

Moving forward

I feel a subtle smile form on my lips, warmth fills my mind and body and I am ready to tackle my day. It is 10.15am on Friday morning and I have just finished my fourth exercise session with Andrea (APT) for the week. I feel amazing and reflect on the path that regular movement has taken me on.

Two years ago I was starting to experience the impacts of poor posture and a lack of structured exercise. I had developed bursitis in my feet; I had a very stiff lower back and was finding it painful to walk. I was about to turn 48 and the thought of deteriorating mobility was terrifying me. Although I had never really had a regular exercise regime, horse riding, walking the dogs and gardening had kept me rational over the years and with limited movement I was wondering how I was going to stay well balanced in the future.

It was then one of those chances of luck that led me to Andrea. I had been doing pottery for a couple of terms, hoping to find a new hobby after my lifelong passion of horse riding was no longer an option, as I was living in Richmond, working part-time and looking after two primary school aged boys. With pottery obviously not being my thing and finishing up for the term, my instructor enquired about what I would try next. I advised I really needed to do some exercise. She told me about an amazing lady Andrea, whom she had gone to school with, who ran these fabulous exercise classes in Richmond. I contacted Andrea and through her warmth, friendliness and interest in me, I was motivated to attend my first group exercise session of bodyART, which just happened to be down the end of my street.

Feeling anxious and concerned about the pain in my feet I stood on my mat waiting for the session to start. Initially Andrea spoke to the group about bodyART and then the session started. I was on the ground and slowly I started to move and breath, starting down low and then standing and moving up and down and stretching sideways all the while being stimulated by an amazing soundtrack. Then the cardio section of the workout came, which although challenging there were options so I could chose a level that suited me. All the time Andrea gave constant cues to assist with correct posture and breathing during each movement. I was feeling wonderful and whilst my feet hurt it felt amazing to be moving. By the end of the session I was floating, felt fantastic and excited by the prospect that I had found a form of exercise that suited me.

Initially I attended one session a week, until the end of term, the following term I signed up for two sessions a week and I also attended a few one on one Personal Training sessions with Andrea to help with my posture and technique. I was really starting to feel great, the pain in my feet had dramatically decreased and I was feeling stronger both physically and mentally, so the following term I signed up for four sessions a week. This also included Functional Fitness, which includes an exercise circuit, with a core strength and stretching session at the end. This gave me more opportunity to build strength, work on my posture and keep my feet moving.

Despite feeling amazing I was still experiencing lower back stiffness and always had trouble getting out of bed in the morning and getting off the couch if I had been sitting for too long. The thought that I may need a new mattress crossed my mind, but I also felt that it might have to do with the way I held myself. I spoke to Andrea and decided to have another stint of one on one sessions to work on my posture. With Andrea I learnt how to hold my body from the ground up, starting with my feet, then knees, pelvis, core, shoulders, neck and head. I also learnt to straighten and stretch my back – which feels wonderful. It took a while, but with the constant little cues that Andrea gave me coming into my head, which in turn caused slight adjustments to how I stood, my back stiffness slowly disappeared (no new mattress required!).

With my overall wellbeing greatly improved I was determined to make some more positive changes in my life. I have always loved gardening, but previously did not have the capacity to pursue it as a job. However with a renewed confidence when the opportunity to do a course in horticulture became available I took it and I am now in the process of pursuing something that I have always wanted to do, but just did not know how to.

In the past I had visions of the person I wanted to be. I always wanted to be one of those people who exercised regularly and worked outside with nature and now that is what I nearly am. My first step towards this was to find a way to nurture myself and get moving. Andrea's amazing ability to keep each class interesting and challenging and meet my individual needs as I have progressed has kept me on this path. My feet feel amazing, my lower back is no longer stiff and I am now feeling strength develop in my core, shoulders and back that I have never experienced before. I have met a wonderful group of people from my local area and after every session I feel rejuvenated and free, both in my body and mind. Andrea is really one of those unique individuals who have the mix just right to install confidence, to encourage and give kindness and support to keep you moving forward.

Sharon July 2019