

This Christian is good for the Jews!

By Yitz Grossman



ing technique on his part, perhaps it was the recommendation (likely both), the man was good, the stretching more than excellent and I was hooked after that first session. I haven't looked back. Yes that initial first hour was on him. Can a stiff lower back that tends to act up with some regularity be fixed in one session? Absolutely not! But I saw enough results in that one session and in the following days that I ran back and signed up.

And while you might believe that this personalized service is beyond your reach, quite the opposite is true. Maybe it's his dedication to his clientele, but somehow he manages to keep himself priced somewhat below the market. Having a trainer and individualized sessions at any other gym will run you as much as 20-30% higher. I asked Christian about this anomaly and he answered that his trick is to keep his overhead low. It's precisely because he finds himself on top of Brach's Kosher Supermarket (in a calculated move by the Brachs) that he's able to pass along these savings and he does. Christian also does in-home private training, though this service tends to run a bit higher. Many of us have joined gyms over the years and have likely abandoned thousands of dollars in registrations and monthly fees. Most start off enthusiastically but find that we slowly cut the routine until it's completely out of our hectic schedules; after all, eating is more enjoyable and doesn't require much stress, effort or *shvitz-ing*. And who hasn't at some time converted their home treadmills into temporary clothing racks?

At Legacy the entire experience is radically different. Whether it's Christian himself, Freddie, Phil, Ian or Chris (all certified), if you're the client, rest assured that you'll be getting called, emailed or *bbm*-d on whatever device you have. They'll find you and you'll be there. Our natural tendency is to forget the gym and hope it forgets us but over at Legacy, there's no forgetting. Christian and his team of highly skilled trainers are on top of their game and will work around your schedule to make sure you avail yourself of the workout. Though not Jewish, they have mastered the art of Jewish guilt.

At first glance, it pales by comparison in size to any of the other neighborhood gyms but what it lacks in size is more than compensated by the quality of the workout. Of course you'll find all of the equipment you're accustomed to seeing in a larger more commercialized gym but at Legacy, it's always one on one and when you're done, you'll be thankful that they left a few machines out of your workout. At Legacy, you're only left alone during your warm-up or post workout on one of the treadmills or ellipticals. At all other

times, you're in their capable hands, one-on-one with your trainer. Because you're being personally trained, you don't need a larger room or space. It all happens on the mat, near the mat or while utilizing any of the equipment.

At a kiddush a few weeks back (where else) I ran into noted attorney Ben Brafman who looked to be in the best shape of his life. And while Ben doesn't need publicity (he is truly everywhere), his line of work is not without stress and demands him being available at any hour (and he is) to those in need. In his off hours, he's busy speaking on behalf of various community organizations. Eating patterns are often disrupted. The conversation turned to exercise and within seconds, his own workout secret was revealed: we shared a trainer. When I commented on his body transformation, Ben said "Christian is an extraordinary personal trainer who has changed my body and my diet. He has also been good for my soul as he is an honest, hard working man truly devoted to each of his clients. What a breath of fresh air in a world that has become far too cynical, with many people putting forward only mediocre efforts at best. With Christian, you get 100% every session. I have gained stamina, lost weight and increased my strength. In truth, I have never felt better or stronger. What more could you ask of a personal trainer?"

Curious as to how Christian scoped out a location on top of Brach's, I called Debbie Brach who, after opening the store each morning, can be found on the elliptical for an hour. Debbie, dedicated to physical fitness has been working out for years, has seen and experienced many trainers. Observing Christian train at another gym, she liked his approach to health and fitness: Christian however wasn't her trainer. "I kept pushing for him to train me but his schedule was too full. I asked for him to train me at home, this too got a no." Eventually Christian agreed to home training and it was at this point that Jack and Debbie Brach hatched the idea of clearing space above their supermarket for Christian's new gym. "Christian works extremely well with middle aged people. He knows how to push you without hurting you."

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Open the inconspicuous blue door, walk up one flight of stairs just above BRACH'S kosher supermarket and have your life transformed. I'm not referring to a new religion or about a missionary trying to convert us or our children away from our core beliefs; rather I refer to one Christian Mendoza, proprietor of Legacy Fitness.

Who is Christian Mendoza and what's he doing above Brach's that has people from all over the 5 towns and beyond paying to go see him? Christian is the owner of Legacy Fitness, a rather small yet highly personalized gym hidden just above Brach's and he's been changing lives, one at a time. As opposed to the great majority of neighborhood gyms, and there are many, over at Legacy it's all about one-on-one training and nothing else. If you're one of the many struggling with your newfound post-Pesach girth or, in general, find that you're not in the shape you should or could be in, and who isn't, now is the time to consider a lifestyle change. Spring is in the air and it's time to slim down and get healthy.

Christian's gym may be signless, it is: but it's certainly leaving an indelible mark and impression on its clients. More of a hidden treasure right here in our own neighborhood (until now), he's being exposed here in this article. Why? Because he has already changed people's lives, my own included - including heart rate, waist size and overall health and his story needs to be told. Not that he and his other highly skilled trainers are lacking for clients; they have plenty, but after my own experience and after hearing (and in many cases also seeing) incredible results and heartwarming stories that include major successes in rehabilitation, weight loss, strengthening and overall improved physical health, the time has come to share him with others who might be in need of his services.

As a long time sufferer of lower back pains, sciatic flair-ups and all that's associated with that area and after trying surgery and every other modality known to man, a doctor friend suggested I call his buddy Christian Mendoza. He spent a good hour with me stretching me in ways I hadn't or couldn't for years. It was an hour of pain and pleasure as he did all the work. The price was good too: free! Frankly, I would gladly have paid for this type of therapy but wasn't going to argue with free; it's sacrilegious. Perhaps a brilliant market-





Because Christian and his trainers will work around a client's schedule and do understand that our hectic lives dictate last minute changes, I get to meet different people coming, going and training. Bill Kaufman, who looks a good ten years younger than his real age, put it

this way. "I met Christian 10 years ago while he was at another gym. When he disappeared, the good people at the gym wouldn't tell me his whereabouts and I had to go hunt him down. I did and he told me that he'd be opening his own gym at which point I told him I'd be his first client. He has added years to my life, also to my wife's. Christian is one of the great community resources in the 5 towns."

On a recent Sunday I ran into Tracie Schaeffer who has been traveling to Legacy Fitness where she trains with Freddie for the past eleven months. That was no surprise, what was though, was the fact that she travels to Legacy from Astoria Queens. With a plethora of gyms dotting every neighborhood, I was interested; when told that she sometimes arrives by bike, my curiosity was piqued.

With a herniated muscle in her leg and no cure in sight, Tracie called Christian, her old high school mate. After looking at her and determining he could help, but afraid that due to their relationship, Tracie wouldn't take orders, Christian asked that his co-trainer Freddie handle Tracie and that's exactly what he's been doing. Tracie told me that she had bad experiences with inexperienced trainers and with rheumatoid arthritis running in her family, coupled with her injury, she wanted the best and trusted Christian. She needs to maintain her health. Since working out at

Legacy, she can now bike as many as 55 miles and her daily routines are painless. Of course she looks forward to the stretching after each work out and states that her goal is "to walk into her future".

Though I've met more than a few clients this past year, I seem always to run into Menachem Pollack of Far Rockaway. Impressed by his workout routine (Freddie Araque trains him) and at times found training in tandem alongside a *chavrusa*, (he call this his military workout) Menachem's story is likely not too much different than the average client. "I'm here because of my wife." When her pregnancy no longer allowed her to work out and with credit for a few sessions, she encouraged Menachem to give it a try. "I started here at 230, am now maintaining a much healthier 195, have since brought six other friends and they all love this place. Besides being a phenomenal trainer, he's also well versed in nutrition. Freddie knows my family, my kid's names and is always accessible to me by phone. He's part of my life."

Christian is no doctor, not even a physical therapist but one wouldn't know by the way he listens and hears one's body. His own experience with injury and the many modalities of therapies it took to get him back on his feet (literally), opened his eyes to his career and life goal: he wanted to help others get better and into shape. Injuries sustained in a head on collision in 1993 led to many months of varying therapies, most of which did little to help his multiple herniations. It was during this time that he studied 'every fitness, anatomy and medical book' he could get his hands on. Shortly after his own recovery, Christian began rehabilitating others with injuries. His dedication landed him a job working for the Orthopedic Surgeons of Long Island and with several other gyms. Ultimately he chose to train privately though fate would have it that somehow he'd find himself right here in Lawrence in a smaller gym, but his own, providing individual attention to his clients. One additional bonus found likely only at Legacy: if you're dedicated and need to use the gym at off hours (really late at night), Christian has been known to provide keys to his clients and while I can't guarantee that every client has one, those who are determined to shape up, do.

Christian can be reached at 9177092740 or by email at Legacyfit@gmail.com. Or, look for the blue door about 50 feet from the entrance to Brach's and stop in.



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