

With news that Southampton is battling an obesity crisis, the *Daily Echo* today launches a week-long look at just what you have to do to Beat the Bulge. In the first instalment of a series of features, reporter **TARA RUSSELL** confronts her gym phobia and gets put through her paces by a personal trainer for the first time.

# Confront your fitness demons



## FRANK'S TIPS:

- Run away from the words gym and exercise, think physical activity.
- Be prepared to make lifestyle changes to get results.
- Start physical activity at home. Just sitting on the floor and standing up ten times will challenge you if you are not used to it.
- Don't be scared of the gym. We often see people who first walk through the door in baggy T-shirts are soon walking proud in skimpy outfits. Everyone is here for the same reason. Nobody is too old or too big.
- Finally keep a positive mindset to achieve your goals. The mind is the master so the first thing to do is get rid of any negative thoughts.



huge smile and a great sense of humour, something that put me at ease immediately.

He told me: "Don't be nervous. Run away from the words gym and exercise, it is not exercise, it is physical activity."

That didn't sound so bad. And with that he led me to a small room to take down my vital stats, do a health check and take me through what he called "mental coaching".

We had a chat about how I feel now and what I want to achieve.

He didn't judge me for not being anywhere near the fitness fanatic he was - a fear that all non-gym members feel - but genuinely wanted to focus my mind to the results I could see if I went for it. Rather than settling for a realistic goal, it was clear Frank's motto is to go that extra mile. He made me feel that even I could get to a size 10 if I wanted to - even though the last time I saw that figure on a label I was in my teens.

After our chat, Frank was very



LIMBERING UP: Echo reporter Tara Russell having a session with personal trainer Frank Mangena at Fitness First in Shirley.

frank with me. He started taking my resting heart rate, which was beating at such a rate of knots that it was in the "dangerous" zone - but he put that down to nerves. To be honest, it was hard talking openly about my weight and personal food and fitness habits. It is something for some reason we all like to hide behind and just forget.

He took me through the results of the tests. It was not great news.

My waist measurement was far from ideal, my body fat percentage was erring on the side of obese and I have definitely seen rulers on my desk more flexible than me.

No it wasn't what I wanted to hear but it was the truth I have been hiding from and it has given me the kick up the bottom to get fit and healthy.

After feeling full of motivation, we hit the gym floor. Five minutes on the cross trainer for a warm-up was manageable.

Then Frank took me to the mats to show me how activity can start at home.

Have you beaten the bulge or how do you or your family keep fit? Let us know at [newsdesk@dailyecho.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@dailyecho.co.uk) or call 023 8042 4522.

It is surprising how simple everyday moves like sitting on the floor and getting up again can leave you out of breath. We also did sets of exercises to combat all those problem areas which he made me take up a level to increase my heart rate.

Frank was the perfect motivator because even though I wanted to hate him for making me put in that extra effort in each move and feeling like I was going to keel over any second, his smile stopped you feeling any long-term resentment.

Yes, I felt like I had run ten marathons in ten minutes... I was the colour of a beetroot and had definitely worked up a sweat.

But I left feeling absolutely fantastic that I was in control and had taken that first step on the road of fitness which will lead to a slimmer healthier me. And it wasn't half as scary as I first imagined. I just won't mention how my legs have been feeling since...

For more information about Fitness First in Shirley call 0844 5712934

To arrange a consultation or a meeting with Frank, who is a qualified GP exercise referral consultant, call 07732 469562.