feel like I could age with confidence. Although I was fit, I wasn't strong.'

'It took time. In the first six months of competitive training, whenever my coach said to me, "You're looking strong," I'd think, "That means I'm looking big." But building muscle and strength helped change my relationship with my body, and I'm now much more confident and comfortable with how I look because of that.'

'Before then, I'd always worked out purely for aesthetics, but as soon as it became about performance and achievements instead, it was the most liberating thing ever. I encourage everyone to train with a real purpose, because that's when you feel free.'

Photography | IAN HARRISON

WH PROMOTION FOR VERY

RINI JONES

Policy and advocacy officer and keen marathon runner (@abrowngirlruns)

'I want to be the representation I wish I'd seen in my teens,' says Rini, 26. 'Endurance running tends to conjure up images of lean, white women and men. I've lost count of the number of times I've rocked up to the starting line and been the only brown woman. I started my Instagram page as a way to motivate myself, but also to dispel a lot of the myths surrounding fitness.'

'In South Asian culture, to be accepted or considered marriage

material, women are expected to be soft and demure, not muscular and strong. Even now, my family will say to me: "You look great, but don't get any bigger." I think to myself, "Don't they understand that I can run for four hours straight, that I can squat 80kg?" Why is it always about how you look and how consumable you are?'

'Running has been incredibly restorative for me. I had a really difficult past with disordered eating and exercise in my teens, so it's been a way of shifting focus from what my body looked like to what it could do instead. Ultimately, I want to live a long life and feel as good as possible, because those are the things that matter in the end.'



◀ TANK TOP, £20; BRA TOP (JUST SEEN), £22; LEGGINGS, £35; TRAINERS, £43, ALL ADIDAS AT VERY

'Hopefully, by sharing my experiences I can inspire others'

CLARA HOLMES

Content creator and amateur boxer (@rollinfunky)

'I have Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, which is an inherited connective tissue disorder,' says Clara, 40. 'I always worked out when I was younger, up until my health started to decline. I became a wheelchair

user when I was 25, and for the first five years I struggled to come to terms with it. But I didn't want to take that negativity into my thirties.'

'I'm never going to get rid of the constant pain or change the fact that I'm in a wheelchair, but what I can do is work on myself and how to be happier with my situation.'

'I've started boxing with a trainer in the last year and I absolutely love it. It's one of the best workouts you can do for the upper body. Exercise

stops me from getting stiff, but it's the mental aspect of it that really helps. I'm addicted to the endorphins and that feeling of invincibility a great workout can give you.'

'When you see disabled people in the media they're often Paralympians, and I just can't aspire to that. But hopefully, by sharing my experiences I can inspire others. You can be all different sizes and still be fit, or unfit. Fitness is a state of mind.'



▶ SPORTS BRA, £40; SHORTS, £40; TRAINERS, £80, ALL NIKE AT VERY. BOXING WRAPS, CLARA'S OWN

WORDS: ALISON LYNCH; PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT: GEORGE READ; STYLING: MADELINE BOWDEN; HAIR AND MAKE-UP: HANNA KALART; ART DIRECTION: BEN BRILEY

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