

A hard day of work drives attorney Kent Berk up a wall.



Entrepreneur Michael Sasek opened a fitness studio after he discovered the benefits of kettlebells.

FIT TO

BUSINESS OWNERS FIND STRESS RELIEF
THROUGH ALTERNATIVE FITNESS TRENDS

LEAD

STORIES BY ASHLEY MACHA

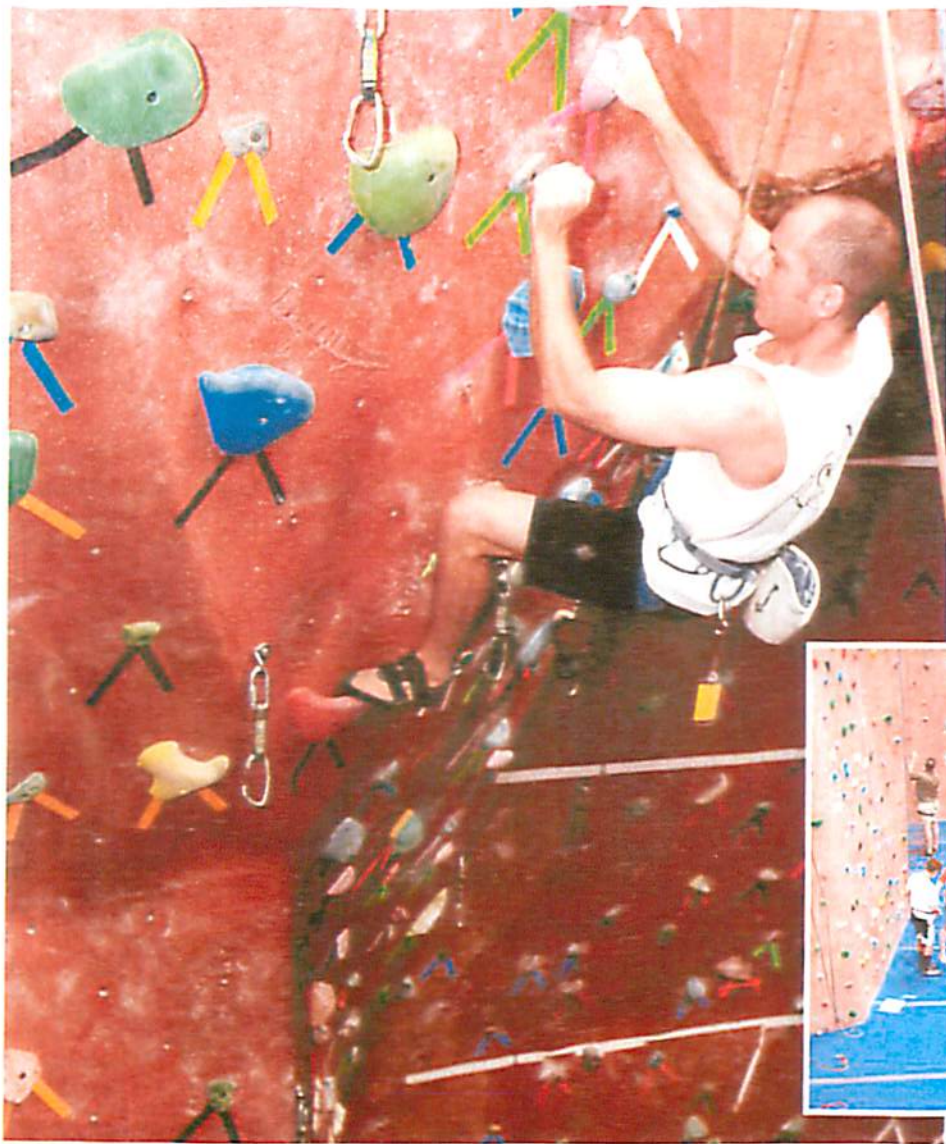
PHOTOS BY JIM POULIN

For individuals striving to stay physically and mentally healthy, a dose of fitness typically does the trick.

For high-anxiety, BlackBerry-addicted business owners trying to balance employees, finances and other logistics, a heavier dose of fitness may be needed to sustain a healthy life.

Maintaining health and continuing to perform as strong business leaders may seem impossible for some. Fifty-hour-plus work weeks, lack of sleep and poor diets are a dangerous combination.

But as busy professionals begin to put a priority on fitness, new trends are emerging. In addition to traditional running, swimming and biking, business owners have switched gears to alternative exercises such as macrotherapy, rock climbing and even the old Russian pastime of swinging the kettlebell.



LAWYER SHARPENS FOCUS ON THE ROCKS

A strong grip and sturdy foot placement are necessities in rock climbing.

Kent Berk takes that same theory with him to the courtroom and his Scottsdale law firm, Berk & Moskowitz PC. He says the stress of working long hours, being in court, and dealing with disputes and depositions took a toll on his body and his work performance.

Always active, Berk decided to take up rock climbing to help him unwind and gain focus. Activities such as running or biking are not as mentally distracting or challenging as rock climbing, he says.

"While walking on a treadmill, I still think about what depositions I have tomorrow, and it's not mentally relieving," he says.

Berk found climbing such a positive force

that he opened his own rock climbing gym with his brother, Kevin. The pair started Scottsdale-based AZ on the Rocks in 2004, two years after Berk began participating in the sport.

Rock climbing is physically and mentally demanding, testing strength, endurance, agility and balance in combination with mental control.

Berk says a climber also must depend on the individual holding the other end of the rope, which helps in relationship building and fosters communication — an important element of business.

"I've recognized the benefits of exercise, and I can't afford not to exercise," Berk says.

He also recognizes the role it can play for his employees at the law firm, so he provides free rock climbing as a benefit.

"Regular exercise has helped me perform and sleep better and avoid the negative impact on my body from stress," Berk says. "I feel more clear-headed after rock climbing. I feel like I can perform more efficiently especially in high-pressure, demanding, fast law."

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Attorney Kent Berk found that scaling rock walls helped him focus, so he opened a rock gym with his brother in 2004.