

Pilates

Meniere's & Mindful Movement

I am inspired to share my recent discovery of mindful movement in the form of Pilates. I recently stumbled upon a newly opened, boutique Pilates studio close to my home. In conversation with the studio owner, Gaiti Rabbani, I was encouraged to trial a variety of classes - Pilates, Barre, Stretch & Flow.

I must admit I was initially hesitant as I have never done Pilates or Barre.

Gaiti is passionate about the transformative powers of movement. She has created a welcoming space that put me at ease the moment I walked in. After just a few classes at her studio, I have settled into a rhythm of attending Reformer Pilates classes a couple of times a week. I love the attentiveness of the instructors as it's a very small class. I feel the benefit to both my body and mind.

I asked Gaiti to explain the different class styles and offer her recommendations to those of us who are new to mindful movement practices. Gaiti explains:

More about Mindful Movement

A diagnosis such as Meniere's can push people into a sense of depression and isolation. Anxiety is a common companion of chronic condition. Mindful movement is a proven way to reduce anxiety.

Low intensity exercise such as Pilates, Yoga and even light forms of Barre, are considered mindful movement. Exercise that encourages a focus on breath will regulate the nervous system and bring attention to the sensations of the body in motion. The exhalation especially stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system that help calm the mind.

Aside from the obvious benefits of physical exercise, mindful movement encourages a stronger mind body connection, improving co-ordination, mental clarity, and overall energy. Physical activity creates a feel-good factor through the release of endorphins.

Group classes are also a great way to cultivate a sense of social connection and belonging."

Some Class Styles to Consider

Pilates

Pilates, predominantly focuses on deep core & posture. It promotes a deeper level of coordination of mind and body, improving awareness of how we carry ourselves and move in space. Most instructors will power up a class with the use of props such as a Pilates ball or hand weights for added strength and balance work. Strengthening your body will help you prevent injuries and falls.

Reformer Pilates

Pilates on a Reformer encourages controlled movement, strength, and alignment through a combination of adjustable spring resistance & a sliding platform. It is low impact, kind on joints and an excellent form of rehabilitation from injury often recommended by physio's. It can appear intimidating at first but it's worth spending time to build confidence in the short term for longer term gains.

Barre

Barre was created by the ballerina Lotte Berk in the late 1950's as a rehabilitative therapy after injuring her back. It is a full body workout that combines ballet barre routines with Pilates techniques and the flow of yoga. Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to be a dancer to join. It will promote a sense of flow while building strength **and improving balance**.

Yoga Inspired Movement

Yoga promotes flexibility, strength and can be meditative. Yoga inspired movement is great for treating tight muscles and unlocking tension and lethargy. As with most forms of exercise there are several styles to choose from, Yin, Vinyasa and so on.

Anxiety can also be brought on with the fear of an attack. So whatever type of movement you choose, remember to BREATHE.

Tips on finding the right studio and class for you.

- Seek out a safe and supportive studio that promotes a sense of calm and welcomes beginners
- Look for attentive and compassionate instructors who are understanding of your needs
- Share your concerns and medical diagnosis with the instructors before a class so they can keep an eye on you and guide you
- Avoid big group classes, fast paced and high intensity workouts. Avoid competitive exercise communities which may lead to a sense of overwhelm
- Focus inwards and forget what everyone else is doing. It's not about keeping up. It's about tuning in and taking care of you.
- Most studios offer an introductory package or even a free trial class. Try before making a bigger commitment, making sure you are comfortable in the space and feel fully supported.
- If you are nervous about joining a group class, ask if you can arrange private session initially to help build your confidence. Alternatively, you might ask a friend or partner to join you for your first few classes for some moral support.

If you have questions, feel free to reach out to Gaiti on connect@studioformandflow.com.

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