

THE WASHINGTON POST

FITNESS: Taking an Exercise

By Shirley Sirota Rosenberg

Some purists say it's not as good; some say it's better; some say there's no difference. But the consensus among exercise buffs themselves is that classes led by private instructors who come to your work place — whether office or home — is the greatest thing since the coffee break.

Concerned that their life-styles offer little opportunity for regular exercise, these fans are among a growing coterie who have discovered time saved and incentive gained when an instructor shows up at the door in leotard and tights, carrying exercise poles in one hand and 3-pound dumbbells in the other.

Employers are also beginning to catch on to the benefits, and a growing number are offering employee space for what is fast becoming known as "carry-out classes." Some bosses are also throwing in the time — typically 45 minutes to one hour — and even picking up the instructor's tab. (Cued, no doubt, by preliminary studies indicating that time out for exercise boosts productivity and cuts absenteeism.) Gym space at the office is becoming as coveted as parking space.

Convenience is the major reason for the popularity of on-site exercise classes. Motivation — or, more accurately, lack of motivation — runs a close second.

"When our teacher walks in," says LaVerne Valentine, the 30-ish managing editor at SSR, Inc., a Washington design and writing firm, "there's no walking out."

Says exercise physiologist Dr. James A. Metcalfe: "Most people need a regular, structured exercise program to keep them going."

As leader of the Northern Virginia Cardiac Therapy Program, Metcalfe prescribes exercise in measured doses to people at risk of, or recovering from, heart disease. "Many of our most successful graduates," he says, "even though they all come into the program for grave reasons, fall off the maintenance regime we prescribe once they go out on their own."

Classes offered at work sites range from slimnastics — the most popular — to yoga, aerobic dancing, and the most recent, "dynamic alignment." Most of the instructors have trained in dance at college, many with classes in kinesiology and anatomy. Students come to work early, leave late, or skip a lunch hour to take classes.

Some 20 government agencies now maintain physical-fitness facilities. NASA's program, set up 15 years ago with help of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, includes sophisticated electronically monitored exercise regimes. Capitol Hill staffers have worked out in the cafeteria at the Dirksen Senate Building.

You don't need a sophisticated site



Among individuals and organizations that will come to your office to provide exercise programs. Contact them directly for more information.

BALLET-RHYTHMICS — Using a combination of ballet movements, toning, aerobics, and strengthening exercises, Jacalyn Cox conducts exercise classes geared to "the body's natural rhythms." The program stresses flexibility, muscle control and development, postural alignment and stamina. Especially good use of music to correspond to exercises.

Group Size: 15-20. Class: 45 minutes. Price: \$2.50 per person. Jacalyn Cox: 966-8070.

CAROLINE GICHNER — Approaches slimnastics "from the health point of view" because it not only tones and firms up muscles but also generates other positive benefits, says Gichner who offers slimnastics for posture, flexibility, relaxation and body sculpture.

Group Size: one person, or a maximum of 8. Class: 45-50 minutes. Price: for one person, 5 classes for \$100, 10 classes for \$195; for 8, \$50 a class. Caroline Gichner: 223-0993.

DANCE ARTS — Juilliard graduate Colette Yglesias emphasizes quality of exercises, not quantity. Based on the philosophy that "dance is one of the best exercises for all parts of the body," classes are a combination of exercise and dance. Attention given to individual needs.

Group Size: depends on space. Class: 1 hour. Price: \$3 per session per person, or will negotiate a flat fee. Colette Yglesias: 737-1662.

DANCE EXCHANGE — One of Washington's most innovative dance programs. Will send instructors to your office to develop a group exercise class best suited to needs and interests. Focus on dance as "a means by which body and mind connect in an exercise program."

Group Size: negotiable. Class: 1 hour. Price: approximately \$3-\$3.50 per person. Paul d'Eustachio: 783-8900.

THE HOME STRETCH — Regardless of space and time available or the size of a group, instructor Shelley Liebman says she will devise an exercise program geared to particular interests and needs of office workers. The program emphasizes specific benefits and correct performance of exercises.

Group Size: depends on space. Class: 1 hour. Price: 1-6 people, \$25/hour; 7 or more, \$30/hour.

Leave the Driving To Them

two times a week for 10 people, \$25/hour. Shelley Liebman: 442-3399.

KAREN DIAMOND STUDIO — Exercise classes use "flowing movements" to help relieve stress and make desired changes in body shape, such as slimming waist or hips. Other physical problems, such as neck pains, also may be alleviated. Emphasis on coordination, balance, flexibility.

Group Size: maximum of 15, if space permits. Class: 1 hour. Price: \$7.60 per person for one class a week; lower price with more classes taken per week. Karen Diamond: 965-7272.

MOVING RIGHT ALONG — Lunch-hour or evenings. Clients have included the World Bank and the Kennedy Center. Their approach incorporates dance with exercise and utilizes the Alexander technique (or spinal integration of the body) for posture. Will also teach jazz or aerobic dance.

Group Size: up to 15. Class: 1 hour. Price: \$4-6 a person per class. Marilyn Mitchell: 387-2803.

SIVANANDA YOGA VEDANTA CENTER — Lunch-hour and other hours in offices; private instruction in the home.

Group Size: any number. Class: variable. Price: variable. One example: \$300 for 8 1/2-hour classes for large group; \$30 per person for small group. Swami Sivasadas, director, 331-YOGA.

SHERRI BLAIR — Exercises, concentrated on leg and abdominal work, selected to vie the maximum benefit in the shortest time. Many of exercises unique.

Group Size: maximum of 4. Class: 1 hour. Price: \$18 per session. Sherri Blair: 333-7305.

SOMEBODIES — A high-energy class consisting of warm-up exercises; leg, abdominal, back and hip work; cardiovascular component, and cooling-down period. All teachers rigorously trained and monitored. Individual attention; instructors stress proper performance of exercises.

Group Size: maximum of 12. Class: 1 hour. Price:

or equipment to get going, and since a typical class works up only a slight sweat (none in yoga), shower facilities are unnecessary. Clothing — whether a sweat suit, shorts and T-shirt, or leotard and tights — is geared for getting in and out of quickly.

Karen Diamond says she can lead a class if she gets at least a 6-foot "bubble of space" around each person. But professional studios — with their light, bright rooms, padded hardwood (not concrete) floors and windows that open — are still the best places, she

believes, because they are built to facilitate movement.

Marilyn Mitchell of Moving Right Along, one of the newest groups in town going out to students, also prefers the studio. "That's where you really leave the workload behind."

Sherri Blair limits her practice to homes and offices. "I work under desks and around sofas." Even though "in a two- or three-person office, someone always has to get up to answer the phone," she maintains that the convenience of working out at

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Break at the Office

STYLE PLUS

on a poster to be available from the commission early next year.

Caroline Gichner, who leads classes at Elizabeth Arden on Saturdays and was one of the first Washingtonians to bring exercise classes to her students, trained originally as a dancer both here and in Mexico and then went on to study with slimnastics pioneer Marjorie Craig. Among places Gichner has led private classes for women: East Wing of the White House, artist Alice Binderman's studio, the showroom of Ademas, Inc., ceiling-and-tile shop, and the offices of Hospital Temporaries, Inc.

Gichner and Metcalfe, who is also associate professor of physical education at George Mason University, agree that a carefully plotted regime has three phases: Students start slowly, speed up, then go into a cool-down. Movement is never explosive, and by continually moving along into new exercises to take stress off areas just exercised, the instructor can introduce enough variety to stave off boredom.

The program, they say, should exercise every major muscle group in the body. Lean body mass — heart, muscle, bone — eventually increases, with some slight compensatory decrease in fat. The subsequent shift in body proportion is the greatest long-term benefit of slimnastics (and also is in tune with the trend toward "body sculpture.")

With the firming of muscle and the lifting of flab, the most noticeable result is better-fitting or looser clothes, even without weight loss. The results depend on how often, how long, how hard you exercise, and how well you control each movement.

Metcalfe points out that some magic takes place immediately. Although a session only burns up 300 calories — the equivalent of three large chocolate-chip cookies — the exercises immediately shut down the appetite.

"Indeed," says Metcalfe, "exercise is a better and more realistic regulator of appetite than is hunger, bringing the calories you eat more in line with the calories you spend."

Capitalize on reduced appetite by taking a warm liquid after class, says Swami Sivasadas. "That's all you need to fill you up."

Among his noon-hour clients are the Labor Department, GAO and the National Endowment for the Humanities where an in-house exercise program has been in effect for about 1½ years.

"When I go for a while without the classes, the tension builds up in my neck and shoulders," says NEH information specialist John Lippincott, 32, who switches during the work day from coat and tie to T-shirt and floppy *paji* pants. "The program helps keep me from speed-

ing along, and restores my equilibrium. I'm also more productive after a session.

"I'm not sure what I'd do without the program. I'd probably push myself to do it at home — but I wouldn't be very successful."

Men, says Metcalfe, are interested primarily in using exercise to relax, to increase cardiovascular fitness, or to allow themselves to eat more without putting on pounds. Most women are concerned with losing or maintaining weight.

"The typical round of exercises done at work can be performed by anyone who has a doctor's permission to work out," says Metcalfe. "The gains are especially important for sedentary workers."

Some caveats, however:

Straight-leg lifts and sit-ups, says Metcalfe, should be approached cautiously by people with a history of lower-back problems; the exercises may cause pain.

And at the Institute of Human Performance, Fairfax, specialists in occupational health believe that isometrics, where an isolated muscle is held taut — as contrasted to the rhythmic movement of isotonic — brings blood pressure up quickly and markedly, and should be avoided by people with a hypertension risk.

The question as to whether the classes build endurance is debatable. Apparently, a once-a-week session is only a beginning, but better than nothing.

"Twice-a-week just starts to bring some results in terms of a cardiovascular workout," says Metcalfe. (It can, however, take off a dozen pounds a year.) "Three times a week is better, but the most efficient overall return to muscles, heart and lungs actually is from exercise five times a week."

Metcalfe recommends supplementing the exercise regime at work with brisk hour-long walks. Using the stairs, he says, won't do much for aerobics, unless you take two at a time.

Sharon Brown, 35, a supervisory economist with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, finds her workouts "excellent for helping me make an adjustment to the bureaucracy. They also," she says, "keep me youthful."

Brown has, however, noted some resistance from fellow workers who don't consider such activities appropriate in an office building. In defense, Brown points out that the yoga-based exercise is hardly raucous.

"The most you hear," she says, "is an occasional 'oom' or 'ah.'"

\$100 for group per session. Pat McKenney or Emmele Pessoa: 8-3822.

YMCA — Offers exercise classes such as aerobic action, slimnastics and "healthy back" in conjunction with office-fitness package, which includes screening and testing, workshops and classes. The whole package may be purchased, or just the classes, geared to accommodate a range of ability levels.

Group Size: Minimum of 10, maximum of 30. Class: 1 hour. Price: varies. For aerobics, \$600 for 10 classes, twice a week. (About \$1-\$3 per person per session.) Contact: Terese Domanski, 862-9757.

YWCA — Through its community-outreach program, offers private classes to business and community groups. Draws from a large pool of instructors offering exercise programs to fit specific needs and interests of group, from aerobics to stretching.

Group Size: up to 20, depending on room size. Class: 45 minutes. Price: \$20 per person for 6 lessons. Shelia Drohan, 638-2100.

Additional possibilities (slightly off the beaten track):

TRIM — Trains individuals to bring exercise programs back to their own offices. Program consists of stress-tested routines, combining dance and callisthenics. Training (for men and women) takes 4 days, is held in Manassas and costs \$158. Also provides instructors to come to your office. Times and prices negotiated. Nancy Shoemaker: 643-1500.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT FITNESS CENTER (18th and C Sts. NW) — Offers a pre-assessment fitness evaluation and exercise prescription for new members. Facilities for 600-plus members include a weight-training room, sauna, showers and lockers. Jazzercise, dance aerobics, circuit weight training, stretchercise and slimnastics classes available for no extra fee to members. Program not funded by the government, but run by a small nonprofit organization, subsidized by member fees and health insurance.

Group Size: up to 30. Cost of fitness center membership for Interior Department employees: \$24 for three months. Waiting list for non-Interior Department employees. Joe Miller, director: 343-5756.

— **Claire Chow and Mary-Carter Creech**

work still outweighs the disadvantages.

Yoga instructor Swami Sivasadas prefers the work place because "everyone needs to have a break to relieve drudgery or stress."

Lou Lyons, who heads the Maryland Commission on Physical Fitness, says that even a 5-minute exercise break is beneficial. A series of 25 exercises that can be done sitting in a chair in a cubicle, dressed in conventional work attire, has been developed by Karen Diamond and will appear