

SEE YA AT NIA FOR A FUN, FULFILLING WORKOUT

The Nia Technique

TIMES AND LOCATIONS VARY; FOR MORE INFO CONTACT CAMILLA STEEN LARSEN ON 2094 9470 OR KONTAKT@ORIGO-NIA.COM, OR VISIT WWW.ORIGO-NIA.COM (IN DANISH)

Would you believe me if I told you that I'd found a new exercise that leaves no muscle in your body neglected and makes you sweat like your life depended on it, while simultaneously letting you dance to your heart's content with a huge grin on your face for a full hour? Because Nia actually does all this with its blend of yoga, martial arts, Alexander technique, and dance.

Although Nia isn't exactly new (it was founded back in 1983), it's only lately found its ground in Denmark. Until recently, all Nia instructors had to be educated by the founders themselves, Debbie and Carlos Rosas, at the Nia headquarters in Portland, Oregon. Instructor, Camilla Steen Larsen, is one such person. She came back from Portland with a blue belt (the belt system is quite like the one in karate) and a mission to teach the joy of the Nia.

Camilla starts out her hour-long class with a little friendly banter, introducing Nia to those who are new to the concept. The first principle of the Nia concept is Joy of Movement, a great underlying theme for any exercise. For every class there is a new focus, ranging from body parts (ie the spine, or the ankles and wrists) to the concepts of stability and agility. The routine, which changes from class to class, reflects the focus and Camilla constantly guides our thoughts to where our focus needs to be, peppering her speech with English words from her own Nia training.

The hour progresses much like an aerobics class. There is a warm-up period, a cardio-vascular period, and a cool-down. However, unlike aerobics, this is a very low impact workout done barefoot, consisting of a lot of moves the body is used to doing, like walking or bouncing gently from side to side. On top of that come layers of other movements, such as the arms riding a wave, or sweeping bad feng shui away. Even fingers get their own exercise, flicking imaginary water drops away and rubbing the back of a Nia classmate! Every body part gets attention, and every movement is deliberate, with a purpose. Emotional release is also an ingredient in the Nia concept, and during the martial arts part of the class, we are encouraged to shout 'Yes!' and 'No!' and 'Me!' while waving imaginary swords about, or kicking our legs at unknown targets. Sometimes Camilla even coaxes us to imitate monkeys - something that takes getting used to, but leaves the whole class in stitches. All this on a backdrop of infectious music helping us keep our groove on.

Nia, which stands for Neuromuscular Integrative Action, is a holistic way of bringing your mind and your body together, working as one graceful unit. The beauty of it is that anyone in any shape can participate in a class, giving it only as little or as much as they've got. It's a gentle, yet powerful workout that leaves you energised and invigorated. As for long-term benefits - I've dropped about four kilos since starting Nia in December, without even trying. My body is more limber, and I'm more aware of my physical well-being. People have even remarked that I look taller!



Get in shape with Camilla

But the best part is just feeling happier in general, and having that extra bit of energy to get through the winter. I'm not the type to have addictions to anything, but I honestly am hooked on Nia.

Camilla offers a free trial class of Nia. For information on times and places, see her website (in Danish) at www.origo-nia.com.

Jennie Kaae-Ferrara