

# INSPIRE

LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE

## THE POWELL PACT



Fitness trainer Heidi Powell has energy we'd like to bottle. Co-host of ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss*, Powell juggles four kids, an impressive fitness regimen and a multitude of jobs. The key to her success: she keeps to her word.

BY RACHEL NAUD

*The Powells love to hike together*





Chris and Heidi Powell try to stay on the same page when it comes to parenting

**NO** MATTER WHAT TIME of day you channel surf, you're likely to come across a reality weight loss show. A bunch of toned, gorgeous fitness gurus take overweight couch potatoes through gruelling workouts in an attempt to thin them down and teach them the basics of healthy nutrition. Been there, done that. Right?

Not necessarily. ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss* (EWL) may strive to shrink its participants, but it also offers something that you don't often see in reality TV—reality. Perhaps it's because its hosts, Heidi and her husband, Chris Powell, aren't your typical trainers. Their compassion is authentic; their passion is undeniable; their commitment is unwavering. The friendships they make with the show's participants are real and they run deep.

"We still keep in contact with a good majority of our

participants," says Heidi, who can also add weight loss expert and transformation specialist to her resume. Over the past six years, she and Chris have spent every holiday with at least one of their participants. "Bruce from season four spent Thanksgiving with us and stayed the week," she says. "[The participants] really do become our best friends and a lot of them actually work with us because nobody understands a journey of transformation like they do."

When the show started six years ago, Heidi played a supportive role, staying mostly in the background. Over time, she's come happily to the forefront, winning over viewers and clients alike with her tough-love tactics and soft heart.

No stranger to tough times, Heidi talks openly about her earlier divorce and struggles with an eating disorder. She's proud of being "perfectly imperfect" and shares everything from her embarrassingly ►



inspire

Heidi  
Powell

gnarly feet to her love for a Starbucks Morning Bun on her blog, the show and social media.

While she may have gnarly toes, there's certainly nothing wrong with Heidi's perfectly toned physique. Her muscular frame and rock hard abs are a reflection of hard work and a true dedication to health and fitness. As if hours in the gym weren't gruelling enough, Heidi's also found time to co-pen a new book with Chris called *Extreme Transformation: Lifelong Weight Loss in 21 Days* while still working on *EWL*. Oh, and she's also a mom to four kids: Matix, 11, and Marley, 9, from her first marriage and Cash, 4, and Ruby, 2, who she has with Chris.

How does she do it all? We chatted with Heidi about how she juggles a hectic schedule with a blended family.

### THE REALITY OF MARRIAGE

*EWL* is so appealing on many levels—one of which is the inside look viewers get of Chris and Heidi's personal relationship. On air, they're like most couples—they laugh, they cry, they get on each other's nerves, they have an argument and then they get over it. Unlike most couples, they share not only a life, but a career. Although some couples may cringe over the idea of working with their spouses, Heidi says the fact that she and Chris were best friends before they got married has been a major bonus.

"Chris and my relationship actually started with helping people and working together. I always respected who he was and his compassionate and kind nature. He has always made me want to be a better person. So that's kind of how love grew between us," she says. "Working with him is the most natural thing ever. We're getting to accomplish dreams and do something we're both passionate about. It brings us much closer ►



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together....not that we don’t occasionally need a couple of days apart. You know what they say; absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

Another thing “they” say? Opposites attract. For the Powells, this is true in both their business and parenting styles.

“We’re so different,” Heidi admits. “He’s such an ideas guy. He’s such a dreamer, such an innovator. If he’s alone, he’s not going to be doing anything because he’s dreaming all the time, and his ideas are incredible. I am the doer. I kind of bring him back to reality and I show him what we can do. So he tells me where he wants to go and I kind of lay out the path for him. We’re really a great team that way.”

### THE REALITY OF RAISING KIDS

At home, the Powells echo the sentiment they strive to portray to their participants on the show—keep the promises you make to yourself. When it comes to raising kids—keep the promises you make to them, especially if it’s a punishment.

“If we say we’re going to punish our kids, the worst thing we can do is not follow through,” she says. “Your word becomes nothing to them. They don’t trust what you say and they know what they can get away with. And, although you may feel bad for following through with a grounding or time-out, they crave consistency. We all do, as a matter of fact. That’s how we learn and that’s how we grow into strong individuals.”

While Heidi admits she’s more regimented in her parenting styles than Chris, she says the two of

them have learned to form a united front when it comes to dealing with conflict with their kids, even when they disagree.

“Chris and I have both learned that if we’re not on the same page, even if we disagree, the kids will sense a weakness,” she says. “When that happens we’ll come to an agreement, and figure it out behind closed doors, and then go forward united.”

For the Powells, being united is extremely important, especially given that the two older children have another parent to turn to: her ex-husband, Derek.

### THE REALITY OF BLENDED FAMILIES

Heidi met her first husband, Derek, when she was just 19. They married young, had Matix and Marley and divorced when the kids were small. Although Heidi admits they went through years of hurt feelings, they were able to rebuild the friendship and now co-parent in a cohesive and even friendly way.

“Every few months, we don’t agree on something and we both get a little bit heated,” she says. “But we get over it really fast. We never let the kids see or be in the middle of our little disagreements. Ever.”

Powell says when it comes to making a blended family work, letting go of your pride is key.

“Drop your own selfish intentions and your egos and so much beauty can happen,” she says. “Derek has flaws, I have flaws, Chris has flaws. But if we choose to focus on the fact that Derek is an incredible dad and a good person in general, our relationship is just going to be that much better. Derek will feel ►

appreciated and he's going to work with me and I'll want to work with him."

And with the teen years just around the corner, there will be plenty of work to do.

### TEENS IN TRAINING

With her oldest on the cusp of teen-hood, Heidi is frank about her concerns over what can be a tumultuous stage of parenting.

"I just hope [Matix] doesn't follow the crowd," she says. "I hope he finds the strength and the courage to be a leader. He's so talented and has so much potential. I just hope we've given him enough love at home that no matter what he does—good or bad—he knows that we're always here to love and support him."

When it comes to her eldest daughter, Marley, Heidi fears what impacted her as a young girl—body image. Heidi remembers being very aware of her body at Marley's age and she worries about Marley's potential to fall into an eating disorder like she did.

"I remember being in gymnastics and seeing girls smaller than me. You take note of that kind of stuff," she says. "When I was about 14, it spiralled into a pretty severe eating disorder that lasted through my early 20s. Those were the darkest years of my life."

If she sees any of the same signs in Marley, Heidi promises to open up to her daughter about her own experiences so Marley can learn from her mistakes. For now, Heidi says she'll continue to build up her self-esteem with the truth—all bodies are different. And that's perfectly OK.

"Last year [Marley] started going to gymnastics wearing shorts or leggings over her leotards," Heidi says. I told her, 'Just because so-and-so's legs appear smaller than yours doesn't mean you're any less healthy or any less beautiful than she is. It's about

how strong we are.'"

Another way Heidi keeps her kids strong—both physically and mentally—is through team sports. She says sports are a great way to teach discipline, team work and commitment to her kids, but they're also a great self-esteem booster.

"Matix plays football and, I have to say, it's probably made the biggest difference in his outlook," she says. "He feels valuable, his peers look at him and they see value in each other. It really has improved Matix's self-esteem. Marley's gymnastics has as well with her accomplishments hitting her aerials and back hand-springs. It just makes her feel so good about herself."

### PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

When it comes to her own accomplishments, Heidi should feel nothing but proud. Not only is she going into the sixth season of *EWL*, but she's seen her book become a success.

"This book is like our baby," she says. "[Chris and I] wrote it together and I have to say it is by far the most inclusive book, and the most thorough guide to true transformation. We included everything in it—meal plans, recipes and workouts—so that if anyone picks up this book, they can create their own transformation at home without a doubt."

That's a strong claim. But if there's anything we've learned from Heidi, if she says it, she means it. ■

**WIN! WE'RE GIVING AWAY 10 COPIES OF CHRIS AND HEIDI POWELL'S NEW BOOK, *EXTREME TRANSFORMATION: LIFELONG WEIGHT LOSS IN 21 DAYS!* Enter at [inbetween.ca/contests](http://inbetween.ca/contests).**







# 5 WAYS TO GET MOTIVATED TO MOVE

Fitness guru Heidi Powell on how you and your teen can get fit together. Plus some must-try exercises to do at home!

**GETTING A TEEN** to turn off his electronics can be akin to asking a lion to share his dinner. Asking a teen to relinquish said tablet in favour of a jog? Insanity, right? Not according to Heidi Powell, ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss* trainer and transformation specialist. Exercising lowers our risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke and depression, she says. Problem is: most teens are getting much less exercise than we did in our younger years. It's up to us to fix that.

Here are five tips that Powell promises will have us all (parents included) off the couch and into the fit zone in no time. ►

**STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE.** Ask your kids what activity they want to do. Don't cringe if they suggest something you feel uncomfortable with—even if it's belly dancing. Bonus points if they choose an activity they already love; they'll be able to teach you some new skills.

**TAKE A HIKE.** Let your teen choose a trail, gear up (you'll want comfy shoes and maybe a few layers to keep warm) then head out. Not only will everyone get a good workout, but research has shown that spending time in fresh air, surrounded by nature,

increases energy in 90 per cent of people. Fresh air is also shown to reduce stress and even boost your immune system. Another bonus: your teen may learn to love nature!

**GO SHOPPING.** While browsing the mall may not seem like exercise, a recent study conducted at the London School of Economics found that people who walked briskly for 30 minutes regularly were slimmer and had lower BMIs than those who did other forms of exercise (or none at all). Try to up your pace as you wander the mall to help increase your daily ►

## UP THE FAT-BURN WITH THESE 5 IDEAS.

**1. RAGNAR RACES.** An all-day, all-night running relay race, Ragnars have become so popular that there's sure to be one near you. Teams split the running so each person gets about three turns to run between

three and eight miles. Sign up with your teen, her friends and some of their moms. There's nothing better for a total body burn than running, and relay races help you achieve your fitness goals while learning to work as a team under some pretty tiring but super fun conditions.

**2. BOOST YOUR METABOLISM.** Metabolic missions are a huge part of Powell's transformation program. Here's how they work: choose three or more exercises (i.e. burpees, squat jacks, commander push-ups, mountain climbers, lunges and

planks). Do a certain number of reps of each or do each exercise for a set amount of time. The best thing about these exercises? They burn a ton of calories in a short time (only a few minutes) so they're easy to fit into even the busiest of days. Record your time and see if you can beat each other!

**3. TAKE A DIP.** Swimming is an uber effective whole body exercise with the bonus of being low impact (which means it's great for those of us with sore joints or arthritis). Think laps are boring? Try pool-based exercises instead. For one ►

step count and get your teen closer to the 60 minutes of recommended daily activity.

**TRAIN TOGETHER.** Sign up for a 5K, 10K, half-marathon, marathon, triathlon, difficult hike, swim, pretty much anything—the possibilities are almost endless. Then train together. You'll be amazed by how much your fitness levels will improve, not to mention your relationship. We're talking about quality bonding time here. As we all know, our kiddos grow up way too fast, so enjoy their undivided attention while you can.

**USE THE SCREEN TO YOUR ADVANTAGE.** We all know teens love their technology. Why not use them to get in an extra workout? Turn commercial breaks into exercise breaks. Do a certain number of moves (i.e. 20 squats, lunges, burpees, sit ups or push-ups). Have a competition to see who can do the most reps of an exercise or time each other running up and down the stairs or around the ground floor of the house. Anything will do, as long as you're all being active during those annoying breaks. As for video games and tablets, try out the Wii Fit or one of the fun fitness games available through Apple TV. ■



of my favourites, partner up. While one partner swims six pool lengths, the other must tread water (add an extra challenge by keeping your hands in the air). Try to get

through 10 rounds each. When treading gets difficult, feel free to use the side to assist...just keep moving. Have a running race in the water to see who's the fastest and Google some teen-friendly pool games (like water dodge ball or handstand competitions). Get creative in the water and you'll have so much fun you won't even realize you're burning calories.

**4. GET YOUR GROOVE ON.** Pop in a Zumba DVD and be wowed by your teen's favourite moves. Shake your hips in time with the music and you'll be sweating in no time. Dancing can

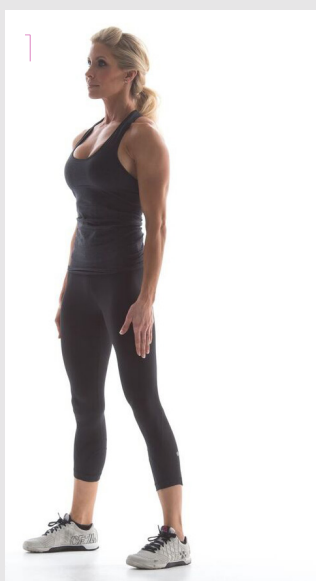
improve your balance as well as your mood and, if you do it vigorously enough, you'll get your heart pumping and calories burning. Not a fan of Zumba? Crank up some tunes and have a dance off in the living room.

**5. BURPEE TABATA:** Set the clock for four minutes. Do 20 seconds of work (burpees) followed by 10 seconds of rest. Repeat eight times for the duration of the four minutes. Make a game out of counting reps with your team. Combine the number of reps with your teen for a grand total, making this a team effort! ►

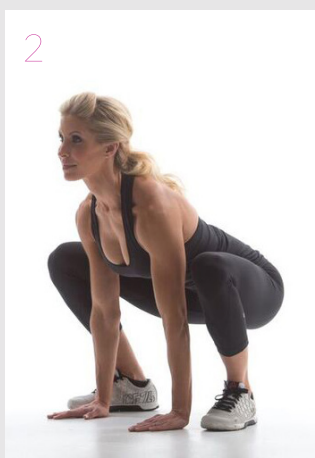


# THE ULTIMATE MOVE THE BURPEE

You can't beat it. It's a total body burner and a Powell Pack fave. Here's how to do it.



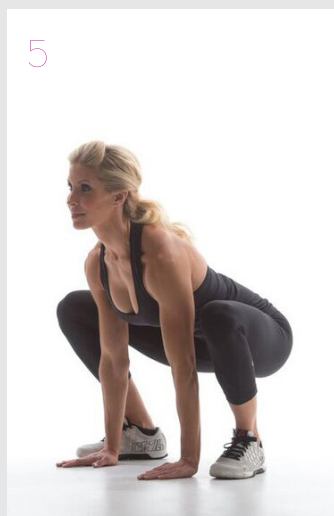
Begin with feet shoulder width apart.



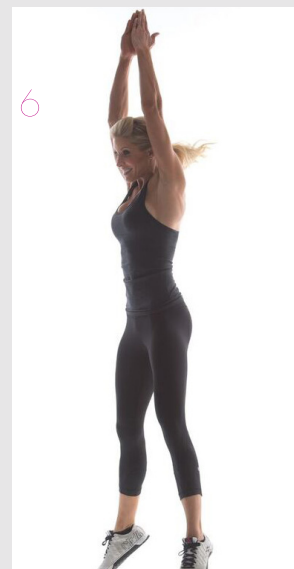
Squat down and place hands on the ground just inside your feet.



Jump back to a plank position.



Jump forward with feet outside your hands.



Jump up and touch your hands overhead.



Perform a push-up.

**TIP:** When performing burpees, you may get down to the ground however you choose, but your chest and thighs must touch the ground during the push-up, and your feet must leave the ground and hands reach overhead at the top of the movement. ■