

# No Pain, No Gain? **NO WAY!**

by Wendy Rappaport

**F**or those who think we must suffer in order to get a good workout, it may be time to try The Nia Technique, a physical conditioning program based on a premise that movement is a pathway for self-discovery and personal transformation. The program is intended to deliver cardiovascular aerobic exercise and whole-body conditioning

Nia (pronounced knee-a) was created in California in 1983 and stands for Neuromuscular Integrated Action. As a movement form, Nia Technique is based on 52 principles that integrate movement modalities from dance, martial arts, and healing practices. Its moves capture the movements from Tai Chi, Akido and Tae kwon do; duncan, jazz and modern dance; and the healing arts of Feldenkrais method, Alexander technique and yoga. And if you like music, you'll love the upbeat musical selections.

Routines start out slowly with a concentration on the breath and begin to pick up as the class progresses. The class ends with a bit of "floor-play" and stretching/yoga movements leaving participants with an overall feeling of joy—and that's just how the originators of the program, Debbie Rosas and Carlos Rosas, want us to feel.

Based on the "Pleasure Principle," practicing Nia requires us to tap into the way our body is feeling each time we practice. This principle suggests that because we are tapping into movements so that they feel good as we do them,

as opposed to 'pushing beyond our comfort level,' we will naturally become fit.

If we are feeling like a level one, we should keep all our movements closer to the core. If we are feeling like a level two, we take movements a bit further away. Therefore, any-

one can practice Nia no matter the fitness level. If we want a good cardiovascular workout, we may want to work at a level three. If we don't want to follow exactly what the instructor is doing, then we tweak the move and do it "our body's way!"

One participant from West Greenwich says he loves the way he feels after a Nia class. "I go in feeling tight from all the physical activities I perform as a gardener and waiter, and by the end of the class I feel like I've had a massage," he said. "The movements stretch me out and make me limber. And because I like to run, it's great for cross training."

Nia is to exercise what holistic medicine is to healthcare. It has proven to be helpful to those with conditions such as asthma, depression and arthritis. And, one thing is for sure, fun will be had while moving to great music and getting fit.



*Wendy Rappaport currently teaches the Nia technique at The Quonnie Grange in Charlestown and Westerly YMCA. For more information about Nia, or to locate a class near you visit [NiaNow.com](http://NiaNow.com) or call 401- 322-0810*