

Spotlight Interview - Karim Tonsy

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Background Information

Karim is a fitness and dance professional as well as a personal trainer. Karim is a group fitness instructor at Equinox here in Chicago, but also acts as a choreographer and artistic director for special events. Karim choreographs routines for weddings, flash mobs, parties, and much more! In addition, Karim is an Ambassador for Lu Lu Lemon.

As a Dance Instructor, Karim help's others feel comfortable dancing and moving their bodies. He realizes that everyone is different and lives life a little bit differently. Therefore, he listens very carefully to each of his client's unique lifestyles and caters a work out or dance routine to fit their unique self.

In addition to Karim's extensive fitness career, he is also in the process of creating his own brand, Tonskin. Tonskin will incorporate all aspects of Karim's fitness career into one single brand. In addition, Tonskin will include an active wear clothing line as well.

When did you begin working in the fitness industry?

Karim has been a dancer since he was 5 years old. However, the fitness aspect of Karim's career did not begin until he was about 18 years old; but joining the fitness industry was a no brainer for Karim. His goal was to make fitness fun instead of going through the motions. Therefore, he believed his experience in dance and art would help create a fitness experience unlike any other.

Why did you decide to pursue a career in fitness?

One of the reasons that Karim entered the fitness arena is because being healthy and looking good, demands more attention. He believes that by looking good and feeling good about yourself, you have more presence and are able to project more. There are a lot of benefits from being healthy, and that is just one reason for Karim's decision to pursue fitness.

Another reason for entering the personal training industry was Karim's desire to help people achieve their goals. He loves being able to positively impact clients' fitness journey and be able to hear success stories. In addition, seeing clients accomplish their goals and being a part of their journey led to Karim's decision to enter the fitness industry as well.

What is the biggest challenge you face as a fitness professional?

The biggest challenge that Karim faces is always maintaining an upbeat attitude and making sure he's always "on" and inspiring. He explained that he constantly needs to always be his best so that he can

positively impact his clients. He also explained that as a trainer, he is his own brand and constantly needs to represent that brand. He needs to always build connections with those he is teaching.

Karim stressed the fact that each client has their own personal story and own personal struggle that led them to start a fitness journey of their own. Therefore, he has to make clients' journeys as peaceful and beautiful as possible, no matter the situation.

What is your biggest accomplishment in the fitness industry?

Karim explained that his biggest accomplishment in the fitness industry is being able to answer any question that a client approaches him with. Karim has worked in so many different companies, gyms, dance studios, etc. around the world. Therefore, he carries with him a wealth of information that has helped create his personal brand.

Another accomplishment is the active wear line that Karim is currently putting together, Tonskin. Karim is proud to share with the world all of the knowledge he has gained throughout his life and be able to positively impact others.

Karim learns something new every single day, and that is what he loves about his job. To be able to provide his clients with something that incorporates everything he has learned, is the biggest accomplishment that Karim could ask for.

What advice would you give to people thinking about a career in fitness?

The advice Karim would give to emerging fitness professionals is to go for it. He said that there is so much to learn, and so much that is constantly changing and evolving. Therefore, it's important to be eager and to be open-minded.

Karim explained the importance of always watching and listening to what is going on around you so that you can learn from it. He also explained that you have to be ambitious and versatile, because this will strengthen your ability as a personal trainer.

Finally, the last piece of advice is to have a positive charisma and upbeat personality. As a personal trainer, you are acting as a performer. Therefore, you always have to be "on" and maintain a positive relationship with those you are instructing. Without this, you won't be able to retain clients and continue to grow your career. Karim compared clients taking your classes as inviting them into your home, you always need to make them feel welcome and comfortable.

Who was your biggest influence when you were starting your career in fitness?

Karim has spent time in various different countries throughout his life. Karim was born in Rome, Italy, went to school in London, and worked in Egypt as an Artistic Director. In each of these different cities, Karim found a role model or someone who left an impact on him. For example, in Italy, Karim had an Art

Teacher who was a constant support system and always a source of positive encouragement.

While in London, Karim attended a dance school and had a Contemporary Dance Teacher who was very influential and demanded attention, in a positive way. She would walk into a room and everyone was immediately drawn to her because of her charisma and strong presence that came naturally to her.

Finally, while working at an Opera house in Egypt, Karim worked with an Artistic Director who was a huge inspiration in terms of how his mind worked and his level of creativity.

However, a more distinct influence on Karim's career happened when he was participating in a talent show as a young child. He was determined to perform a dance piece and wanted more than anything to accomplish this goal. Unfortunately, Karim was rejected from the show, and ever since then, he has felt a desire to prove everyone wrong and become a dancer.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your career?

Karim believes that the most rewarding aspect of his career, hands down, is when a client leaves with a smile on their face. When they give him a hug and thank him for making an impact on their lives, makes everything worth it to him. Karim has worked with clients who have faced numerous life challenges such as battles with cancer, traumatic experiences, or other severe illness. Therefore, hearing them say that Karim helped them get back on their feet, is the most rewarding thing he could ask for. He explained that no one or nothing in the entire world can replace that feeling. If he can make a difference in someone's life in just one hour, then his job is done.

