

I thought I hated exercise. My dad shoved it down my throat for ten years, so subsequently I spent ten years refusing to do anything remotely resembling exercise. Ultimate Frisbee? Skiing? Sounds like fun, but it just might be exercise in disguise; can't have any of that, can we? Stubborn, I mean I was truly stubborn about the issue. Fat Girls Aerobics changed all that. Not my father's exercise, by a long shot. Officially, it is called AbunDANCE, but I've always called it Fat Girls Aerobics or FGA. The class is for women size 16 and up. Big strong women. Women who take up space. Women my size. FGA changed my life. For one hour, three times a week, a whole bunch of big huge women wearing lycra/cotton bodysuits and leggings in front of a full-length mirror, dancing our hearts out to Ferron, Bonnie Raitt, Neville Bros, Aretha Franklin, and more. It feels so amazing.

I realize it is not exercise I hate, so much as the attitude that the entire exercise industry seems to uphold. I used to walk into Gold's Gym and I could just feel how much everyone hated fat. They were trying to rid themselves of every ounce of fat, and as a fat woman, I felt like the very embodiment of everything they hated. That doesn't make it easy to want to exercise. And it certainly made Gold's Gym a place to avoid. But now that I've tried FGA, I'm stunned. I love exercise, it makes me happy, I get high off of either the endorphins or the sweat or both. OK, maybe my dad was sort-of right, this is fun.

When I first started going, I realized how numb my body was from the neck down. Chaya, the teacher, would say move your hips like this, or shake your shoulders this way, and I literally could not make my body do what I wanted. I felt frustrated. I couldn't move my arms one way and my legs another; I just felt so lost from my body. Every time Chaya would say, do what you can, listen to your body, get your feet right first, just do what feels good, this class is for you. So I did what I could. I felt

so inspired watching Chaya; she's a large woman and she can move so Hot. I thought, I want to do that. I kept trying. I learned that it really didn't matter that other women seemed to pick up the steps in about two seconds, and that I didn't know my right foot from my left foot, and I couldn't move my rib cage without my hips if my life depended on it; none of that really mattered. I just kept going, and persisting, and learning. Learning something by moving, instead of learning by reading a book. For me, the class was about my falling in love with my own body. And I did. I love watching myself in the mirror. I love seeing all the other women. There was such a great variety of women, all over size 16 and all so different. Each class felt like a celebration of being large. At the end of the class, Chaya would tell us to point at ourselves in the mirror and say, "I love myself especially the way I am." I have never encountered an exercise class that made me feel good about

the way I am. Every time I try other aerobics classes, it's a burn-that-fat attitude.

As I fell in love with my body, I found that I was having alot more sex. And doing FGA made me want more sex. I never knew exercise could do that.

And I was happier; the few times I didn't go to the class, I found myself getting depressed. The class actually became the highest priority in my life, my new-found religion. Something about the smell of sweat made me want to ask every woman in the class out on a date.

Pheromones rule my world. I like moving and dancing and playing and just being with fat women. It's great being in a place where fat is the norm; that hardly ever happens in my life.

So that's my rave.

FGA. Nothing else quite like it.

AbunDANCE classes are every Wednesday at 6:00 pm and Saturday at 11:00 am in SF. For more info, call (415) 337-6379.

RAVE
By

DEBBIE ANN WERTHEIM