

Other Indoor Sports

InTouch movement and the role of sex in keeping fit

The autumn is typically slow for trainers and gyms. If it's not bikini season or resolution time, we twiddle our thumbs and wonder how and if people are staying active. On a personal level, it feels counterintuitive to put on shorts and run on the treadmill in November. I opt for slower movements, such as yoga, stretching and massage, in a quieter environment to honor nature's effect on my body. Feasts, fireplaces and warm blankets offer sensual sanctuary and keep us seated. This is definitely not a good time of year to abandon your exercise routine, but I encourage you to let it change, just like the season.

In searching for an exercise alternative for people wanting physical contact with clean boundaries, I found Paula Byrne. Best described as DJ, torch singer, dancer and lesbian, she teaches a contact improv dance class called "InTouch."

I attended her class and was impressed with the ease and congruency in movement. The class was made up of a diverse cross section of society: Gay, lesbian and who-knows-what-all grappled playfully in slow motion. Some danced, some rolled onto each other laughing, others briefly rested, indulging in wine and chocolate that were part of the workout. An intimate dance form, InTouch requires all parts of the body to move equally, and the barriers around specific parts to dissolve. People of all sizes, abilities and genders have a place on the dance floor. All seemed to be having a great time with this inclusive and unique class.

Paula says: "InTouch focuses on the pleasure of touch, and how to fine-tune the senses to fully enjoy the connection. No matter the state of the physicality of the body, there is pleasure resident somewhere,



Paula Byrne teaches the contact improv class "InTouch" to get your body and spirit moving.

somehow. My work is about using movement as the vehicle for people to reconnect to their own inherent pleasure. The movement forms I teach are not necessarily about athletics or cardiovascular benefits, but rather life benefits: fully enjoying the body you've been given. I find that the students who are the most sweaty and winded at the end of the class are not those who jumped and ran the most, but rather those who were the most engaged in their movement."

InTouch is taught twice a month, with an additional class in the works.

For more information about InTouch or other dance instruction, please contact Paula Byrne at



Dear Ethel
BY MARIA CALLAHAN

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The movement required at InTouch shows that when we keep connected with ourselves, we enhance the quality of our connections with others. Sex is only one form of intimacy, and traditional exercises are only one small piece of health and wellness. Touch has infinite health benefits—we realize just how true this is when we go without it.

Which brings us to this month's question:

DEAR ETHEL:

My boyfriend and I are experiencing a serious ebb in our sex life. We've both gained weight during our time together, and we can't seem to make it to the gym as often as we once did (for multiple reasons). I'm trying to think of constructive ways to encourage intimacy, and get us back into the shape we once were in. Please help me outline the health benefits of sex for a formal presentation!

Good news, and not-so-good news: Sex tends to be more of an aerobic and core activity than a strength activity, so you and boyfriend might want to incorporate free-weights a minimum of once a week. (Note: Please be careful using free-weights if you are naked—the resulting injury could be difficult to explain.)

Having sex for no less than 15 minutes can improve your endurance and release some of the "feel good" chemicals in your brain. Being creative about how and where you have sex can potentially improve your flexibility, but I will not elaborate here. Try to hold each "stretch" for a minimum of 20 seconds. If you've been having sex in the same location for years, you might be bored. Create a new romantic location in your house!

Intensity and frequency are key. Sex will have the greatest cardiovascular benefit if it's vigorous enough to keep you from carrying on a casual conversation. If you break a sweat, you'll be burning fat as a fuel source. As far as calorie burn is concerned, you might expend anywhere from 200 to 1,000 calories an hour. I have read that having sex three times a week is the aerobic equivalent of running 75 miles a year. Try recommending your new exercise program three to five times each week, and good luck with your presentation! jo

Information in this column should not be used in place of advice from a licensed health care professional. If you don't see the question or answer you're looking for, e-mail DEAR ETHEL at maria@etbeldiesels.com or visit www.etbeldiesels.com.



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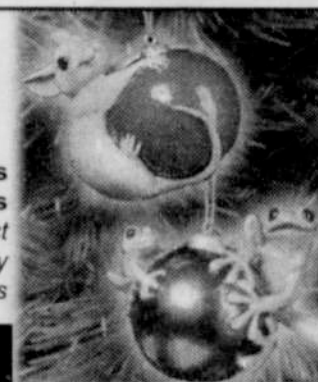


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