

Dr. Jennifer E. Turner

Adjunct Professor, Rutgers School of Public Health

Dr. Jennifer Turner's passion for health and fitness has been cultivated through a multi-decade long journey that started as a personal endeavor and grew into both a personal and professional mission. As a formerly overweight, asthmatic child with an eating disorder from the South Side of Chicago, Dr. Turner conquered her health issues to become the health educator, athlete, and "fitness activator" she is today. Because she discovered empowerment and happiness through good health, Dr. Turner felt compelled to help others to discover and "activate" their own inherent fitness.

A seasoned media executive with nearly 25 years of working on the business and creative sides of television, Dr. Turner combined her passion for fitness and desire to help others with her media background to found edutainment lifestyle brand MADCOOL Fitness that helps people and communities to achieve long-term good health and happiness through behavior science-based educational and entertainment programs. Having maintained healthy living for over 25 years by focusing on her health behavior vs. dieting, Dr. Turner is designing behavior science-based obesity prevention programs targeted to individuals, families, and communities.

To support her mission of health, Dr. Turner went back to school and received her Doctor of Public Health specializing in Health Education and Behavioral Science, from Rutgers School of Public Health. Given her interest in making communities healthier through health programming and policy, Dr. Turner's dissertation evaluated the Healthy Schools Program (HSP) implementation at four, New Jersey, K-8 independent charter schools. Using the Diffusion of Innovation as the analytical framework, Dr. Turner sought to uncover the level of HSP implementation at each study school, and factors impacting that implementation (e.g., the charter school's context, social and environmental factors both in and outside of the school that affected HSP implementation). Study results found the social determinants of health (e.g., economic stability, education, built environment) impacted HSP implementation in schools, as well as parent health behaviors, knowledge, and health status. Consistent themes across all study schools were: 1) The need to improve parent health and parent health behaviors, and 2) The concept that schools were dealing with many other social externalities (e.g., poverty, domestic violence, incarceration, immigration stress) that impacted a student's ability to learn. Teachers and administrators stated that schools were not just schools, they were "community centers" that were created to service the needs of the child, family, and the broader community. Schools needed to be resourced accordingly, but were dramatically underresourced, or did not have the right kind of resources.

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To partner more effectively with community organizations, such as schools, to deliver health programs to underserved communities, Dr. Turner also founded sister non-profit MADCOOL Community. As a follow-up to her dissertation studies and to deliver on her mission of health, Dr. Turner continues to work with charter schools and youth organizations to help students, teachers, and parents to live healthier, and achieve unconditional, empowered fitness, MADCOOL Fitness!

Dr. Turner is an adjunct professor at Rutgers School of Public teaching courses such as Public Health Foundations and Leadership and Management Essentials for Public Health. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Stanford University, a Bachelor of Finance from the Wharton School of Business of the University of Pennsylvania, and a Bachelor of Japanese Language also from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Turner is also a New Jersey certified Teacher of Health Education N-12, an American Council on Exercise (ACE) certified Youth Fitness Specialist, Fitness Nutrition Specialist, Health Coach, Behavior Change Specialist, Group Fitness Instructor, and Personal Trainer. She is an avid athlete and runner having completed numerous marathons (including two Boston and three New York City Marathons) and triathlons, (including Ironman Lake Placid). Dr. Turner is a Trustee of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Northeast Region and leads its Impact Committee supporting the strategic goals of club CEOs. She is also a classically trained violinist and board member of the Merit School of Music.