

# EXERCISE ME HAPPY....

Because not every sweat session should be aimed at losing inches off the waist and toning the arms. Sometimes, we need to exercise just to be grateful for our body and to smile about the little things in life. Here are four places in Dubai where you can find your happiness



Below: Aerial artist Leanne Gerrish stretches it out at The Warehouse Gym



## AERIAL HOOPS

Aerial hoops classes are held at The Warehouse Gym on Umm Sugeim Road. Phone +971 4 323 2323 to enquire

When you're asked to put your trust in a single hoop connected to the ceiling while you hang upside down using your body weight to twirl in ways you never imagined, all in the name of exercise, you know you're part of something very special. Aerial hoops class is like the love child of gymnastics and circus – it can teach you how to do the splits and leave you in absolute awe. All you're requested to do is leave your inhibitions and fear at home. "Aerial hoops classes or learning any such form of circus skills is a challenge, yes. But it is way more special than just slugging it at the gym or copying someone at Body Pump," explains Emma Walker, owner of Polercise Dubai who teaches at The Warehouse Gym. "This is a movement-based training, best to tone those inner thighs, calves, lower abs, back, and triceps." Emma says women need to give this circus-based class a try because of the feeling that follows after the hour-long class. "When I see a woman accomplish a new suspended move, she really relishes in that feeling because it's all hers. She's achieved it all on her own. And that's the moment of joy we all want to be in after we exercise, isn't it?"

## SALSA DANCING

Ric Banks teaches salsa, kizomba, rueda and bachata from his studio in Media City. Phone +971 5 5620 2814 to enquire

Wake up. Go to work. Stress over deadlines. Come home. Make dinner. Check Facebook. Go to bed. The daily grind of the same routine can get so tedious, especially when you have nothing to look forward to. So how can you break this cycle and do things that actually make you happy? Enrol in a Latin dance class that doesn't just boost your physical fitness but also helps release

feel-good hormones in the brain. "There's something about the music that lifts the spirits. The happy tunes of Latin music are incomparable," says Ric Bants, Dubai-based Latin dance instructor. Ric continues to explain how salsa, in particular, is the best form of dance for those who lead stressful lives. "You will never see a salsa dancer who's not got a smile on their face when they're dancing. Salsa is all about disconnecting from everything that's been holding you back all day and letting go," he explains. "It's the healthiest form of addiction."

Aside from all the joy that comes from grooving and swaying, one hour of salsa dancing can burn up to 600 calories. Not including the calories from all the smiling and laughing you'll be doing. And if you're too nervous about entering a room full of strangers and getting partnered up with someone for a bit of *Dirty Dancing* action, then Ric has some advice for you. "From break-ups to battling depression, salsa has the power to change your life. And you know what, if you can walk, you can dance, so don't tell me otherwise," he claims. You heard it here first!

## TAI CHI AND QIGONG PRACTICE

Tai chi and qigong classes are held at Golden Eagle School of Martial Arts. Classes will begin from 1 September. Phone +971 4 447 7451 to enquire

If you are new to Dubai and already feeling anxious thanks to the fast-paced intensity that comes with residing in this Emirate, then you need to introduce tai chi and qigong – both ancient Chinese traditions – into your life. With a host of

health benefits that include reducing stress, improving flexibility and muscle strength and boosting stamina and agility, these martial arts techniques, when practiced regularly, can help control hypertension and mood swings. Tai chi and qigong are forms that involve a series of graceful, slow-paced movements accompanied by deep breathing. Each posture slowly flows into the next without a pause, focusing all the attention on the 'qi' of the body – the energy force that's said to flow through the body, and as per Chinese philosophy, tai chi unblocks and encourages a proper flow of this energy. "Tai chi is medication and meditation in motion," explains Dubai-based master John Duval, of the Golden Eagle School of Martial Arts. "The Chinese arts of tai chi and qigong began over 2,000 years ago and their health benefits abound

– from boosting the immune system, slowing the ageing process, and offering the most effective balance and coordination conditioning, for young and old alike."

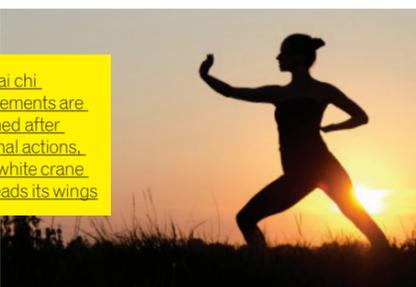
## ANTI GRAVITY YOGA

Classes are held at Fitness First Clubs at Beach Park Plaza, Motor City and The Meadows. Call 800 348 6377 to enquire

Call it aerial yoga, swing yoga or AntiGravity yoga, whatever you call it, it all boils down to the same thing – dangling from skeins of a silk hammock suspended from the ceiling, and of course, being insanely happy. AntiGravity yoga is the brainchild of gymnast and co-founder of Cirque du Soleil, Christopher Harrison, who started this unique form of yoga practice in 2007 in Manhattan. Eight

years on, this incredibly enjoyable form of fitness is taking the Middle East by storm. When suspended mid-air, AntiGravity yoga works your muscles in the most unfamiliar way, encouraging them to tone and relieve compression. The technique uses a fusion of about 40 per cent yoga with inputs of acrobatics, dance, gymnastic moves and Pilates, while the flying silk allows participants to travel freely between postures. Another reason why it's *Grazia's* current favourite form of yoga is because AntiGravity yoga helps the release of happy hormones – serotonin, endorphins, oxytocin, dopamine – so when you're inside the hammock, you block everything around you, laugh in your little cocoon and are incredibly aware of your mind, body and breath. Still not convinced? Know that Gwyneth Paltrow and Karlie Kloss are committed AntiGravity yogis.

All tai chi movements are named after animal actions, like white crane spreads its wings



Words: Shilika Arand. Photos: Getty Images, Stuart Gerrish, Supplied, Vita Prana Yoga Studio