

KATHLEEN TROTTER:

PERSONAL TRAINER MARRIES GRAD SCHOOL WITH GROWING WRITING GIG



V. Tony Hauser

KATHLEEN TROTTER got her career started earlier than most. An active YMCA member at 17, she caught the eye of the aerobics instructor and was soon up front leading the class. Ten years later, the master's student has never stopped working, studying, and growing a successful personal training business – not to mention penning articles for *The Globe & Mail*. As she wraps up her first year of part-time master's work in the exercise sciences program, she tells *Pursuit* how she got to this stage, what drives her, and what's next on her agenda.

P: At 27, you already have a 10-year career behind you. How has your approach to fitness changed during this time?

KT: Along the road I changed my perspective on why I exercise personally; maybe it was my [kinesiology and women's studies] degree at York and becoming more self-aware. At 17, I wanted to sweat and burn calories, but now I'm more athletic – I do triathlons and marathons, never aerobics. Unfortunately a lot of trainers are very focused on the aesthetic – “do this and you'll get great abs.” Looking great is a nice benefit, but it's more about having energy and a positive self-image. It's also about feeling more centred and less stressed. Studies show exercise can help with depression, anxiety, and even anger management.

P: What drew you to grad school at this stage?

KT: This program at U of T really is the perfect mix of my two loves. I think there is huge power and potential in working out, but gym culture also reproduces certain gendered identities [that aren't always positive]. The U of T program allows me to see it from both sides, and study part-time so I can continue working.

P: What will your master's work focus on?

KT: I'm in the socio-cultural stream with Marg MacNeill as my supervisor. I took a gender and sport course in my third year in kinesiology at York, and it really changed my life. I'm still doing coursework and mulling over thesis options, but I'm very interested in gender, gym culture and identity. I may do some sort of demographic study to bridge the gap between academic work and lived experience.

P: How do you balance your career with your studies?

KT: I've always done both – I worked full-time through my undergrad degree as well. I love my job and my clients and what I do. I don't think I could ever just be a student or just someone who works. I also love the idea of lifelong

learning. I feel like that way I go to my job more energized and I go to school more energized. They complement each other.

P: You have had some good success as a freelance writer, with assignments at *The Globe & Mail* and *Chatelaine*. How did this come about?

KT: I'm pretty good at self-promotion, but I also have some terrific clients who believe in me and have opened doors. *Chatelaine* and the *Globe* both came from client contacts. Often I will just pitch ideas to various publications, and I've been fortunate to have had lots of interest. One recent contribution was a commentary on lifestyle expert Rose Reisman's health and fitness regime for the “Power Crunch” column in the *Globe*.

P: Why add writing to your repertoire?

KT: I like to be challenged on an everyday basis. If I was doing exactly the same thing I was doing when I was 20 or 21 I'd feel disappointed. Writing is taking my work to the next level and continuing to challenge myself. I don't like to be stagnant – which is part of the reason I'm here at U of T. —ABE 

When the Globe launched its redesigned paper in October, Trotter became a regular in the “Ask the Trainer” column. She also demonstrates over 50 exercises in the online edition.