

## What is Nia?

Sometimes referred to as “aerobic yoga,” Nia combines Eastern and Western styles to blend elements of dance, Tai Chi, martial arts, and yoga. It is a thoughtful physical practice that appeals to those who welcome creativity and flexibility in a wellness program. Pronounced “nee-uh,” the word Nia rhymes with mia as in “mama mia.”



To really understand Nia, you need to hear the constantly changing backdrop of music that plays during a Nia class. This is nothing like the music of other fitness groups. A customized soundtrack is the vital thread that weaves all elements of Nia together and makes classes varied, surprising, and interesting. Participants might hear several styles during one class: melodic to rhythmic and anything in between, as each musical passage motivates the body in different ways.

### No ordinary fitness class

To allow for increased stability and more enjoyment of movement, Nia is always done barefoot. Participants wear loose-fitting comfortable clothes to un-layer as they warm up. A typical class begins with flowing stretches. There is a comfortable ebb and flow to the amount of effort required as the pace gently increases toward a low-impact cardio workout of swifter whole-body movements. Self-awareness plays a key role; those who modify their degree of movement according to their body's response will benefit most. After about 40 minutes, the pace gradually slows to blended poses and

luxurious stretches. Some Nia teachers use gently guided relaxation to calm minds and bodies as the session comes to a close.

### My personal experience with Nia

My first Nia session filled me with new ideas about what a health routine could be. On rising the following morning I experienced my muscles in a new, life-affirming way. With subsequent classes I learned to relax more, stay true to my body's comfort zones, and enjoy the fun, safe, energizing environment.

Over four years, the benefits of Nia workouts have continued to surprise. I have learned to use movement and music to let go of stress. Focused attention has increased the benefit of the exercises. The attentiveness required for Nia began to spill over into the rest of my life. Posture improved, as did flexibility, circulation, balance, breathing, mental clarity, and mood. New music brought more joy.

### Who does Nia?

We are a varied group; not everyone attends Nia for the same reasons. Some use Nia as a source of healthy activity

and others use Nia as a place to find peace. Classes in my community see a wonderful cross-section of younger and older participants engaged in a shared fitness activity. Some are grandparents with newly replaced hips and others come to rehabilitate knees and stiff joints. Younger, more toned participants are eager to maintain or challenge personal fitness levels. We, the younger and the older, perspire, breathe, and laugh together. While sharing our fitness routine we demonstrate a healthy zest for life. We have fun!

Done regularly, Nia can lead to a healthier physical outlook and richer, more enjoyable daily living. All are welcome, and all find enormous personal benefit.

To find Nia near you, check online at [nia-nia.com](http://nia-nia.com). ☺

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