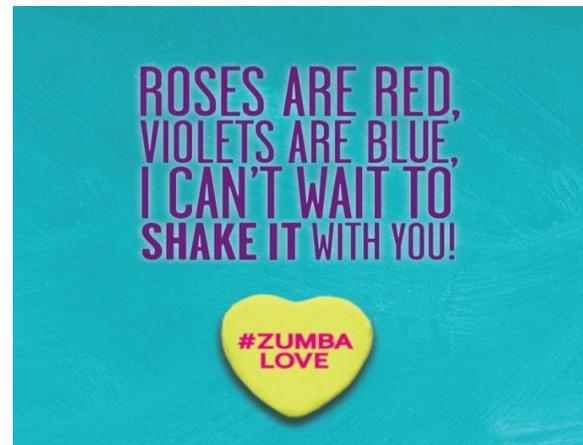


The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Ditch the workout & join the party!!! Inspired by the dance and music of Latin America, Zumba isn't your typical aerobics class. Claiming to take the "work" out of working out, Zumba classes feel more like a party than a cardio class. But even though you may feel like you're at the club, you're still getting all the same benefits of a demanding exercise session, including calorie and fat burning, strength training and improved cardio vascular fitness. Zumba was born in the 1990's, quite by accident when Columbian trainer Alberto "Beto" Perez reportedly forgot to bring his regular aerobics music to the group exercise class he was leading. With no music and a class to teach he grabbed some Latin albums from his car. As he ditched the constraints of a traditional cardio class and danced like he would at a club well his class followed along, sweating to salsa and merengue beats, and loving it. It was an instant hit. Traditional aerobics class is like a paint by numbers. Repetitive and predictable. Zumba on the other hand is line-dancing on steroids, both communal and completely open to creative interpretation. And most importantly its non-judgmental. No wonder Zumba fitness has quickly grown in to a global franchise. Zumba is performed by more than 12 million people at 110,000 sites, in 125 countries around the world.

I personally love music and dancing (go figure). My heart starts pumping and my feet start moving every time I hear a beat and, as it turns out, it is evident in that very beat that's thumping in our chest. It isn't just the Latin-inspired music that gets the heart going (although that can't hurt). The moves and routines in a Zumba workout range from low to high intensity providing a near perfect workout for your heart. This exercise in disguise makes reaching your target heart rate much easier than standard workouts. It does this by using songs that range from 120 -160 beats per minute. The music is fast upbeat and contagious, allowing it to feel natural to move around quickly while building up your aerobic endurance subconsciously. As we know, the heart is where it all begins, and a healthy heart makes everything else work better.

Zumba classes are an event as much as a workout and previous dance experience is not necessary. Everyone can join in the fun. Zumba is suitable for all fitness levels as you are free to choose how much intensity to put in the movements. Listen to your body and take a break or a sip of water whenever needed. Zumba isn't a one size fits all fitness solution. There are different classes to choose from at varying levels of difficulty. Standard Zumba, Zumba gold which is tailored to an older exerciser dealing with osteoarthritis or knee injuries. Zumatonic for kids. Aquazumba (Zumba in a pool), perfect for people who need to be exceptionally careful about their movements as water reduces impact and minimizes joint stress. Zumatoning incorporates weight training into its choreography. Focusing on movements that encourage muscular strength, endurance and toning with more simple dance moves. Because Zumba is based on music and dance, it seems to speak a universal language that people of all ages can relate to.



Zumba's hip swinging, stomach gyrating movements increase core strength and balance. This prevents participants from having to get on the floor and do crunches. Who wants to do that? Many routines and movements in Zumba are designed to keep your abs and core toned and trimmed. You get to do movements that target the upper and lower abs, obliques and lower back, thereby stabilizing your core and giving you better posture, form and balance.

Compare Zumba with running, (not that there is anything wrong with running) for example, say you have a tough day at work, your kids are driving you over the edge, or God forbid you have an argument with your spouse, your attention is on those stressful thoughts. So, you go for a jog to clear your mind. However, because running is a simple repetitive motion, you set your mind on automatic. (especially on a treadmill) Allowing your attention to wander freely. Unfortunately, what often happens is that your thoughts retract back on to your problems. In other words, even though your body gets a good workout, you won't necessarily feel mentally refreshed after going for a jog. However, on the other hand when you attend a Zumba class the opposite occurs. You get a break from reality, a great workout, which is a given, and because you are paying so much attention to the instructor to follow the moves and feeling the music, you don't have a chance to think about anything else. Your attention is fully focused on the moment. Its like watching a great movie. When it's interesting, you can't think about anything else. So many of my participants say they feel less stressed, more relaxed and mentally refreshed after attending a Zumba class.

Workouts don't have to be a chore. In fact, workouts don't have to feel like workouts at all. Zumba is a fun social dance party, and since Zumba is a group activity, you'll be able to meet and interact with interesting, fun vibrant people. Essentially being welcomed into a social situation any time you step into a class. Zumba is the perfect workout for anyone of any fitness level who wants to connect to other people, no matter how shy or outgoing you are. The Zumba community is especially warm and welcoming to newcomers. Some participants that have been coming for months still pivot left when everyone goes right and, no one raises an eyebrow. The best part is that you don't need a stitch of equipment. Come as you are, no fancy uniform. Whatever you pulled out of your closet, plus a supportive bra and a pair of running shoes and your good to go. Boredom is just not an option. It's your opportunity to do your ugliest, all-over-the-place happy dance with zero pretense and individual style and expression are strongly encouraged. You never know, the instructor might even make you sing, clap, or "WOOOHOOO" along.

Increased aerobic threshold, more stamina, improved core strength, balance and muscle tone, less body fat, and lower stress levels, makes it hard

to deny that the benefits of this dance party cannot be out done. So, put down your phones, get over yourselves, leave your inhibitions at the door and join me and let the rhythms move you so you can shake it all the way to a healthier and happier you.

As with every fitness program talk to your health care provider before joining a class if you've been inactive, have any medical issues, or take any medications to be sure that Zumba is right for you.

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