

## Megan O'Shea & Kirilee Wood

When physio Megan, 40, needed a personal trainer for her women's fitness class, she wasn't expecting rock-climbing "hippie" Kirilee, 50.

### Megan

I qualified as a physiotherapist 20 years ago and did a lot of work with sport but once I had kids, I had to truncate my hours and inherently began treating more women. I realised I was getting them nice and strong, particularly after kids, but when I encouraged them to get back to a class, they would hurt themselves again. It was very frustrating. On average, personal trainers know a lot about exercise but not rehabilitation and how your body changes after childbirth.

When we moved back to Perth after 15 years in Ireland, where people exercise indoors, I saw so many women out in parks exercising really badly. From their age and changed shape I could see they had kids, and I thought "why on earth are you doing those exercises?" They were trying to do the right thing but they didn't have the right information.

I wanted to design a program specifically for those women, so I went to a gym I knew and the manager put me in touch with Kirilee. He told me she was a rock climber, a personal trainer and had just moved over from Sydney, so I was expecting the stereotypical hardcore, young, fit, Bondi beach woman. Then in walks Kirilee, who is older than me and while fit and healthy, certainly wasn't walking around in a bikini. Most personal trainers are trying to emulate Michelle Bridges; Kirilee was just fabulously realistic.

In February 2015 we met up in a park with the kids and a coffee and put our heads together. It was like talking to a colleague, rather than trying to convince a personal trainer of a different perspective. We agreed on the design and the focus, as well as the style, of a gentle warm-up and some running. But the difference was the delivery; I was very boring and medical, issuing instructions to do this and then do that. Kirilee makes it flow and has chit-chat in between about weird, crazy things and lots of humour.

We didn't want people to feel completely flogged afterwards. We wanted them to enjoy exercise and feel what their body

could do but not end up sore or injured or needing physio.

It took six months to get going. We were very professional to start with but now she knows my strengths and weaknesses and I know hers and we can tease each other about it.

Kirilee gets up at 4am to study; I work at 10pm after my kids are in bed. There are a couple of suburbs between us and I'm always having to run off somewhere, but I know I can text her and get an immediate answer.

### Kirilee

I have always been a rebel; I had a serious junior tennis career in the UK before rebelling and finding myself in Italy doing three-day eventing. In my late 20s, I started ultra distance running. After realising I was too much of a rebel for marriage — I did try, but it was never going to work — I found rock climbing and that became my life.

For eight years, I lived in tents and vans. I am more than happy to live in the dirt and can't wait to do it again. You had a round-the-world ticket and did hops to climbing spots, then to places to work in whatever way you could to finance your life. You shower once a week and if you're by a river, you get in even if there is snow. But when your feet are off the ground, that's when you're happiest.

Most climbers find a career through training and coaching. From early on, I realised this issue of broad health and wellbeing; personal training came as part of that. In my prime, I was doing sports therapy, team building, outdoor therapy with vulnerable people, people coming in and out of prison, things like that.

Then it came to a stage where it was time to try to have a child — I did that on my own. I needed to be close to my parents so I found my way back to Australia. I was in Sydney initially because I needed to use the fertility clinics. I did a bachelor of arts in humanities, professional writing, then a post graduate in international health. I'm still studying, doing a masters in philosophy, international health.



Hands on Megan (left) and Kirilee complement one another. PICTURE IAIN GILLESPIE

When I met Megan, I felt I had finally found someone who thought laterally in terms of broad, long-term health, rather than this boot-camp idea. It was also a relief to come across someone who was interested in doing the business side because that is not me.

It's comical because the first time I saw Megan, she was pretty much carrying all three children and I thought, "this is a strong woman!" My daughter is six and Megan's kids are eight, six and four. They get on well but they are clearly as different as we are.

Megan's very direct, which really helps when I've got that English thing of "oh well, you know, maybe..." She is so business-like, and I am so not. We just get each other. That's part of maturity and having worked a long time — we know our role. It's about respecting each other's experiences.

In the classes, people aren't going to get it on the first go, so you have to be a bit laidback. If you're a physio like Megan, you might want to go up and say "no, no, no, that's not how you do it", but from a personal training perspective, they're not damaging themselves and in a couple of weeks, they will be able to do that exercise. We want the same end result but the way we get there is very different. ■

Katherine Fleming

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*'We just get each other.'*

take  
FIVE

with  
writer/  
director  
Renee  
Newman



*I love ... the view from my partner's family house in Capo d'Orlando, Sicily. The sea is clear and warm, the food and wine extraordinary and the sun kisses you (unlike here, where it smacks you in the face). Other than right here, with my friends and family, Sicily is my favourite place to be.*

*I loathe ... intolerance and apathy. But other than that there is not much in this world I dislike. Actually, for some reason I really hate cucumber. I'll be shot for that.*  
*I will ... get my driver's licence one day. The power we have sitting inside a piece of metal terrifies me. But I have too many fears and this is one I need to conquer.*

*I won't ... ever say I won't do something. Or at least try. Life is too short and complex for won't and don't.*  
*I wish ... we would all slow down a little and appreciate that life is fragile and temporary. My new show is a meditation on movement and migration. We can learn to move a little slower and appreciate what, and who, surrounds us.*

Seeking Basic Needs and Other Tales of Excess takes you on an audio journey, sharing migrant and other stories, through Northbridge, starting at PICA. Until February 17, see [pica.org.au](http://pica.org.au) for session times.