

To the YMCA Ann Arbor:

I'm writing this letter to let you know just how instrumental the YMCA has been in the transformation of my fitness over the past year. Last summer, after struggling with some health problems, I decided to join the YMCA. I had not been exercising regularly before that and I was not always self-motivated, so I joined a number of group classes. Specifically I attended Morris' cardio kickboxing class and Gianna's introductory studio cycling class. I hated cycling right away. The bike was uncomfortable and it felt like my legs couldn't make it through the class. Somehow Gianna was encouraging without being patronizing or giving the impression she had lower standards of performance in an introductory class. Although it seemed mysterious at the time, that is why I continued to attend the class. After a month I could see a significant improvement in my fitness (and the comfortableness of the bike) and I was proud of the progress I was making.

I also started to attend Morris' class twice a week. I would never expect that a technochoreographed punching and kicking class could have an air of focus and precision, but Morris manages it. It is not only a fun and welcoming class but also challenging in ways that make it feel a lot less silly than other aerobics classes. Turns out, I like to punch! The upper-body cardio and weightlifting have been key to my progress and have kept me motivated for the past 12 months.



A couple of months later I serendipitously dropped-in on Michelle B.'s cycling class. I was starting to feel confident on the bike, but the huge pool of sweat I left on the floor that day quickly checked my confidence and bolstered my motivation. I enrolled in the class right away. Michelle is not just teaching a studio cycling class, she is also teaching people how to train their bodies (both their muscles and their minds) to get the most they can from the time spent on the bikes. I have learned a lot from her about training.

As spring rolled around one of my friends suggested that I take the skills I developed on the stationary bikes outdoors and get myself a

(nonstationary) bike. Without the classes at the YMCA I would not be enjoying outdoor cycling this summer.

The end of June was the one-year anniversary of my decision to join the YMCA, marked by my first mountain biking trip. I could not have faced the frustration of steep hills or managed to climb to amazing views without the work I put in at the YMCA. That work would not have been possible without Gianna whose introductory class was so important for getting me in shape and keeping me in shape, Morris who helps me punch, focus and enjoy cardio and Michelle who, on a weekly basis, teaches me that my body can do more than I think it can.

I wanted to write this letter to tell you that it has not gone unnoticed that these three instructors are not only excellent instructors, but also athletes who are dedicated to sharing their athletic abilities in incredibly empowering and helpful ways. They have had a positive impact on my physical fitness and mental well-being (without knowing it) and I cannot express my appreciation enough. In one year I have gone from someone that rued any walk longer than 4-blocks to someone that looks forward to long bike-rides and hikes. There are times when it seems like an impossible change. Thank you for helping me make it possible.

Sincerely,
Chloe A.