

Finding Peace Within Power and Strength

Taryn Toomey's "the class" defies classification

By Christine Beal Dunst

When you can't classify a fitness method as yoga, mind/body, pilates, strength training, targeted muscle training, or cardio, you know it breaks the traditional boundaries.

I've been a yoga practitioner for over 15 years and a general enthusiast of the latest Barre, Tracy Anderson, and Physique 57 workouts, so I ventured to try Taryn Toomey's new fitness method, "the class," a wait-listed phenomena in Tribeca.

Toomey's concept of "the class" sprouted from her training in yoga and desire for a vigorous workout that maintained a mind-body connection, and her method has grown organically and spread through word of mouth over the past several years.

"the class" combines physicality with the concept of "clearing your space," something she acquired from a teacher and beloved mentor of hers, Mama Kia, who ran a Peruvian orphanage and inspired Toomey along her path and vision. Toomey let the concept marinate while experimenting in her gym with a few people. What does clearing your space mean?

As her method became more popular, Toomey, who formerly worked in fashion at companies like Ralph Lauren and Dior, couldn't nail a name to classify her vision, so "the class" is what stuck. "I really just didn't know how to classify it, and I purposely use lower-case letters so people wouldn't think I meant this class is the bomb. It's not about that," Toomey said in an interview.

'the class' Experience

I recently attended a special 90-minute session of "the class" hosted by the athletic apparel company Lululemon, as part of a larger fitness/yoga event located at the Chelsea Market.

There were over 100 attendees, and eagerness was in the air before the class started. I arrived after everyone had set up and the only mat left was smack dab in the center next to Toomey. I was intimidated by this, but my placement also gave me a unique vantage point, allowing me to feel not only how I experienced "the class" but also see how others did as well.

And it was a ride, or as Toomey likes to say before hand, "The wheels will come off after the first song."

We started off slow with breathing to ground us and set the rhythm, but it didn't take long to get into the burn and deliberate muscle-sculpting, which worked our quads, butts, and inner and outer thighs. The repetitive squats, thigh lifts, and pilates moves were punctuated bursts of cardio so intense that even the burpees came out. And as we worked, Toomey instructed us



Taryn Toomey's unique fitness workout, "the class" combines power and strength training with awareness of the mind-body connection.



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to "close your eyes and get inside."

With my muscles burning and my heart pumping, my mind started getting involved saying things like, "I can't do another squat...is she kidding?" This is when the cues from Toomey came into play and set this experience apart.

"Allow the flow to happen, change the way your mind talks to your body, and stay on it...IT'S HAPPENING," these words all spoke to me and helped me push through what felt like a hundred squats that I didn't think I could endure.

Toomey said later that she intentionally uses the cues to help people push their boundaries.

"The cues focus on taking you to the edge of pain and exhaustion, that point in your head that says, 'I can't, it's too much,' that is when you need to push through, to transform and change," she said.

Toomey doesn't prepare the cues in advance but rather "shuts her head off" and feels like she is speaking from a

deeper place she said.

And she inspires those in her session to dig deep and push ourselves beyond what we thought possible without feeling like we were being scolded. During the session my endorphins really kicked in as my heart and will found the strength to push through.

Motivation

Finding peace within power and strength was a theme throughout the practice but there was also a playful almost child-like enthusiasm. The energy in the room was magnetic and alive as participants fed off Toomey's remarkable light and strong energy. A live DJ added to the fun spinning tribal beats and old-school Rusted Root, along with other highlights like Cold Play and the Lumineers "Ho Hey."

Yelps, singing, even occasional screams and enthusiastic grunts gave added motivation, and at one point the entire class sang along with the refrain to, "I will wait for you" by Mumford and Sons.

The normal 75-minute classes don't have a live DJ, however, I think you'll definitely still get motivation from the playlists.

The session ended with a cool-down on our backs with our eyes closed and hands connected to our hearts, giving thanks for what the body provided us and what we gave to the practice.

I left feeling empowered, like I had accomplished something. The feeling reminded me how I felt after running my first 5K or finally being able to do a difficult yoga posture: exhausted, exhilarated, accomplished, and just peaceful.

I was also able to iden-

tify some of my attachments through noticing the "chatter in my mind," and "the class" reminded me that I can transcend these attachments. I will be back for more.

Class Options

Demand is high and waitlists are common for "the class," so Toomey is expanding the schedule and adding more teachers. She just added a 6:30 Tuesday class with a new teacher, Jaycee Gossett. Philanthropy and giving back

are central in Toomey's long-term vision: "Our end goal is to be an organization that also gives back to children and women to help them go into their place and help them breathe into their stuff," she said.

This down to earth fitness guru is bound to bring peace and strength to many. Toomey herself seems humbled by the fanfare her classes have received and is extremely gracious and humble.

Toomey's studio is located at

291 Broadway, in Tribeca NYC. Classes are 75 minutes long and cost \$30 for a single class; www.theclawwithtt.com.

Christine Beal Dunst is a marketing consultant and freelance wellness, nutrition, and lifestyle writer who lives in Brooklyn. She has a Masters in Public Administration in Health Policy and Management, is certified in Pilates Mat, and is enrolled at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

Acupuncture for Children

PART 2

By Jennifer Taveras

As a parent, your greatest healing tool can be no further than your own two hands.

An acupressure massage can be a simple and natural remedy for children's most common ailments. It can be a go-to remedy for a host of conditions, such as cough, constipation, and sleep problems.

The great thing about acupressure is that once some basic points and techniques are learned, you

as a parent, will have effective, gentle, and time-honored treatments literally on-hand for whenever your little ones get sick.

Children are especially easy to treat with acupressure because their energies are still very pure and unburdened by years of toxicity, and a small amount of acupressure can have a great therapeutic effect.

Where and How to Massage

There are 363 acupressure points on the regular acupuncture channels and countless extra points, so how do you choose what points to use? An

excellent strategy is to have a consultation with a pediatric acupuncturist and have them teach the right points to do for the child's specific condition.

Another idea is to get an acupressure reference guide that has easy-to-read point location descriptions and that also has recommendations for specific point protocols for the most common pediatric ailments. Once you know the right points, then you'll have the power to help your child anytime and anywhere.

See *Acu-child* on B4

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