

GO FROM 'MONKEY MIND' TO 'SUPER BRAIN' WITH NIA!

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Last month, I presented a 'user's manual' for taking care of your body the Nia way! But The Nia Technique conditions MORE than just your body! This holistic, integrated movement practice also conditions and stimulates your MIND by engaging conscious awareness, directed focus, mind/body synchronized actions and neurological cross patterning, imagery, meta-perception (how one perceives oneself), etc.

Many in Western societies, with our constant connection to TV, smart phones, iPads, and laptops, are training their brains to constantly be 'entertained', seeking stimulation outside of our SELF, rarely taking time away to 'unplug' from digital media and 'plug IN' to our own inner landscape. We see it all the time! Runners, cyclists, gym-goers mentally "check out" during their exercise activities with TV's, texting on smartphones, rocking out to music or being taken on a mental journey via digital books on their iPods to distract them from the act of working out...detaching from their body and the multitude of sensations that happen as the body exerts, conditions, and trains itself. In other words, many people go into "monkey-mind" mode, or as Deepak Chopra calls it, 'baseline brain' ..where mind is unsettled, unfocused, and unconscious, merely fulfilling the tasks of everyday life.

Nia offers a better way of moving, living, and truly BEing in a body! With buzzwords like "neuroplasticity", "Super-Brain", 'integrative', 'holistic', etc., Nia is THE wellness program that delivers health and balance to both your physical brain and your conscious mind!

But much like the credo, "use it or lose it", our brains are designed to 'think', be aware, focused, and engaged. When we fail to exercise those abilities, we lose it.

Here are 9 ways that Nia conditions the mind and develops the body-mind connection:

1. AWARENESS:

Nia invites, engages, and stimulates conscious awareness of being IN one's body by paying attention to body sensations...not just in class, but ALL the time! Let's do it now! Right now, as you read this blog post, direct your attention to your feet. Sense your feet and notice what you notice! What sensations are you aware of in your feet? (ex. I sense my feet inside my shoes; I sense pressure as my feet stand on the floor; I sense my toes wiggling; etc.) Now, sense your spine...How about your hands...breathe....elbows...and so on. This feedback loop between body (sensation) and mind (awareness) communicates to your 75+trillion cells that you are 'in there', consciously aware of your body. Awareness trains the mind towards 'presence'...being HERE now.

2. VISUALIZATION, IMAGERY, and IMAGINATION:

Nia stimulates the mind by pairing suggested visual images with movement to trigger authentic, functional movement and conditioning the imagination. Notice the difference in lifting your arms out to the sides and above your head as you inhale, and lower your arms as you exhale. Now, imagine your arms as wings..lift and lower your 'wings'...do you notice a difference in the quality and sensation of the movement? Now, walk around the room...then, imagine 'stepping stones', or a HOT FLOOR... did the quality of your movement change as you engaged this imagery? This pairing of visual imagery with physical movement engages MORE of your body...and has you moving from 'the inside-out"! It resembles the way children move and play, stimulating creativity, functionality, and authenticity.

3. RIGHT/LEFT BRAIN ACTIVATION:

The human brain has two hemispheres, the right and the left, each with different capacities and functions. The left brain, manages language, logic, critical thinking, numbers, reasoning, linear/forceful/precise movements while the right brain governs creativity, intuition, imagery, color, expression and interpretation of emotions, fluid/continuous movements, etc. Nia engages BOTH the right and left brain by utilizing both linear and fluid movements, choreographed patterns and freeform/creative movements, cross-patterning left and right sides of the body, and more to balance and optimize the functioning and performance of the two hemispheres towards "Super-Brain" status

4. WITNESS:

Nia encourages participants to 'witness'/observe themselves, noticing (without judgment) their thoughts, choices, actions, habits/tendencies, etc. This practice conditions insight, self-acceptance, and non-judgment, igniting a different way to perceive self and others with respect, compassion, and love. Do you witness what you tell yourself about your body? What are the messages you give it? Do you focus on your self-perceived 'flaws' or do you celebrate your body and self? Do you focus on what your body can't do...or do you celebrate what your body CAN do? These meta-perceptions are important in training your mind for optimal, whole-being functioning!

5. NEUROPLASTICITY and TRAINING YOUR BRAIN:

Nia shakes things up...breaking up the 'ruts' of neuropathways, creating NEW paths for maximized usage of the brain and conscious mind. As we witness our thoughts, choices, actions, etc., noticing certain tendencies...Nia invites us to 'CHANGE!!" If I notice that I always lead with my right foot when I move...I can choose to change and lead with my left! If I tend to dance to the rhythm of music, I can choose to experiment with dancing to the melody! If I set the table a certain way, I can choose to change it to a different way! Every time I choose a different way of doing things, I condition the neuroplasticity of my brain, thereby staving off brain degenerative diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's!

6. FOCUS:

Every Nia class begins with a focus...something you will be aware of, observe, experiment with...as you move your body! Having a set focus throughout the Nia class experience, ensures that you are IN your body, consciously aware, and purposefully directing all of your movement choices and actions, thereby keeping you safe, diminishing the chances for injury, as you move.

7. MOVING MEDITATION:

Nia's way of using directed focus, breath-work, consciousness, and mindful presence in the NOW, gives every Nia experience the sensation of being a 'movement meditation', achieving an alpha-state relaxation response, sensed as a calmer, saner way to move, live, and BE in the body, while countering the fight/flight stress response that gorges the body with streams of cortisol, inflammation, and stress.

8. MENTAL HEALTH:

It is a well-documented fact that exercise helps to balance brain chemistry, positively impacting mental health. The Nia Technique delivers MORE than just 'exercise'...Nia's holistic approach to addressing the body AND mind with awareness, insight, positive messaging, presence, healing music, gratitude, self-direction, meaningfulness, and many other tools for transformation...positively impacts mental health, balanced brain chemistry, and overall positive regard for self and others.

9. CURIOSITY + BEGINNER'S MIND:

Nia encourages every participant to enter the experience with 'beginner's mind'...a state of consciousness to become fully present in the moment, leaving behind past learning, as well as expectation towards outcomes, entering the current experience with 'new eyes' and empty, readiness to experience, practice, learn and grow, creating a sense of relaxation, consciousness, and curiosity about the experience.

So, there you have it! Nine tools that The Nia Technique delivers to ensure, not only a healthy, vital body...but a razor-sharp, calm mind and 'Super Brain'!

"Want more? Bring Mia to YOUR community for experiential workshops and master classes...or consider taking the Nia White Belt Training to actualize the Nia Practice into your body and life! Learn more!"