

Workout: Movement For The Mind Movement For The Mind

Aimee Heckel Camera Staff Writer
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Boulder, 303-402-0443, bodyminddynamics.org

Instructor: Franoise Netter, of Boulder, an author, educator, dancer, performer, certified yoga teacher and the founder of Movement For The Mind. She has been involved with dance and movement therapy for more than 30 years.

She has a master's in dance therapy.

What is the workout? A movement program based in dance and dance therapy, so you get all the benefits of dance and exercise, except you also bring consciousness to it -- an intention. It also blends yoga, meditation and spiritual and emotional studies. Movement For the Mind has four main applications: dance as creativity, dance as physical healing, dance as psychological healing and dance as stress management.

In my class, we learned a series of basic exercises, and then picked one area to focus on. I chose stress management.

The goal is to teach people how to purposefully integrate their creativity into their personal and professional lives. In other words, how to turn off your brain for a while and tap in to the "wisdom" of your body; to shut off your left brain and let your right brain lead you, nonverbally and through loosely guided movement.

Netter says the exercises are based in neuroscience. Many people believe in "mind over matter" and that the mind can affect the body; Netter also teaches that the body can affect the mind.

"It ushers practical results for daily life," Netter says.

You learn to use the body as a vehicle of expression by using the choreographic principles: "locomotor" movement, time, space, energy and motion.

What's different: Unlike a traditional dance class, the technique is the choreographic principles, so you don't have to learn specific techniques. (She might say, "Move fast. Now move slow.") The warm-up is all guided, so anyone can do it, with or without dance experience. Unlike dance therapy, this guided class can be therapeutic, but it doesn't have to be.

"I've gone into corporations where we have done problem-solving or brainstorming, using the nonverbal way," Netter says. "When we use words, we tend to lie, but the body does not lie."

When: Her next training session and intro class is 5:15-7:15 p.m. May 22 for \$15. Get more info online.

She also does private lessons, corporate workshops, or you can buy her book, "Movement For the Mind: Dance That Awakens Inspiration, Wisdom And Healing," in paperback (\$19.99) or ebook



Franoise Netter teaches "Movement For The Mind," a dance class that she says awakens healing, inspiration and wisdom. (CLIFF GRASSMICK)

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(\$9.99), or her CD, "Redress your stress" (\$19.99).

Level: Depends on what you choose to do. Netter doesn't tell you what to do; she guides you, but you ultimately choose how you move your body, she says. I found it a five on a 10-point intensity scale.

No dance experience needed.

She has taught her program to graduate business students at Stanford University (and other colleges), to employees at Fortune 500 companies, therapists, medical professionals, kids, survivors of sexual assault and incest, people with fibromyalgia, people who want to learn to dance, people who want to lose weight, prison inmates, kids with focus problems -- "anyone in a body," she says. She says she has worked in hospitals, veteran hospitals, halfway houses, whole-life expos, health clubs, celebrity tennis tournaments and retreat centers.

"I really recommend it for people who are so locked in a left brain," she says. "If you can embody it, it's yours. And we don't do that in our society."

What to prepare: Wear comfortable clothes, no shoes required. Bring water, because you will likely get your heart rate up. You definitely need to bring an open mind. Netter asks you to leave your judgmental voice with your shoes at the door, and replace it with your intuition.

Muscles worked: You warm up each part of the body with isolated movement and then you explore it with connected movement. Sometimes you move fast. It works all the parts of the body, re-oxygenates the blood and provides all of the full-body benefits of dance, while connecting you with emotion and intention, Netter says.

What I loved: Without doubt, this was different than anything I've done before. But at its core, it was actually surprisingly fun. I felt like I was dancing around my living room with my daughter.

I really enjoyed one exercise where we imagined something stressful, and we put it inside our bodies, and then we put it outside our bodies and pretended to dance with it. It helped me shift my perspective from being stressed about stuff to just playing with it -- batting it around, exploring it. It brought me back to my center, which is enjoying and having fun. And this was accomplished by subtle reminders about boundaries: where I begin and where the stress ends.

What I didn't like: At first, it was hard not to be self-conscious and worry if I was doing it "right." Netter tries to help people drop their insecurities by beginning class with eyes closed, starting slowly and teaching about boundaries. I never felt like she was judging me, or even thinking about what I was doing.

Netter told me stories about businesspeople in three-piece suits being hesitant to try this program at first, but eventually enjoying it. I think many people will experience resistance at first, because it is so different and right-brained. But if you don't think about it too much, you might be surprised by what you learn.

How I felt after the class: Silly. I like feeling silly. Child-like and lighter.

-- Reported by Aimee Heckel.

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