

Unique perspective draws perspiration at Fitness FX

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Focusing on eccentric movements, Manning offers neat routine



An Essentrics workout at Fitness FX in Halifax is a unique workout session that focuses on eccentric body movements in order to help regain flexibility. (ESSENTRICS)

"Weekend warriors!" "Beast Mode!" "No pain, no gain!" "Sweat is fat crying!" . . . and additional fitness-related clichéd Facebook quotes. No matter how you stack it, sprint it, swim it or squat it, the "push to your limits" fitness trend doesn't seem to be going away.

Remember the good-old days of tracksuit-clad trainers reminding us to simply "Keep Fit and Have Fun?" When you could participate in a workout without legitimately being concerned if you'd ever see the light of another day again?

Maybe you're currently icing your knee and TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) machine-ing your shoulder.

Maybe you're a guilty member of the "perhaps I'm overdoing it" fitness community, or you've earned many a participant ribbon in several activities and are fairly certain every time you sign up for another event your physiotherapist sees dollar signs.

So no doubt you can understand the sweat culture and that addictive feeling of accomplishment when the class is over and you're somehow still alive.

A perfect time to discover "Essentrics."

Pause: Vocabulary lesson.

Most people are aware of the "concentric" movement — when you do a bicep curl, that is a concentric contraction movement. The muscle shortens to achieve the curl.

On the flip side, literally, you have your eccentric movement — the muscle contracts while lengthening. Get it? Awesome. Knowledge is power.

Essentrics (not a typo) is just as you suspect, a class that focuses on eccentric movements. These movements, according to Laurissa Manning who teaches Essentrics at Fitness FX in Halifax, offer a counterbalance to any training routine.

"Essentrics has a ballet-inspired piece and the flow of tai-chi, with some of the benefits of physiotherapy movements," said Manning. With enough fitness instructor certifications to wallpaper a room, she happened upon Essentrics after putting herself through years of competitive kickboxing and boxing training, not to mention teaching and taking kettlebell. All of this left her with debilitating hip and shoulder pain.

"After a few months of Essentrics I had regained full range of motion in my shoulder, so for me the benefits that I've seen with Essentrics have been unbelievable."

Explaining Essentrics as a stretching and flexibility class doesn't give it justice — you really have to try it to understand its benefits.

Donna Forbes agrees. Now 53, Forbes battles joint pain on a daily basis.

Very active and competitive during her high school and university days, this breast cancer survivor celebrated her 30s and 40s with triathlons and a half-marathon.

"Looking back, I realize I was working the same muscle groups and am now having issues because I wasn't balanced," Forbes said. After discovering Essentrics two months ago, Forbes is elated with the results.

"After years of pain I can finally put my arms over my head."

With the hope of being able to return to running, Forbes is confident that Essentrics, "the best class I've ever gone to," will get her back on the road.

Speaking from experience, Manning understands it's hard to trust that you don't have to leave an exercise class by crawling out on your hands and knees, dripping in sweat, to know you've had a good workout.

"It's very important to rebalance the body especially if you want to continue to work hard in other areas," she said. "Whether you're a weekend warrior or a professional athlete, your body needs the rest."

Wanna try it?

You can join Laurissa for an Essentric class at Fitness FX (6330 Quinpool Rd. in Halifax).