



Ditch the workout; join the party'

Thursday, January 01, 2009

By **Dustin Brady** dbrady@sunnews.com

Brunswick Sun Times

Finding time to both exercise and go dancing can be tough. So why not just combine the two?

Zumba, an exercise program based on Latin dance moves, does just that. Its motto, "Ditch the workout. Join the party," sums up its fun dance atmosphere.

Tammie Costa of Brunswick joined the party a month ago through Dynamic Fitness in Strongsville and has been hooked ever since.

"It lets you be kind of uninhibited for a little bit," she said. "If you're coming to look pretty, it's not going to work out. But if you want to dance and have a good time, it is a lot of fun."

Dynamic Fitness Zumba instructor Dana Urbanski said most people join her Zumba class for the same reason Costa did -- because it looks fun.

"You just get caught up in the music. It's so much fun, that you don't feel like you are working out," Urbanski said. "You know those Latin dance movies where everyone is having a good time? That's what we're trying to capture here."

But just because it's fun doesn't mean that it doesn't provide a good workout. Urbanski said that Zumba can burn up to 1,000 calories an hour.

In Spanish, "zumba" connotes the buzzing of a bee or moving fast. The class's frantic pace explains its name.

Dynamic Fitness's Zumba class lasts 45 minutes, and participants are moving the whole time. Even though Urbanski has been teaching dance for the last five years, she still finds herself sweating by the end of a class.

However, Urbanski said that the class is perfect for people at all levels of fitness because participants can dance with as much intensity as they want to. While it is easy enough for beginners to pick it up in the first class, some dances are so fast that participants are just encouraged to do what they can to keep up.

All that crazy dancing tends to make its participants, especially those new to Zumba, feel foolish. Urbanski makes sure to encourage her students and keep the atmosphere light.

"I tell them that we're not going to be in the next Britney Spears video, so just have fun," she said.

Zumba is different from other aerobic classes because of its freedom. While it does not have any specific "moves," it incorporates elements of dances like salsa, merengue, samba and cumbia. Instructors are also free to incorporate their own moves into songs. Urbanski said that she likes to add a lot of ab workouts.

She said that she tries to incorporate some hip hop into her classes as well. In the middle of one workout session, she took a break from the fast-paced Latin songs for a Christina Aguilera number.

"Technically, she has a South American heritage, so it's okay," she joked.

Bryan McIntosh, owner of Dynamic Fitness, is encouraged by the success of Zumba. He said that the class is doing exactly what he hoped it would do when he added it in May.

"In this stressful time, with the economy the way it is, we just wanted to make fitness fun for people," he said.

©2009 Sun News

© 2009 cleveland.com All Rights Reserved.