The Nia Technique
by Debbie Rosas and Carlos Rosas

I. The Nia Technique - A Movement Practice and Lifestyle Program

What Nia Stands For

Nia is a movement practice dedicated to both fitness and personal growth. Neuromuscular Integrative Action is a descriptive term used to describe Nia. In Swahili, Nia means, "with purpose," and in Hebrew it means, "tiny movement". As a practice and lifestyle, Nia offers a path to integrate the body, mind, emotional self, and spirit. Grounded in loving consciousness, Nia is a passionate and stimulating way to gain health, well-being, and personal growth. It is a way to discover one's own deeper meaning, value, and depth in living life.

About The Program

Both the styles of Classic and Athletic Nia use an interactive, expressive system designed to enhance body awareness, free emotions, expand mental insight, awaken higher consciousness, and integrate the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. As a movement practice, Nia leads to developing a loving, healthy lifestyle, and provides both traditional and non-traditional results such as: increased awareness and sensitivity, cardiovascular conditioning, energy rejuvenation, joint, muscle, and spinal flexibility, celebration of life, community interactive recreation that is fun and playful, internal strength, creative visualizations, meditation, emotional and physical balance, integration, and relaxation. Safe enough to be performed in bare feet, Nia works with all kinds of energy dynamics by incorporating various speeds, movements, and ranges of motion into an adaptable method that is easily modified to fit all ages and individual needs. Nia is powerful and transformative because it reaches people in their hearts and creates a deep, personal desire to explore one's own potential. Nia motivates you to get fit and healthy, and to enjoy the divine experience of living a sacred life in a body.

What is unique to Nia is the way it creatively integrates East/West movements, concepts, and philosophies from the worlds of the healing arts (love), the martial arts (mindfulness), dance (technique), and body integration therapies (craft). Various psychological approaches are also integrated to offer students and patients tools to support a self-guided, personal growth process, while the blueprint for practicing Nia is process oriented, practical, cognitive, and experiential. User-friendly, Nia offers a flexible structure that students can personally adapt with the aid of an intimate teaching approach of sharing, guiding, and offering information and suggestions in an interactive, empowering way. People of all fitness and wellness levels, and ages participate in Nia throughout the world. Addressing "specificity," Nia has been adapted to fit a wide range of therapeutic, wellness, personal-growth, and educational models such as: Prisons, Drug/Alcohol and Cardiac Rehabilitation, Autism, High School Teens, and Sexual Abuse Support Groups. The existing markets for Nia teachers is vast, including: Mind Body Medicine Centers, Traditional Fitness and Health Clubs, Yoga Centers, Healing and Wellness Centers, Seniors, Retreat Programs, Summer Camps, Personal Growth and Transformation Seminars, HMO Programs, Corporate Wellness, Sport Vacations, Teen and Inner City Youth Groups, University PE and Theater Departments, Dance and Martial Arts Schools, Spas, Hospitals, Prisons, Drug/Alcohol and Cardiac Rehabilitation, and Spiritual Journey Retreats that combine personal growth and vacations.

Developed by Debbie Rosas and Carlos Rosas, Nia has been featured in a multitude of publications including: The New York Times, Time, Harper's Bazaar, Glamour, Self, Yoga Journal, American Health, IDEA Today, New Realities, McCall's, Vogue and more. This highly acclaimed work has been presented to groups and organizations from both the fitness and wellness communities such as: URSA, IDEA, New York

II. The Tools

A. The Four Realms

1. The Body - Sensation

Matter, breath, feet, hands, pelvis, chest, head, the senses, joints, and limbs. The physical process of Nia is personal, organic, conscious, and experiential. View the body as an intelligence, an entity that offers unending potential for ongoing learning through the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms. Use your body to access and perceive information, for feeling and connecting to sensation from the internal and external worlds. Use the senses of the body as instruments to help you become more available to yourself, to your actions, and to others.

2. The Mind - Thoughts and Imagination

Focused and intentional, conscious and mindful. Think of mind as an energy that is circular, fluid, linear, and multi-dimensionally creative. Mind energy directs the body, thoughts, emotions, and creations. Use mind energy to focus, gain results, relax, direct, create, alter, and build energy. Connect to the left brain (the logical mind), to organize, code, and create structure. Use the right brain, your creative side, to develop your imagination. To strengthen your mind, activate the witness, play with images, symbols, directions, sequencing, rhythm, and visualizations. The witness is the part of you that is not attached. It is the great eye that observes to gather information without judgment. The witness is the one that allows you to be in the fluid sea of experience without holding onto thought. It is the most illuminated part of mind energy. Use the witness to notice and observe the patterns of your movement, detail, and to free your mind.

3. The Emotions - Feelings

All feelings, including love, anger, fear, compassion, joy. Emotions are the fuel of expression. They are the language of the heart, gut, open hand, and fist. They are at the very center of all outward expression and have the power to relax, stimulate, excite, and feed both the giver and the receiver. Use all kinds of emotions to enhance the physical expression of your movement and to release tension.

4. The Spirit - Personal Expression, Spiritual Practices, and Beliefs

This unique descriptive of energy is not religious, but merely a word used to describe the essence of you and all that is in the universe. Connect to your own spirit and personality, the excitement, passion, and exhilaration of feeling you. Spirit is tangible, it has a feeling all of its own, just as mind energy has a feeling all of its own. Spirit is powerfully electric, alive, and real. By consciously connecting to your spirit, you discover greater abundance of energy and develop a deep satisfying feeling that goes beyond what can been seen and felt. You discover meaning and purpose behind what you do.

B. Sound

1. Music and Vocalization

Music is the underlying energy source used to stimulate your mind and body. It is used to create organic choreography. To work with music, activate that part of you that listens. Connect to the sounds, the vibration and resonance you hear and can feel. Active listening is a way to allow the vibration of sound to move the body, to stimulate the mind, and to passionately touch the heart and soul. Use active listening to work with subtle sounds, instruments, the rise and fall, waves and cycles within music that help to support and create movement. Once you are connected to the sounds, actively speak using your body gestures and voice. Develop the ability to be touched and expressively respond to something outside of you, the music.
2. Sound Energy

Nia uses all kinds and styles of music: popular, ethnic, sacred, world beat, as well as rhythm, resonance, and harmonies to support healing physiological responses.

3. Balance: The Polarity of Masculine and Feminine Vibrations

For masculine response, choose music that stimulates the body to intuitively react, to be powerful, aggressive and sharp, alert and ready for action. Music with a strong sense of beat and clarity will seduce the body to act with greater precision. This kind of sound stimulates a strong exhale, supports grounding, focus, intent, and centering. Some examples are funk, hard rock, techno, and drumming. To invoke a feminine response, select music with strong and clear melody lines, music with a feeling of space to invoke relaxation and promote ease, breathing, and graceful movement. This kind of sound invokes the inhale, softening and surrendering into movement and into expansion. Some examples are classical, ballads, love songs, soft rock, blues, and Celtic.

C. The Movement

1. Integration

Blend East/West movement forms, practices, and concepts; specifically the martial arts, dance, exercise, and body integration therapies. Draw from many disciplines to offer choices, variety, and unique stimulation to the body, mind, emotions, and spirit.

2. FreeDance

FreeDance is a process used to tap into your own authentic movement, your way of moving. It also is a way to tap into the creative source where sound, emotions, freedom, movement, and expression become one. Freedance allows sound and movement to merge, creating in a fluid, expansive environment that uses the mind to witness.

D. The Choreography

1. The Base, Grounding

The feet, legs: steps, stances, kicks, and locomotion used in both athletic and classic styles of Nia. Stances are movements where both feet or one foot stays in contact with the floor, freezing in place for a period of time. As you go into and come out of stances you gain precision, control, and balance; all components for developing and maintaining power and strength. Stances provide the opportunity to powerfully express postural strength, balance, and stability. Steps are rhythmic combinations of foot work where one foot is always leaving the ground.

2. Energy Flow

A balanced flow of energy combines vertical and horizontal alignment. Shift body weight versus dropping it, and use a smile line to move, ground, stay centered, and cultivate energy.

3. Moving Through Space

Three planes and levels, low, middle, and high plane movement; working with speeds, contracting and expanding joints and muscles to move energy.

4. Feeling and Expressing

Discover your own body language and ways of moving. Make choices that take you into places of love and joy, comfort and ease. The body is a feeling organism that responds to love and joy. Movement finds its source at the center of the emotional, feeling being. The art of any expressive movement transcends technique and science, and is an expression of your very own personality. Moment to moment, expressive
movement is an opening, an unveiling, a manifestation of you. Uninhibited movement offers you the opportunity to express who you are as you create.

5. The Core of The Body: Head, Chest, and Pelvis

Generating movements from the center, the tan tien, located two inches below your navel between the front and the back of your body. Activating the abdominal muscles by using the entire trunk, your breath, the chest, and head. When your pelvis is free, the spine moves and increases ease and energy to improve performance.

6. Creative Arm and Hand Expressions

What stimulates movement of the arms is connecting to the emotional feelings and responding with gesture. This is the safest and most effective way to build upper body strength and definition.

7. Form and Freedom; the Balance Between Masculine and Feminine

Freedance and structured movement address the duality of masculine and feminine movement in choreography and create an energetically balanced workout. Some benefits are improved sensory awareness, a balanced and healthy nervous system, a powerful breathing and circulation system, a balanced and integrated emotional body, a logical, imaginative, and resilient mind, a graceful gait, integrated posture, and a harmonized body, emotional self, mind, and spirit.

III. The Practice

1. The Way of Nia

Personalized, masculine and feminine, soft and hard, linear and circular, interactive, whole, expressive, energetic and meditative, dynamic, organic, natural, practical, loving and compassionate; nurturing, athletic, classic, supportive, adaptable, fun, relaxing, conscious, grounded, sensitive, sensory, visual, symbolic, sacred, intentional, purposeful, focused, creative, and explosively wild.

2. Guidance

Share what you feel. Honestly communicate by being in the moment. Teaching fitness is a relationship between you and yourself, and between the student and the teacher where both the feeling and thinking body, the logical and imaginative mind, and expressive being become integrated. It is a relationship that becomes an art of communicating to help individuals develop their potential. It addresses the needs of all levels of fitness, provides three choices and intensity levels, as well as a variety of movement choices to support personalization. Infuse relaxation into every move to establish a quality of ease within every action. Relaxation establishes grounding and supports moving from center, regardless of the speed or intensity level. Use imagery, visualization, and sensory language to stimulate systemic movement. Offer loving guidance to help people create their own resilient and flexible boundaries. Love is the foundation for growth that replaces punishment with pleasure. Use words and phrases that bring the student into their body, that connect them to their own experience. Guide rather than command, becoming sensitive to the words and phrases you choose. Offer students time to reframe and personalize movements. Guide students to feel and explore, putting them in charge of making their own choices and decisions. Help them blend conscious thought (mindfulness) with the unending possibilities and actions of the body. Elicit sensory awareness by incorporating images, words, and phrases into your vocabulary.

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