

USA Kettlebells unique training philosophy is a magnet for women

Michael Bailey

Driving down Washington Avenue in Minneapolis your curiosity is captured by what appears to be an un-detonated bomb penetrating a one-story building, resting half in and half out. The site looks like a war casualty that took a hit, and by the luck of the draw the bomb didn't explode. What is this place? It's Ron Morris' USA KETTLEBELLS — *A School for the Fundamental Exploration of Physical and Mental Well-Being* — a lot said and a lot to live up to.

I've never stuck to any workout program more than 3 months; they were much too boring and the results were too slow. I was more interested in fun things like kayaking, rock climbing, and cross-country skiing. For example, Pilates, I was so bored I couldn't wait to get through the DVD. I was amazed when I first started Kettlebells, in 3 weeks I had far surpassed 3 months of Pilates and I was never once bored. After my first week of Kettlebells I noticed I was definitely standing straighter and I could feel my core changing. My lower back bothered me less and less each week.

My first trip to a chiropractor, 35 years ago, revealed a slight curve in my spine. Rolfing, Cranial-Sacral therapy and other forms of alternative medicine became my mainstays to control the impact of the curvature and other physical inconveniences like my perpetually tight hamstrings. These cords of steel were a lifetime curse of inflexibility. I tried yoga and everything else to stretch them out. Much to my surprise, three weeks of Kettlebells did the trick—that Kettlebell Swing is magic! Major improvement in my scoliosis took a little longer, over a year; but hey, how many can say in that short time they were able to improve a genetic quirk. Kettlebells was the tool, but the credit for skill and physical knowledge — what muscles to strengthen etc. — goes to Ron Morris.

I'm 59 years old. I started Kettlebells, a year and ten months ago; at that time I weighed 122 pounds. My weight has varied over the years, but this time seemed like the longest and I was starting to accept everything said about menopause. I'm not too much for believing conventional wisdom but I was beginning to wear down and think, 'maybe that's just how it is when you get older, maybe I'll always carry this extra weight'. How was I to know differently? I'd never before been in my late fifties. It was all new territory for me and I was more out of shape than ever. I'm barely 5'2" and was hoping to get back to my 'fighting' weight that I hadn't seen for three summers (I now

weigh 106). Enter Ron Morris. Lucky for me Ron's respect for conventional wisdom was even less than mine. Wow, an ally to lead me through uncharted terrain.

It's second nature for me to look to the root of what is working, or not. My curiosity is immense and the day I met Ron Morris and the kettlebell I knew I had two very interesting subjects in front of me. I was soon to see the power of Kettlebells to change my life and that the ideal trainer may come in a very unexpected package.

Early on, I began to wonder why so many students, myself included, were inspired, full of determination, and dedicated to their workout—what friends might label as 'a kettlebell addiction'. My observation of Kettlebells is: it's an unbiased feedback system that is quick to point out the moment I begin to judge myself or think limiting thoughts. You can't ask for a better teacher — combine a heavy metal ball with insecure thinking and... immediately you *know* you've got a problem. The same goes for Ron. He's not a heavy metal ball coming at you...maybe worse...but his sharp intuition catches every mind game his students have.

Another reason for this rampant 'kb addiction' is most women never had a workout that brought remarkable results in such a short period of time. With kettlebells, not only is the amount of time spent per day extremely short, the increase in strength is something most women have never experienced even if they've been athletic all of their lives, which most of us haven't. For instance, I can easily swing a kettlebell that is exactly my weight; I'm not exceptional, all the women after a short time in the school can swing the 48 kg '*Beast*'. As a result of my training, it's now an effortless chore to carry large logs to our cabin for splitting; firewood in the wilderness is a necessity.

I've always known, a good trainer teaches how a student's mind-set can defeat them. I've since realized, a **really** good trainer knows that his/her mind-set about the student is an influence that should not be underestimated — its fundamental to the teacher/student relationship. What both my trainer and I believe about my physical ability are two invisible, primary building blocks that make more difference in training and progress than anything else. This important understanding joined with a kettlebell changed my health, my body and my thinking about what is physically possible for women, regardless of age.

This superior combination, kettlebells and well-being, has brought forth consistent results and dedication from a large cross section of people, mostly women. The school attracts an enrollment of 75% women. The appeal is a

surprise, considering the unconventional exterior with an interior to match — a uniquely converted custom motorcycle shop. Students range from 16 to 70—doctors, lawyers, counselors, artists, computer program designers, fire fighters and more. And there's Ron, like the school he created—unconventional, edgy, politically incorrect, and a real comedian that knows how to entertain and push limits. How can it be that this tattooed ex-drummer, ex-wrestler, ex-body builder is able to deeply instill in his students the ability to go far beyond limits, that they not only put on themselves but society put on them as well? It's not a secret, but it is intangible and invisible — although strongly felt.

Why are women so attracted to this school and its philosophy? ... Maybe it's the first time in their lives they're in an environment that is completely supportive, where everyone truly believes that they can go beyond their expectations. Although society's beliefs have changed in the past 30 years about women's capabilities, many coaches, trainers and students still have low expectations. That programming is unconsciously in place, even in women that loudly proclaim "We've come a long way baby".

Ron's curiosity of the human spirit and its ability to rise above limitation overrides thoughts of failure. This attitude sets the table for the school's 'can do' philosophy. It seems to permeate the walls and fill the air with thick promise of change. Through osmosis, students pick up and reflect this contagious energy back to each other creating an atmosphere full of passion that pushes you beyond whatever you thought you could do. Everyone that participates at the school remarks about the supportive feeling they get from everyone else. This support is one of the most important assets that USA Kettlebells' instructors are expected to understand and embody in order to be part of the training crew.

At USA Kettlebells as much is expected from women as from men. I came to discover from an unbiased source that the results from the school's unprejudiced viewpoint is attention getting. At the checkout counter of my local nutrition center, the owner remarked to me that some of the male patrons he sent to the school reported that they were a little embarrassed at first because they couldn't keep up with the women in the class; and he added, "...and these guys are in good shape". He was pleased to pass on the compliment for the school, and mentioned that his clients were intrigued by the women's results and planned to continue their classes.





I will close with saying that although I'm thrilled with the results of my new lifestyle change and the fun I've had arriving so quickly; I'm just another story of many women with successes superior to mine. Stories of high weight-loss, physical and mental strength, women gaining confidence and going beyond fear, and men and women solving health issues they were told they would have to live with.

There's something great about people believing in themselves that allows them to stick with physical exercise and change their life. Everyone wants to change physically — so what's the combination that unlocks the human spirit to take action? I think its creativity, fun and discovering how to trust one's self. What's the most efficient tool? ... A simple iron ball with a handle.

To learn more about this amazing training method for yourself, please visit:
<http://www.dragondoor.com/kkb010.html?apid=steel16>



Michael Bailey has been a mixed-medium visual artist for over 35 years. Her second artistic expression is writing. She is currently writing a book on the practical nature of spirituality. Michael trains at Ron Morris' USA Kettlebells, www.usakettlebells.com