

Lesley Fitzgerald:

By Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans

One Midlife Live Wire GOES FOR THE GUSTO

Talk to Lesley Fitzgerald on the phone for more than two minutes, and you can feel her exuberance, like a bolt of electricity, crackling across the miles. Even the words in her emails leap and whirl with exclamation points and capitals—witness to a woman who isn't afraid either to express herself or to reach for her dreams. It is that energy and principled conviction that has impelled Lesley, a mother of five and grandmother of three, to pursue her fitness goals.

For Lesley, who has been married for twenty-two years to Bob Fitzgerald, fitness is part of a life dedicated to helping others, raising emotionally healthy children, nurturing her friendships and giving back to her community. For ten years she and her husband, who coached youth football for twenty-six years, took in a series of foster children. Many were teenage boys from Philadelphia.

When praised for making the decision to open her large Bucks County home to children not her own, Lesley simply said she was rather shocked that more people didn't do it. "She is so caring," said longtime friend and fellow Armstrong Colt and George employee Tracey Cosner. "She is very giving and good hearted." Seconding those emotions, husband Bob added, "I can't say how great it is to be married to her."

The longtime step-aerobics fanatic, who turned fifty last October, has the vibrancy of a woman half her age. Asked why she is so dedicated, she mentions that watching her mother struggle with arthritis and her father become disabled by a stroke at fifty-two motivated her to pursue a



healthy lifestyle. "I'm not vain," she said, "but I do like looking well and trying to be as young as I can."

A resolute fitness jock, she has been resourceful about making time for exercise since the early days of her marriage. "Lesley has always been into fitness, even with her absolutely crazy schedule," said Cosner, herself a mother of three children under ten. "I'd be happy to be that energetic and young minded."

In the old days, before she had time to work out at a gym, she got up at 4:30 a.m., threw an exercise video into the machine or a pulley on the bedroom door-knob, and worked out before she got in the car to go to work. She is particularly committed to a step-aerobics class taught by a fitness instructor who turned fiftytwo days before Lesley.

Bonding around the propulsive routines of her favorite instructor, Deb Hernandez Osbourne, has fostered a real sense of

community among those who attend the class, said Fitzgerald. "We feel like we are in a dance class," she said. "We yell, get excited and feel so accomplished at the end of the class."

Other employees at the ophthalmologist's office where she works are also health conscious she said. "We motivate one another."

With four kids still at home, Lesley also tries to set a good example by eating lots of fresh fruits, vegetables, and lean meats. She was even able to persuade Bob to switch from cream to fat-free Coffeemate. Nonetheless, she admits to a fondness for tuna hoagies—albeit hoagies with fat free mayo. Although she mentions casually that she would like to lose that five pounds we'd all like to vaporize, she doesn't obsess about it.

Instead, she focuses on all the things for which she is grateful—a list that she adds to everyday. And as for Bob? He is grateful, too—for the wonderful wife and mother, his spouse of twenty-two years and counting. "I got so lucky."



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