

## EXERCISE

# PUNCH YOUR WAY happier



Traditional mindfulness techniques do nothing for Hannah Dunn; instead, she finds clarity in the boxing ring

“Did you grow up with boys?” asks my Fight Club trainer, Ian Streetz. It’s Saturday afternoon and I’m throwing punches at him – a man almost double my size. “NO!” I shout. “But you’re very aggressive,” he shouts back. *I know*, I feel furious.

A bad break-up had left me feeling raw and, well, angry, so I’d turned to my go-to stress reliever: exercise. I ran my first 10k, started HIIT classes and yoga classes. I even tried meditation, which people told me made them calm. I ended up so frustrated I had to leave mid-class. I couldn’t scratch that angry itch until I pulled on a pair of boxing gloves.

British ex-professional and performance coach Cathy Brown tells me why, when I train with her at one of her Bitch Boxing sessions at London’s The Third Space. “If you lose your temper, you lose your clarity. Your reactions slow down, you don’t see what’s coming, in life or in boxing,” she tells me. “Releasing that power makes you think much more clearly.”

As I consider this, my attention wanders and I’m almost rewarded with a left hook to the face. At class, I realise, I can’t afford to be thinking about what happened at work, what I’m going to have for dinner, or the details of the break-up. “You have to focus on the technique so much that it has a blackout effect on you,” says Brown.

After each boxing session, I notice I leave feeling lighter, happier and more together – for days afterwards.

Boxing has definitely lost its violent, macho image. A quick scroll through my



Instagram feed shows model Gigi Hadid and Ellie Goulding sparring, and Cheryl Fernandez-Versini has been pictured after a session at Kobox, the UK’s first boutique boxing gym aimed at non-boxers.

In fact, I fall in love with Kobox the moment I walk

through its doors. All sanded wood, candles and pretty cacti, it’s far from what you’d expect from a boxing gym. At Kobox – set up by Barry’s Bootcamp trainer Shane Collins – the lights are low, the music loud and the combinations are tricky enough to put you purely in the moment. Leaving, I feel calmer than I have done in weeks.

My body is reaping the benefits, too. The day after class, everything hurts. “One punch uses every muscle in your body,” Collins confirms.

But the best thing about boxing? It’s fun. “Everyone points to stress relief, but it’s the best, most fun thing to do; come and beat on something that won’t beat you back,” says Collins. Just call me Rocky. 🥊

## JOIN A NEW-STYLE FIGHT CLUB

● **Cathy Brown’s Bitch Boxing sessions at London’s The Third Space ([thethirdspace.com](http://thethirdspace.com))** Expect a beginner’s course, all in the setting of a real-life boxing ring. Members only.

● **Boxing at Virgin Active nationwide ([virginactive.co.uk](http://virginactive.co.uk))** In pairs, you’ll learn how to throw jabs and upper cuts while wearing pads and gloves. Members only.

● **Fight Club at west London’s Gym Class ([gym-class.co.uk](http://gym-class.co.uk))** The perfect blend of high-intensity fitness and hardcore boxing, you’ll leave sweaty and stress free. From £20 a class.

● **Boxerina at Paola’s Body Barre in west London ([paolasbodybarre.com](http://paolasbodybarre.com))** Mixes kickboxing and boxing with ballet and barre. From £28 per class.

● **Fight Klub at various gyms nationwide ([fightklub.co.uk](http://fightklub.co.uk))** Combines high-intensity exercise with simple combinations of kicks and punches against a punch bag with an incredible soundtrack.

● **Kobox in west London ([koboxlondon.com](http://koboxlondon.com))** Alternating between punching and bodyweight training, it’s as much about the music and experience as the workout.

Read more on fighting fitness at [REDONLINE.CO.UK](http://REDONLINE.CO.UK)