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Working out, home-style

Energy Fitness specializes in one-on-one training

Memphis Business Journal - by [Kate Miller](#)

Tucked into a small 1,600-square-foot, second-floor space at 265 S. Front, Energy Fitness has no gaudy signs, pictures of bulky hardbodies or blinding fluorescent lights.

Treadmills, exercise bikes and combination weight machines aside, the gym looks more like a loft apartment with exposed brick and duct work, track lighting and a fully equipped kitchen open to anyone.

The room clearly can't handle many people at once, but co-owner Tonya Tittle says it's more of an advantage than a hindrance.

"We target people who don't want to work out in front of other people and don't want to be disturbed," Tittle says.

Designed to train people on a one-on-one or small group basis, Energy Fitness doesn't require a membership but works on an appointment-only basis. A one-hour session is \$60 with package discounts available. Memberships, which allow limited non-appointment time on the cardio machines, are \$45 a month for individuals and \$65 for couples. Everyone must have a \$75 fitness assessment before their first training session.

Open since September 2002, Energy Fitness now has 30 customers, two-thirds of whom are female. Expecting a total of eight, the Tittles have been surprised both by the number and profiles of their clients. Many are not the baby boomers they envisioned but 20-somethings looking to get more from their workout.

An athlete in high school, Tittle would do push ups in her room after cross country practice. She taught aerobics and coached women's sports at the University of Arkansas at Monticello to help pay for her degree in physical education. She went on to graduate school at the University of Southern Mississippi, where she got her master's in exercise science.

After graduate school she was the health and wellness director at the Downtown YMCA for more than three years. She then went to work for Forever Fit in East Memphis, where she got management training. It was her husband Mark Tittle's idea to open her own gym after she was approached multiple times to manage Downtown gyms that never quite panned out.

Mark Tittle, who sells diagnostic equipment for Beckman Coulter, says they never looked

anywhere besides Downtown. Most personal trainers are out east or in Midtown, and it's close to the couple's Mud Island home.

Mark Tittle says 30 clients is more than enough to make the gym profitable. Although there are times when the gym is empty, the couple is reluctant to add many more people for fear of overcrowding during peak times. Moving to a larger space isn't an appealing option.

"Small is what people like," Tonya Tittle says. "They don't want it any bigger."

"It's almost like working out in your own home," says client Jacque Bailey.

Bailey joined in November to intensify her workouts in preparation for an adventure race. The fact that Tittle runs marathons and other endurance races herself made Bailey confident she could help her achieve her goals.

Bailey has lost 13 pounds since she started, and says Tittle's confidence and insistence has helped intensify her training.

Eric Drabiuk joined in December seeking discipline in his workout. Energy Fitness is convenient to his Mud Island home and he likes the privacy and easy access to equipment.

"They make it fun, and when it's fun it's a lot easier," Drabiuk says. "I don't dread getting up at five in the morning to go meet with her."

Tittle says her methods of motivation differ from client to client and she admits she can be a bit of a drill sergeant.

"When it gets to the point it's not comfortable, you want to stop," Tittle says. "That's what a trainer does -- pushes you past the point of a little bit uncomfortable."

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