



fitness excuse 2 "I'm too stressed to work out!"

Incarnations of the excuse:

1. "I'm too upset to exercise!"
2. "I'm too tired after work to exercise."
3. "Exercise isn't going to take my mind off stress."

SOLUTION: BEYOND EXTREME KICKBOXING

Where: Mandarin Fitness Centre, Meritus Mandarin, 37th floor. Call Jason at 90921358.

How much: One session costs \$25; four sessions cost \$80; eight sessions cost \$160



"I've got my gloves strapped on and I'm ready to kick some butt today!"

"We started off with some warm-ups — jumping on the spot, lots of leg-lifts and stretching — to get our heart rates going. Then we had to gear up to be taught the techniques of boxing. We each donned a pair of white cotton gloves. Then we paired off — one person puts on the boxing gloves, while the other person straps on the Thai pads to 'take' the punches. We were taught the basics of boxing: The jab, the cross, the hook and the body punch. In each pair, partners took turns to try out the punches and we did a few rounds of this until we got the moves right. Then we moved on to the kicks. Again, one person would kick (barefoot) while the other person would hold the kicking shield. The three basic kicks we learnt were the kick, the push and the roundhouse. Then we swapped places and did a few rounds of each.

The instructor was very clear and the moves were easy to pick up. The class was pretty intense, a few punches or kicks and sweat started to trickle down my face. But it was very fun — I felt like Hilary Swank in *Million Dollar Baby* and started hopping from foot to foot and punching

the air and getting into the swing of things! It's the kind of workout where you can dictate the amount of force you use but you *should* use a decent amount of force really to gain any kind of benefit from the exercise (the girl next to me was merely nudging the shield with her toe — while I was kicking with so much force my partner started to joke that I had issues!).

Because it is such an intense and high-impact workout, Beyond Extreme Kickboxing is the perfect way to release stress. The session ended off with a short cardio session, where you do the kicks you learnt continuously against a shield propped against the wall for two minutes. This was followed by another two minutes of boxing the wall, as fast as you can (this almost killed me!). It didn't help that they played cheesy quick-paced techno music for this bit!

Then we warmed down with some stretching before the hour-and-a-half long session ended. Did I enjoy it? Undoubtedly, it was a fun way to boost my usual workout routine. Would I sign up? Unlikely — the high-impact nature of the workout and my old back injury meant that my lower back was aching by the end of it. Was it tiring? It's a pretty intense workout which can get your heart racing without you even being aware of it but I found to my surprise that I didn't sweat as much as I do during my usual yoga workout. And even though I didn't ache the day after, the workout tired me out enough to knock me into an unplanned-for afternoon nap!" — CHARMINE CHAN



Burn factor: 7/10

Fun factor: 8/10

Man factor: 6 1/2/10

(It was an all-woman class but the instructor, Lester, was easy on the eye!)