

Green Science – for the Body

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Fad-based exercise programs are plentiful, but clinical, research-based programs are in dearth. That's why so many Southern Californians and others are welcoming the science-based technique called Restorative Exercise with open arms. Developed by a biomechanist named Katy Santiago, the program consists of movement and postures that feel a bit like yoga and a bit like physical therapy. These exercises reset the musculoskeletal state of the body for movement without pain, not something that a lot of people over 30 have experienced in a while.

"I look back and I can see the turning point for me. I was working at a fitness center in Northern California", starts Santiago as we visit in the sun-filled Ventura, CA office of Wellness Retreats of California - in which she is a partner owner and practitioner. "The center had athletes and regular people alike, training there and working out. Training people day in and day out I began to see people as lines and angles. When you see movement in that way, similarities start jumping out at you. People with similar injuries walked the same, they stood the same, they wore their shoes down in the same places and they had biomechanical habits that were so easy to cluster just by watching their gait pattern. I got a bit of a reputation for guru-ism for being able to assess damage quickly after watching a person simply walk in to meet me, but actually, I was just observing what the science tells you." Most biomechanists are scientists working in research - they don't teach the physics of movement and the body. And Santiago was hell-bent on developing a practicum. Soon, Santiago opened a little 800 sq ft studio where the landlord and limping phone installation technician were her first and loyal customers.

"Word of mouth grew that facility", she tells. "You touch one person and they bring in their husbands, children- the degrees of connection became deep." Soon, the tiny facility was bursting at the seams and within a year, Katy was looking for a bigger space; and her client base has grown 400% in the two years since, as people clamor for the information and particularly the patented method she teaches. "There's a whole middle ground of knowledge that people need to address before starting what is traditionally called a fitness program. You're running, boxing, studying karate – and you are misplacing the gravitational force that operates with your body to make it operate against your body. 'Fit' is not health. Health is being pain free. You should be trying to get healthy first."

"You have to ask yourself, why are both those who exercise and those who don't in pain? We have people strengthening their weaknesses! If you don't have the platform to move correctly and if you haven't restored first, then you have a tougher time getting to 'fit'. People are trying to become well but they don't have the right tools. We're strength-training our bodies using motor habits that damage our bodies. And we as a species sit so much – we weren't made to sit so much. We literally don't have the strength to stand because we don't do it. "

“We humans have anthropometric dimensions, which are the lengths of your bone parts- wrist to shoulder socket; the length and girth of your femur, etc, and you can’t change those. But you can change the way you use those parts – so that you get the most leverage to walk, take a swing at a tennis ball, or rise from a kneeling position.”

Katy’s understanding of the base level from which the reconditioning of the body had to be approached has attracted plenty of attention. Notably, was when the young scientist was asked by the comeback kids in sound shoe design, Earth Shoe, Inc., to be their Biomechanics Consultant.

“Katy has a wonderful way of explaining the complex physics of the human body and relating it to our everyday life experiences.”, according to Vern Aisner, Director of Marketing at Earth®. “Her unique perspective as an expert in restorative exercise and biomechanics has helped us to understand the science behind health benefits of wearing Earth shoes.”

“My partner in Wellness Retreats, Donna, said it first – but it was so true, it just resonated in lectures and sessions I teach,” ends Katy, “Restorative Exercise is green science for the body because it teaches you the best, long term way to use your body for its greatest efficiency.” It’s sustainable living for very important resource – the physical you.”

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In her newer space, a much larger facility, Santiago has created a training program for Restorative Exercise Specialists. The program graduated eight specialists in 2007 and has a full cadre of students now in session. Private sessions are a mainstay. Katy’s Restorative Exercise is presented exclusively in retreat with Wellness Retreats of California. For more information, contact Mary at Restorative Exercise Institute, 2409 East Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA, 93001. Phone: (805) 642-9900. Mary@venturabalance.com.