



Nia Basics

By Myreille
Simard

Whether you're a fan of dance or yoga, you'll find something to love about Nia, a new type of physical activity that is quickly gaining in popularity. Lucie Beaudry, a Nia instructor, helped us discover this unique form of exercise by answering all our questions.

What is Nia?

Founded in 1983 by two trained aerobic dancers, Nia was inspired by nine disciplines, which are divided into three categories: dance (jazz, modern dance and Duncan dance), martial arts (tai-chi, taekwondo and aikido) and healing arts (yoga, the Alexander technique and the Feldenkrais method). It consists of 52 basic moves that are pulled from the nine disciplines; they're simple, safe and accessible to everyone, as there are three intensity levels (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) for each movement. From those, your instructor will create a routine that contains equal parts of each of the three categories. Each routine lasts the length of a song which is chosen specifically for it; no two routines are alike. Nia can't be done at home; the assistance of a certified instructor is required to help guide you through a specially-created routine.

What are the benefits of Nia?

Nia is a great way to break up your regular gym routine. "Nia adepts relearn to move for themselves and always want to come back—which is why the abandon rate is pretty low," explains Beaudry. The focus of Nia is well-being and pleasure, rather than performance or obligation. "It's not necessarily being in pain that makes moving worth the effort," she adds. Physically, Nia increases flexibility, agility, balance, cardiovascular capacity, and also coordination. "There are moments when the arms and legs make different movements at the same time. None of the basic moves are complex, but it's combining them that complicates everything," says Beaudry. She also states that this technique works the entire body: "It doesn't solely work the muscles, or help with balance—nor does it only work cardio."

What does a typical Nia session look like?

A Nia session lasts 60 minutes and, like other exercise regimens, follows the same principle of intensity variations. "We start up with a moment of full-body awareness, using light movements to warm up. We then move on to more intense moves and combine them. The cardiovascular portion of the routine follows, and we finish off by lowering the intensity with stretches to decrease the heart rate," explains Beaudry. Improvisation plays

a large role in the routine, as it gives adepts their freedom. The goal is not to learn a sequence of movements by heart like a choreographed dance; the instructor constantly varies the order of the moves so that students may remain concentrated on what is going on at-present.

Who's it for?

Everyone, no matter their age or body type, can follow a Nia class, especially since it has different degrees of difficulty. It's not necessary to consult a health specialist before starting up. Beaudry explains that when new people show up to a class, the instructor needs to be informed about any health problems they may have. No matter what your body's limitations are, a personalized routine will be adapted for you.

Are you curious? Check out a video of a Nia class; or, you can visit www.niamontreal.com or www.nianow.com for more info or to even give it a try!

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