

EXERCISE YOUR BODY AND YOUR MIND

We all know how important it is for seniors to decide on a regular exercise program and stick with it. The problem is often how to find an exercise program that you enjoy. Working out on a stationary bicycle or treadmill can be boring. Many people would look forward to walking or other activity more if they had an exercise buddy, but can't seem to find one readily. Social isolation can be a real problem for some seniors.

If exercise seems like hard work to you, or too boring, or too lonely; square dancing could be an ideal choice. This type of healthful exercise gives you more than just an aerobic workout. It also exercises your mind and does so in a pleasantly social way. This makes square dancing a truly holistic activity, taking place along three dimensions: Physical, Mental and Social. This is why square dancing has been referred to as one of the most complete exercises you can do.

Square dancers learn to listen, concentrate and react. Some have compared this process to putting a puzzle together or finding a solution to a particularly interesting problem. In fact its often this mental aspect that gets dancers "hooked" on square dancing and motivates them to continue learning and advancing their skills year after year. Many of the best square dancers are seniors and they use dancing to help keep themselves sharp mentally and physically.

Because square dancing is a multi-dimensional activity it is more likely that both members of a couple can find it satisfying. Perhaps he enjoys the mental challenge while she likes the romantic aspect or just having a good chat during the breaks. If one partner says "I can't dance they will often be surprised to discover that they can square dance and have FUN doing it. This is because square dancing does not really require any fancy footwork or any particular gracefulness. Women often say they had to persuade their husband to go the first time, but after that, he became the one who never wanted to miss a dance.

Square dancing can also be a great depression buster. Instead of being at home watching TV in the dark, you're in the bright lights, amidst swirling color and music, and surrounded by smiles. For two hours you can't worry about the house, money, or the state of the nation. Why? Because square dancing is totally absorbing. If you start to think about anything other than what the caller is telling you to do, you'll mess up. You quickly learn to put all other thoughts aside.

Square dancing is a moderately strenuous activity comparable to a brisk walk or a game of tennis. Most people who are in reasonably good health can do square dancing. However you should check with your doctor in advance if you have any doubts about your ability to engage in this activity safely.

Dr. Donald Rosenberg, Medical Director of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, supports square dancing and has discussed its benefits. These include help with weight

control, physical conditioning and cardiovascular fitness. Square dancing has been recommended for diabetes and cardiac problems among others. In a past article Dr. Rosenberg cautioned: "Cardiac patients must have been through a cardiac rehabilitation program and reached a Phase III or IV level of fitness before commencing square dance exercise".

Many physicians are looking for a way to increase patient's long-term compliance with their prescriptions for a positive exercise lifestyle. Square dancing, once begun, is quite likely to become a lifelong activity. Another factor in compliance is cost. In the Charleston, West Virginia area cost is generally \$3.00 - \$4.00 per night per person. Local clubs usually offer free trial lessons for the first two or three weeks of their new dancer classes. Nationally square dancing costs about \$312 per year based on a twice a week schedule. In contrast bowling costs about \$720 a year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 303-233-1550 OR 303-933-2037