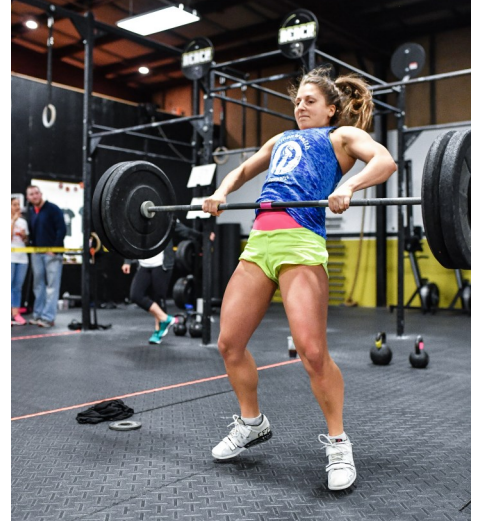




Our Stories | Natalie Raffol

A CROSSFIT LIFE

Crossfit has not only been an exercise regimen for me, but a way to practice goal setting, form social connections, and learn more about myself. The multifaceted nature of what Crossfit provides me and many others who leap into its realm of burpees, countdown timers, and barbells, is what I think keeps us there. Wanting to be fit and exercising accordingly is likely not enough to keep you moving in the long run. You have to find something that motivates you beyond the sweat and makes you excited to exercise as part of your daily habit.



GOALS

It is no surprise that naturally goal-oriented people gravitate towards Crossfit. With endless opportunities to check-off: new skills, faster times, and heavier weights, the ability to measure progress is very fulfilling. As a newer Crossfitter I remember looking at others doing WODs (workout of the day) with pull ups and weights I *knew* I'd never be able to do myself. "That's ok," I'd think, "I like Crossfit, but I'm not like them." Little did I know, years later I would be the one doing the "impossible." My "to-do" list may be decreasing, but there is *always* something to work on and developing measurable targets has been fundamental to achieving my goals.

FRIENDS

No matter how bad a day has been, and how much I may not want to go to the gym (although usually I do) I know that at the end of my workout I will always feel better, whether it's because I had friends cheering me on, or someone helping me put away equipment. Crossfit gyms typically develop communities of people who share daily goals and struggles. Through this common experience, I have formed friends that bring fun into my routine both in and out of the gym. They are a huge motivator that is hard to replicate in other gym environments.

GROWTH

New Crossfitters typically experience constant progress. With every workout you become faster and stronger. The gains and feeling of power are addicting. Then, one day...you stop. You come into the gym and aren't better than you were yesterday. You realize your mile time has increased and your squat weight is still where it was a year ago. This is where many Crossfitters quit. This is where I struggled with feeling like something was wrong with me to not be progressing anymore. It was hard to come in and do the same work without getting the measurable improvements I was used to, and felt like I *should* be getting.

WRAP-UP

However, with some attitude adjustment thanks to great coaches who have experienced this as well, I realized the game of fitness is a marathon, not a sprint (unless maybe you are an Olympic sprinter). I'm in it for the long haul of health and fitness for life. This requires patience with myself, understanding progress ebbs and flows, and appreciating what I am able to do *on this day*. This approach is not only valuable in Crossfit, but in all journeys we take in life. I may not be setting new records every day, but I am still consistently surprising myself with new fitness abilities, developing deeper friendships, and learning valuable lessons.

If you have any questions about this article, Natalie can be reached at nraffol@mcMahonassociates.com.