

Women's Vitality Summit

Dr. Keesha Ewers Interviews Rachel Holmes

April 2017

DR. KEESHA EWERS: Welcome back to the Women's Vitality Summit, everybody. This is Dr. Keesha Ewers. It is my delight and honor to be interviewing Rachel Holmes today who is based in the United Kingdom. She's a Health and Fitness presenter. She's the creator of the Fitness Pilates Program, the BrainFit Workout and Kickstart Wellness, a franchise program with 100 franchises in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Rachel's been presenting fitness education in the UK and Europe for 30 years and has created group exercise programs for Virgin and many other leading health clubs and brands. Welcome to the Women's Vitality Summit, Rachel.

RACHEL HOLMES: Hi. I'm really happy to be here, really happy.

DR. KEESHA: I think this is an important discussion because the people that tune into the summit range from 20 to 75 to 80. I actually had somebody last time that was over 86 who sent me a little email.

RACHEL HOLMES: Wow.

DR. KEESHA: It's a wide range of women. When we talk about fitness, I'm 52 almost, back in the 1980s when my very first start of really working out, it was all about really short little running shorts and marathon running, which is what I did, and the mono thing, the mono exercise program. Get out. Put your running shoes on and go and go and go. I tell you the truth. Jane Fonda's the one that broke that up for me. Whether her leg warmers or her tights and I started doing jazzercise after that and some aerobics and things like that. There's been a big evolution in the fitness industry, right?

RACHEL HOLMES: Massive evolution. I'm 47. I was totally inspired by Jane Fonda and Jamie Lee Curtis in the movie. Do you remember that?

DR. KEESHA: Yeah.

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RACHEL HOLMES: We have just evolved so much with group exercise. There's so many amazing benefits to group exercise and for women to work out together in a group is very empowering. It's great for self-confidence, self-esteem. Over the last 30 years, we have seen such a huge evolution. We've gone full circle. I think for everybody watching and listening, there is something for everyone. I hope from this little discussion today, you can find something that suits you, that fits you, that is going to really help you mentally and physically because there really is something for everyone these days.

DR. KEESHA: Isn't that the key? If you don't like it, you won't do it, right?

RACHEL HOLMES: 100%. Absolutely. I think we've gone so far where we used to go for the burn and we would go to classes and everyone would work really hard and get this real aerobic high. We know, as we've evolved, we're realizing that as we are living such very busy, stressful lives, 24/7 society, scrolling through social media, for many women, actually the last thing they need is a really intense, high-energy workout. It's something that's a little bit more grounded, a bit more relaxing, a little bit more restorative. We're seeing a lot of very different workouts now that are really encompassing that kind of work. It's much more gentle in approach. Lowering stress and lowering cortisol levels and just giving people that space, that time to just breathe and relax.

DR. KEESHA: BrainFit, describe that. What does that mean?

RACHEL HOLMES: This is a brainchild I had about a year ago because we were seeing it in the United Kingdom. We've got a lot of very high-intensity HIIT workouts. CrossFit's very popular.

DR. KEESHA: It is here in the US too.

RACHEL HOLMES: Very the same, very popular. At the very other end of the scale, we have a real big yogi, yoga scene and Pilate's scene. For many women, yoga and Pilates can still be quite intimidating, a little bit scary. On this hand, you've got the CrossFit side, which also can be a little bit intimidating. I wanted to create something that was in the middle, that anyone could just walk into and enjoy, feel part of, and just do very simple movements.

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A little bit of Pilates, a little bit of yoga, a little bit of low-impact, but mixing that up with affirmations. Really retraining what's going on in the mind while we're working out, while we're exercising, while we're moving so it's getting those affirmations, that ultimate power, and really changing what's going on in the brain. A real good, feel good workout, that's what BrainFit's all about.

DR. KEESHA: Take me through. What does that mean? How do people that are listening to this summit right now access this?

RACHEL HOLMES: It's taking all the great things. In the present tense, things like saying, I feel positive. I feel inspired. My vibe is high. Just really simple statements. Just repeating them while we're doing our movement. The movement might be just a squat position where you're reaching down towards the floor and then reaching up. The instructor would say, I feel positive. The class members would say it back to the instructor, I feel positive, in time with the music. It just gives it that real power. It just feels so good. Real fit really feels good.

DR. KEESHA: This is basically kirtan chanting.

RACHEL HOLMES: Yes.

DR. KEESHA: Doing call and response where you really get to access your heart, your spirit, your mind, and your body, which, of course, is what this summit's all about is bringing all of that together and not thinking that we have these compartments in our body that are just operating separate from each other. Bringing it all together and being a whole woman as you are moving your body doing something that you love and also feeding yourself in such a way that it's not chilling your body. Not looking in the mirrors across the way and saying, I hate those hips or that's a flabby Abby or look at those arms, they wave twice when I say goodbye, all of those comments.

Women are so hard on themselves. There's a place in Africa that I take, in Kenya. We do a medicine wheel and plant medicine. It's this amazing, amazing tour where we go. There's a hot springs there. I get women in there. They don't know this is going to happen ahead of time. Now the cat's out of the bag. I've just done it. If you come to Africa with me, now you know.

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RACHEL HOLMES: Love to.

DR. KEESHA: At the Mukutan Hot Springs, there's this huge pillar of stone across from the hot springs and then there's this circular hot springs. It's just like the masculine energy and the feminine energy right there. I get them in. We all get in together, no clothes. I have them take this little exercise that we go through. It's a body image exercise where I have them each say 10 things that they love about their body. Do you know how many times they struggle with that? Just 10 things and they're only allowed to say one thing they'd like to correct about their body or that they don't love as much.

We all love that part of their body. We'll just say, no, that's a beautiful back or that's a beautiful nose. We give that part of the body some love, verbally. I think that this is such a powerful thing. The first time I did this, there were a couple of girls that were in their 20s that were from Europe. In the United States, we have this idea that in Europe, people are a lot freer about their bodies.

RACHEL HOLMES: Not true.

DR. KEESHA: Here we are getting in the hot springs. There was someone there that was 65. Someone in their 50s, some in their 40s. There was me. Several women, already in there and they did not want to get in and had the hardest times coming up with things about their bodies. Finally, I just said, you know that 30 years from now you're going to look back at this body that you have today and you're going to say that was an amazing, strong body that got me around and I didn't appreciate it enough. I said, get in and let's start appreciating that body of yours. That's what it is. It's the little car that drives your spirit around. You get one in this lifetime. It's important to not be obsessed with it, but to take care of it the same way you would do your car.

They finally got in and they had an amazing experience. There were tears. It was this very, very incredible, which I think in ancient days of being female, this was normal. Everybody got into the river together and bathed and they were by the river doing their laundry and stuff like that. That just doesn't happen anymore. I think women coming together in groups like this, moving, being positive with the messaging that they're

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giving themselves is so powerful. Rachel, thank you so much for doing that because honestly, that body image exercise was very telling to me about how much this is needed.

RACHEL HOLMES: You're exactly right. I think if we'd have launched this program in the UK a few years ago, it wasn't the right time. I really think right now that women are. So many women have put themselves through intense workouts, intense fitness programs, and dieted and dieted and dieted and they've still not got where they apparently wanted to be.

DR. KEESHA: The front of the Cosmopolitan magazine picture. It's crazy what we're aiming for. It's not even real.

RACHEL HOLMES: We see this every single week, so many women who just quit that mindset and go to this restorative form of—I think it even needs to be called group wellness rather than group fitness so it has a different connotation. They just start to lose body fat. They start to lose weight around their middle. They start to feel better without really trying when they let go of this white knuckling and having to do this, all these intense workouts, stress on top of stress on top of stress. It's life changing. It's life changing.

I think as well you hit the nail right on the head. There's something about women moving together in a group. It's a little bit tribal. The music that we use has not got any lyrics. It's very bassy, just a backbeat, and a little bit trance-like really. It's very calming. We finish with some meditation and some relaxation. As you said, sometimes it brings up all kinds of emotions. It's just a good, cleansing workout. I think this is very much needed all over the world, not just in the UK, all women. You can do it anywhere. You can do it when you're walking. You can do it at home. It is so simple, so simple to do.

DR. KEESHA: Simple is good. I think the world has gotten very complicated. The more that we can simplify things. Here's what I'm drinking right now. It's my little juice that I have every day. It's just simple. It's got some beet, obviously. It's got tons of greens in it. It's got some ginger. It took 5 minutes to make. That was also the cleanup. I think simplifying everything is the best thing that we can do. I think we make food too complicated. We make our workout too complicated. We live complicated lives anymore. The more we can simplify it, the better so

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that's fantastic. For women in the United States that don't have a BrainFit access point, how do they get that?

RACHEL HOLMES: You can access it on a virtual program. Anyone who is watching and they would like to sample it, I have some home workouts. I'll give you the URL and you'll be able to just sign in and you'll be able to see me doing the workout and you'll be able to do it at home, wherever you have a little bit of space and trial it and see what you think.

DR. KEESHA: It's actually on your speaker's page here on the WomensVitalitySummit.com. That's fantastic. It's part of your bonus material that you provided for everybody. That's really wonderful. What is it that you would tell women who are afraid of working out?

RACHEL HOLMES: It is a big step. I do appreciate for many people going into a group exercise setting can be very intimidating. If you can take that step, the friendships that you'll make, the support that you'll make, everyone that leads a class like that are usually very nurturing, very positive people that want to spread this message. Just trial. There are so many different classes around. There are so many different forms of fitness.

One of the most important things is just to move. Move through the day. Try and do your 10,000 steps if you can. Get out in nature and just walk. On YouTube, you can find every kind of workout that you would ever want to do. There's something for everyone or get together with your girlfriends. Locally, I'm sure wherever you are in the US, there's some classes that you would be able to trial and just enjoy. It really can be life changing.

DR. KEESHA: What's your story and how did you get into this?

RACHEL HOLMES: Oh my gosh.

DR. KEESHA: Everyone has a story about how they arrived. I love to hear that.

RACHEL HOLMES: I used to do BMX racing, would you believe it? Gran Prize as a girl. I was a European champion. My brother lives in the US. He lives in San Diego and he went to the US to compete and he won a lot of competitions there. He stayed there. We just used to go to a local gym to do weight training. It was 1984. I used to do dancing. I just loved aerobics, exactly

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as we said at the beginning. I loved Jane Fonda, Jamie Lee Curtis, started going to classes and I never looked back. I finished college, started leading aerobics, and I've never done anything else. For the last 30 years, I've taught group exercise to women, really all over Europe.

It's taken me an amazing career, met some fantastic people, created some lovely workouts. Every day I still am blessed that this is why I love to do. I love to share the fitness message and I love to work with groups of women and inspire them to work out and enjoy fitness at whatever level and whatever peace they are. It's been an interesting 30 years, but yes, I still love it every single day. I still think we're only at the beginning. We're only at the beginning of this. There's so much more to go, so many ways to take it.

DR. KEESHA: That's wonderful. I got goose bumps when you just said it's the thing I love the most because that's what I want for every woman, is to be able to feel fulfilled in what she's doing. She's on her life path. She's doing it. She's shining as brightly as she can and you're clearly shining your brightest. It's really wonderful.

RACHEL HOLMES: It is.

DR. KEESHA: The word vitality, this summit is called the Women's Vitality Summit, how would you define vitality?

RACHEL HOLMES: Exactly as you just said. Someone who is finding and living their passion and their truth. They are living authentically. It's not about body shape or size. It's just there's an inner confidence, that inner glow that you can see when people are living their truth and living their passion and they feel and look vital. They radiate that. That's what vitality means to me.

DR. KEESHA: What do you see as the biggest thing that blocks women's vitality today?

RACHEL HOLMES: Gosh, so many things. I think many women get very pressured with the media and social media and how they should look and how they should perform and how they should be and how they should act. I think many women in the UK are juggling just so many plates. Career, some families and home life and hobbies and everything else. So many things just piled up and piled up.

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I just see so many women that are lost and forgot who they are and what their passion is and what actually makes them happy because they're probably caregivers and taking care of a family and husband and probably aging parents and have a lot of responsibilities. I think I see many women that just got lost under all that. I think it's really important to look within and see what really does fulfill you and what lights you up, makes you happy, and try and do more of it.

DR. KEESHA: Yes, wonderful. That's a fantastic answer. I see the same thing. I always say, women have gotten themselves into this place where we're painted into a corner in a way, but I wouldn't change it for anything, which is bringing home the bacon, frying it up in a pan, and trying to look hot at the same time. We can start to reduce some of that pressure cooker that we put on ourselves by doing some self-care. One of the most amazing acts, I think, of self care and gifts that you can give yourself is to move in the way that you want to and not the way that you think you have to or should. You did a lot of shoulds when you were describing women under pressure. It's true. We should all over ourselves.

Get out from underneath the should boulder and instead what is it that I really want. What thrills me? Move to that. Women, we've got rhythm and we need to be moving with it. We're more in touch than men with the rhythms of nature because of, I think, our menstrual cycle. If we disconnect ourselves from that, then we lose out on a huge compass and a force for our energy. Women traditionally have always gotten together and moved. I really appreciate you for doing the work that you're doing in the world. Thank you for coming on the summit and sharing even just a little bit of your wisdom with us and for the great program that we all get access to. I can't wait to try it.

RACHEL HOLMES: Thank you and thank you for having me. It's lovely to be here. Great, thank you.

DR. KEESHA: Thanks, Rachel.