



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Randi Eisenshtat  
Posted January 4, 2023**

[Pete Moore]

Let's go. This is people who are on Halo talk to NYC. I have the pleasure of having a camp friend of a friend as well as a fitness entrepreneur and one of the leaders in our industry. We're going to talk about nonprofits. We're going to talk about a big cycle ride that's coming up. We want to welcome Randi Eisenshtat to the show for her first podcast. Hi, great to have you. So we've both been working in the health club industry for a long time. Talk about how you originally got involved basically right out of school and some of the things you've seen and then going into working at Lifetime, which is kind of one of the preeminent businesses and programming across the country that's the most respected so far away.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, I got my start in the industry over 17 years ago and my background was in dance, so I got hired like a cardio funk and hip hop instructor. These are like the pre Zumba days. And, yeah, I started working for Lifetime right out of high school and was very fortunate that that was my first real job in the industry. So I got in with the best of the best from the ground up and I was with them in Texas for about six years and I did everything from teaching group fitness and I graduated from teaching the dance classes to teaching everything under the sun, main studio, cardio, strength, cycling, you name it. And then when I was about 23 years old, my parents decided to retire and moved to South Florida. So I followed them as I did not want to be left behind in Texas by myself. My brother was already in Florida for college and I left Lifetime and I transitioned to work for Equinox, who I worked for in Miami for a little over a year and then transferred to New York City. And I worked for them in New York for a few years and that's when I really got involved in the fundraising space when I was working for Equinox. They are huge partners with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centers and they raise a ton of funds for that organization. And I was like, cool, sign me up, how do I get involved? And next thing I know, I was one of their top fundraisers and raising.

[Pete Moore]

Hundreds of thousands of dollars, was that all part of Cycle for Survival?

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Part of Cycle for Survival, I was one of their lead instructors for those events. I taught at many different cities and I taught it in the middle of time.

[Pete Moore]

We definitely met them or taking a spin class with you because Jen Goodman and David Land were friends from college. So I've kind of known them from the first event on, which was totally unfancied at the Equinox.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

It's the honor to meet Jen, but I know Dave and I know her parents very well, and I taught actually at the New Jersey event in their hometown. So, yeah, that was quite an experience. And I got very involved and I fell in love with the family and I wanted to do everything I could possibly do. And I ended up being one of the top fundraisers for Equinox. So that was really fun. And then fast forward to 2015. Lifetime decided to start opening up in those big cities and their first club was in Manhattan on 42nd and 11th. And they gave me a call and next thing I know; I'm going back to Lifetime. So after about five or six years of Equinox, I went back to Lifetime. I opened up their first location in Manhattan as the group fitness manager. And then less than a year later, I actually moved out to Scottsdale, Arizona, and I was managing a couple of clubs out there for a year. And that year that I was out there was when Lifetime partnered with St. Jude's and they were doing their cycle event called Ride of a Lifetime, which was raising money for St. Jude. So having my experience with Cycle for Survival, my club was one of the top fundraising clubs in the country. And yeah, that was an incredible experience. And it's a crazy situation that I actually fell into. One of the girls that was one of my instructors who ended up being one of my top fundraisers, went out to the St. Jude's Hospital in Tennessee and I sent them out there to congratulate them and get a tour of the facility and all of the things. And she came back to Scottsdale and six months later, her six year old daughter was diagnosed with cancer.

[Pete Moore]

Oh my God.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, it was just this like wild whirlwind of an experience where her efforts were not for herself or for her child. They were just out of the goodness of her heart. And then it hit her personally, which obviously hit all her personally.

[Pete Moore]

Let me ask you some questions. Let me ask you some questions about working in these very large organizations that are well capitalized. Obviously, group programming is a big area of focus for them because you bring in families, you're bringing in primarily women that want to get a great workout. You've got some of these boutiques that have kind of posted up. I call them manual weapons of mass destruction, where it's like, oh, we got a Pilates studio across the street from a lifetime. Well, that's odd. We got a cycling studio. So talk to us about like the psychology of, hey, look like we've seen you guys come and go. There's always an instructor that leaves. I want to take 300 members. The next thing, six months later, they're back in lifetime. Because we got all these other amenities. We got great education, it's safe, it's structured, it's clean. So talk to us about when you were a group of fitness instructor, how do you thought about managing people, managing programming, and kind of saying like, look like we're going to provide the best that we can just inside the club. Doesn't make it any different than if you went to a studio that now thinks they're an authority because they have their own square footage.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, it's funny, I've been in the industry long enough to have experienced all of those crazy changes, especially even just the last couple of years. And I have worked in smaller boutiques for a little while. When I first moved back to Florida, I taught for a cycle bar. I was potentially going to go work at Flywheel at 1 minute in my life. I've worked at different yoga studios and smaller boutique, kind of mom and pop shops as well. And I find that these big box gyms, because they are providing everything under one roof for a really decent price for what they're offering, they're always going to be there, they're never going anywhere. And that's, I think, what is keeping, especially over the last couple of years with the Pandemic, some of these bigger businesses floating and some of the smaller ones obviously are no longer in business. What I have found is that when it comes to group fitness, even though we are a non-revenue generating department in these clubs, we are the heartbeat of these clubs. We are the reason why people come and they keep coming and they never stop coming. And so I feel very fortunate to have had that as a part of my career as a young adult and figuring out what I wanted to do with my life, which I no longer am in the industry full time. I work with Mark and we work at Northwestern and we have a financial planning practice together. But I'm very grateful that I still get to teach and I still get to dip my toes in the industry. And that's how my event with Sunrise has become what it's become.

[Pete Moore]

Before we get that event, I just want to ask you one other question, because it's really sitting in a very interesting spot and have had the ability to kind of see some of these cycles, if you will go by and say, like, okay, this is a boutique concept that we need to be concerned about. This one doesn't when you look at a lifetime or Equinox or just a big box gym in general. Let me step back. I go to SoulCycle like five, six days a week, and I follow like, two instructors. So it doesn't matter what time that class is. It just matters that he or she is teaching those classes. And that's where I gravitate towards too. Inside of a large club, is there any kind of directive or desire when you are running the Group Fitness? Or if you run into group fitness now to say, hey, look, I kind of want a program that's more about the program and maybe the instructor, like orange theory calls them like a team leader where it's not like you go in this class because we're providing the programming, we're providing the time and the experience, but it's irrelevant who the instructor is because you're not basically, like, yielding marketing or, like, the pull of the class is the class. It's not the person. So have you seen any of that change? Do you think that's, like, some boutiques or some group exercise platform should be like, look, let's de-emphasize the instructor or let's emphasize them because if you got a great instructor, they're awesome and you just got to make sure that they stay with you. So give us like, your psyche on that because you're an interesting spot to see it over time.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, I don't know that there's like, a simple answer to that. I really think that it's a little bit of both. Right? So I know that people come to take my class because I'm teaching the class now. There are people in there that don't know me that I've never taken my class before, and they come take my class. And let's say they go take somebody else's class the next day or a couple of days later, and it's a different experience and they recognize a different experience and they say to themselves, you know, I like this class better than that class. And then they will rearrange their schedule like you do to follow that specific instructor around. Some people don't have that type of luxury. They can only get to the gym at this time and these days. And so they either are lucky to find an instructor or class that they like or they don't go. So I think it's a little bit of both. I also think that there's so much diversity in the industry when it comes to what people are getting as far as an experience and a service goes. So what I have found is that when people step foot into a lifetime for the first time, or they step foot into an equinox for the first time and they take one of the classes that are offered those two brands on their own are known for classes and group fitness and having the best of the best in that department. So if you got somebody coming from a different facility or a different tiered gym or experience, they're going to be completely blown away by what they're, by what they're pointing, you know. So I think it's a little bit of both. You know, I we just opened a new location here in Florida about a month ago in Palm Beach Gardens.

[Pete Moore]

Yeah. So Palm Beach, it sounds like it's sick.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

It's beautiful. It's one of the nicest clubs I've ever been and it literally has everything you could imagine and then some. And a lot of these people have never stepped foot in a lifetime before because the closest one is down in Boca, which is a good 45 minutes to an hour away from where these people live in their communities. So this is the first time for a lot of people to experience the type of experience and the type of classes that that lifetime provides. And just in the last month that I've been teaching there the feedback that we're receiving, not just me, but I know the other instructors, they are beside themselves with the type of experience that they're getting and that's what we're trying to live here. So yeah, I think it's a little bit of both.

[Pete Moore]

Yeah. Really interesting perspective. I know a lot of people try to track the best talent, but sometimes your business model doesn't allow you to pay for the best talent. Whereas in a lifetime of equinox you can pay for the best talent. Therefore there's less risk that they're going to leave because they're saying they're underpaid or they think they have a better business opportunity somewhere else because the revenues there per member. So we talk about that a lot with our Halo Academy and like telling people, look, you can't have the best group access if you sell \$19 a month membership. Like the math, it doesn't work. But when you want it to work and make people pay for the value and then deliver it as we kind of pivot the conversation here towards you are heavily involved in cycle for survival. It sounds like you've got a side of you that wants to help as many people as possible, whether it's on the fitness side or whether it's just raising money for the right causes. Before we get into your charity, have you had the positive reception from companies that you've worked with? And has anyone come back and said, hey, Ray, that's a great idea, but we have to take this up to corporate chain, and we're only doing a deal with this nonprofit, and we can't kind of contaminate how many charities we work with. And then once you answer that question, do you feel like now it's like, look, whatever cause that I'm interested in as an instructor or as a fitness celebrity or influencer or whatever, I'm doing it and that's how the future is. It's like my choices.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah. The answer to your first question is yes. There's been a little bit of pushback. I did last year when I first did this event and we did it all virtual, I had connected to somebody that works in the event space for Lifetime that I've had relationships with for many, many years. And the timing was terrible just because they were literally just coming back from basically being out of business, the COVID shutdown and they were pivoting from having no budget to figuring out what the new budget looks like. So that was one of the things that I struggled with. And then the other thing was that they are connected to an organization. So now I'm bringing in another organization and even though it's similar to what they're doing, it's all around kids, they stick to their land. Right.

So that has been a challenge in getting some of those larger sponsorships that we will hope to get in the coming years. And then what was your second question.

[Pete Moore]

Just about going forward? Do you feel just given social media and Integrity Square and everything that people can promote and go fund me and set up your own campaigns for whatever you want to do right now is like easy, take five minutes instead of a web page. Do you think the future is more about individual instructors and individual people basically raising money for what they want? Not really have any guardrails around that.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, I have an amazing partnership with Sunrise, with the organization and they've been doing these events whether it's their walks that they do every June or the galas or the golf outings or the dinners. So they have a team of people that they handle all the logistics and the websites and the fundraising and stuff. My role in the event is getting the best talent and organizing the actual event day and then obviously promoting the heck out of it and utilizing all the resources that I have and that the instructors that I've chosen to be a part of the event have. It's great when you have that partnership with somebody because I'm a little hands off on the back end stuff, which is good because I have other things going on.

[Pete Moore]

Yeah. So why don't you just give us kind of like a two minute infomercial on Sunrise, how long large your organization is, the fundraising is happening this weekend specifically and then how much money they're looking to raise and who that helps.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah. So Sunrise has been around for over 15 years. It started in Long Island, but it has since grown and is all over the country as well as multiple camps in Israel and blessing and a curse. But they're continuing to grow. And why that's a blessing and a curse is that they're able to grow and open up camps in obviously different locations to service children in other locations. But the curse is that they have to because kids are still getting diagnosed with cancer every single day. So Sunrise is a full service summer camp that sends children with cancer and their siblings to summer camp completely free of charge. And what makes it very special is that, you know, these families are going through one of the most tragic, worst things that you could ever imagine having a child, whether they're a baby or they're 5678 years old, all the way up until they're teens. And they not only have the financial burden of doctors' bills and, you know, everything that they have to take on, but the joy of life is kind of sucked out of them. And so what Sunrise

does is it gives that joy of childhood back to these kids for their summer. And the best part about it is that they're not separated from their siblings who are already feeling a little neglected because they have a sibling that's sick and they get to participate with them in all the events and they aren't treated any differently. But they have the resources to make sure that if somebody needs special care, special attention, they have the staff there. But it is the most magical place. I had the honor of actually touring camp last summer when it was in session, and to see the kids in action. And they have babies there. I mean, they have like three or four year old children running around on this little splash pad that are struggling with an illness. And the saddest part is not all of them make it, but those couple of months that they're there is some of the best days of their life. And that's what they want to remember.

[Pete Moore]

Is it one camp? Is there several camps? And then how many campers per summer? How much does it cost to run?

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Every camp is different. What I know is that they have yet to turn anybody away. So they will find a way to get every camper into camp. They provide transportation. They have the most incredible staff and volunteers. I actually did an Integrity Square live with the director of the Long Island camp the other day. She's been there for 16 years. That's one of the best things about it, is that the thing is people have children that have cancer and they don't know about Sunrise. And some of the ways that a lot of people find out about Sunrise is they actually go into the hospital. So they have a program called Sunrise on Wheels, and they bring Sunrise into the hospital. And basically what they're doing is they're just while they're sitting in the waiting room waiting to go get their blood drawn or whatever, they're coming in and they're bringing games in and artwork and just sitting with them and consoling with the parents. And one of the parents whose child was like kind of our mascot, so to speak, for our event last year, he was doing all the raw behind the scenes for us. His name is Nicky. He's in remission right now, which is incredible. But she didn't know about Sunrise until they were sitting in the hospital and now, he goes to camp. So yeah, it's pretty cool.

[Pete Moore]

That's great. So how much does it cost and what's the fundraiser you're doing? And then how do people get involved in that? We're going to try and get a little clip up. Is it a virtual is it in person as well, or hybrid?

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Yeah, so this year it's 100% in person and it is held at the camp, which is going to be very cool. So a lot of people get to get on the ground and see this magical place. It's in Wheatley Heights, New York, in Long Island, and it's going to be a mashup of fitness classes, so anything from meditation to yoga to dance to strength training to cardio to mobility. I've got five instructors, including myself, so six, and we're going to be doing just this one big mashup class outside. The weather looks beautiful in New York right now. And we have a sponsor that is coming. She has a company called it's called oh My Goodness, which is really cute. And they provide daycare and services to children in Long Island. And she makes like healthy smoothies and healthy snacks for these kids. So she's actually coming and making smoothies for us at the end of the event. And it's just going to be amazing. We're having a family there whose daughter is one of the campers and her sister, and she's going to be speaking and just talking about her experience and how much Sunrise has changed their lives. But it cost \$6,000 to send one child to camp. And last year we were able to send one kid to camp from my little event that I did. We'd like to raise \$18,000. We've raised a little over five, which is really great because it's not even the day of the event yet. And you can purchase a ticket on our website and you can donate as little or as much as you'd like. And yeah, it's going to be an amazing day.

[Pete Moore]

That's great. So we'll get that information up, we'll get it out. I'm assuming people can make donations any time afterwards as well. So once we post the full podcast up, we'll put that information up there. Sounds like a great cause. I want to camp only for a short ten years. So the camper waiter, counselor, group leader, lieutenant, I think maybe general, that's what I was looking for. So I know it can't change everybody's lives and everyone should be able to experience that. So it's a great cause that you're ahead of here and hopefully we can find a couple of people in the audience here that really resonate with this and went to camp and understand the power of it and get involved. So great to finally see. I'll see you in Miami. Maybe I can come down to the Lifetime and spend a day at the Lifetime in Palm Beach, car in jungle.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

That'd be my guest.

[Pete Moore]

Good use of time. All right. Be down there before Russia. Shannon, so good to see you. Lucky 18 and see if we can help you get that money raised.

[Randi Eisenshtat]

Thank you so much.