



I AM ME

Being gay in the fitness industry.

“Diversity”. “Equality”. “Inclusion”. These terms have been used across the world for such a long time but are we really achieving any of them?

I was recently asked “what I would tell the younger me, 30 years ago when I started out in the fitness industry as a young gay woman?”

The thing is, in those 30 years so much has changed. For example, employment equality regulations were introduced to provide me with a legal protection because “sexual orientation” was recognised as a protected characteristic; and gay marriage has become legalised in some countries around the world. There have been some significant steps in driving equality for the LGBT+ community.

Given this, there’s probably little point in me thinking about what I should or could have done differently 30 years ago. However, what I can answer is “what advice would I give to another gay person who is starting out in what I consider to be the best industry to work in – the health and fitness industry?”

Here’s what I’d say:

Don’t assume

We all have learned and negative experiences that make us assume people

will judge us, make assumptions, look down on us, criticise us or talk behind our backs. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not naive to think it never happens, but try and remember that they could do all of those things for a million and one different reasons, and not just because we’re gay!

Speak up

Be brave. If something’s not right, speak up. We have great support networks and advocates who will support us if people, brands or industries are homophobic.

Support others

Whether you know or think they are a member of the LGBT+ community or not, let’s support each other. Let’s build a truly inclusive industry where people feel safe and have equal opportunities and treatment. I believe we should focus less on ‘diversity’ and more on ‘inclusion’. Where the focus is on diversity, this lends itself to be a tick box process where we “think” we have the right number of the right “types” of people. When this happens, diversity is not inclusion.

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Rachel Young

Rachel Young is the founder of Are You Supercharged? Rachel is ferociously committed to chewing the living daylight out of life, and she believes she was put on this planet to make a difference to people’s lives and to get people moving. Simply put, Rachel loves the fitness industry and she loves nothing more than helping others to become the best version of themselves. Find out more at www.areyousupercharged.com

What would I say to my straight allies?

I don’t want special treatment. I don’t want to tick a box. I want to help you to build a positive, supportive culture within which we all understand and are confident with difference; whether that be sexuality, race, gender or any other protected characteristic.

“Privilege” is an interesting concept, and in recent times we’ve heard the term “white privilege” a lot. Members of the LGBT+ community often experience the impact of your “straight privilege”, which refers to the benefits of not feeling judged when you mention your partner’s name; or when you attend a work do and hold your partner’s hand, knowing your career progression has absolutely no connection to your sexuality. It’s just something to think about.

I am proud to be gay. I am proud to be a woman. And I am equally as proud to work in the fitness industry.

None of these things define me. I am me.