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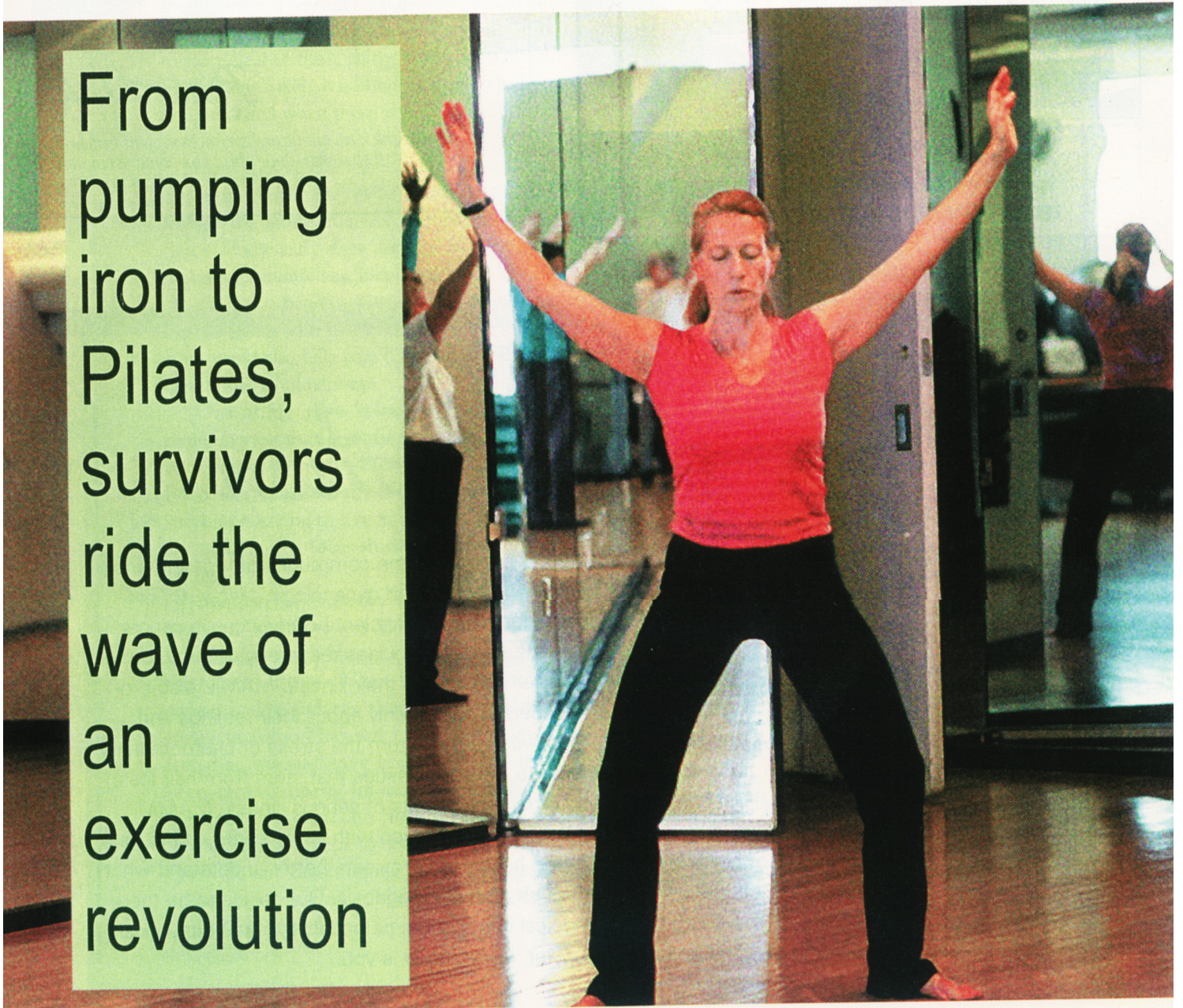


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By Pamela Weintraub

The Breast Cancer Workout

From pumping iron to Pilates, survivors ride the wave of an exercise revolution



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For years breast cancer patients were told to take it easy. Even as cardiac and stroke patients rehabbed their way back to health, breast cancer survivors were warned that too much exercise and exertion might cause the painful arm-swelling called lymphedema or, in a worst case scenario, disability for life.

What a difference a few years have made. In May 2005 a large-scale study out of Harvard showed that physical activity following treatment boosted breast cancer survival. Moderate exercise, like brisk walking three to five hours a week, cut the risk of dying from breast cancer in half, researchers said in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. But any amount of exercise, even walking as little as an hour a week, significantly boosted the chances of surviving the disease. The icing on the cake came in February 2007, when the *British Medical Journal* extended the findings to quality of life. In news that rang around the world, experts from Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland, found that survivors who exercised not only had the ability to walk farther with far better mobility, but also sustained superior mood.

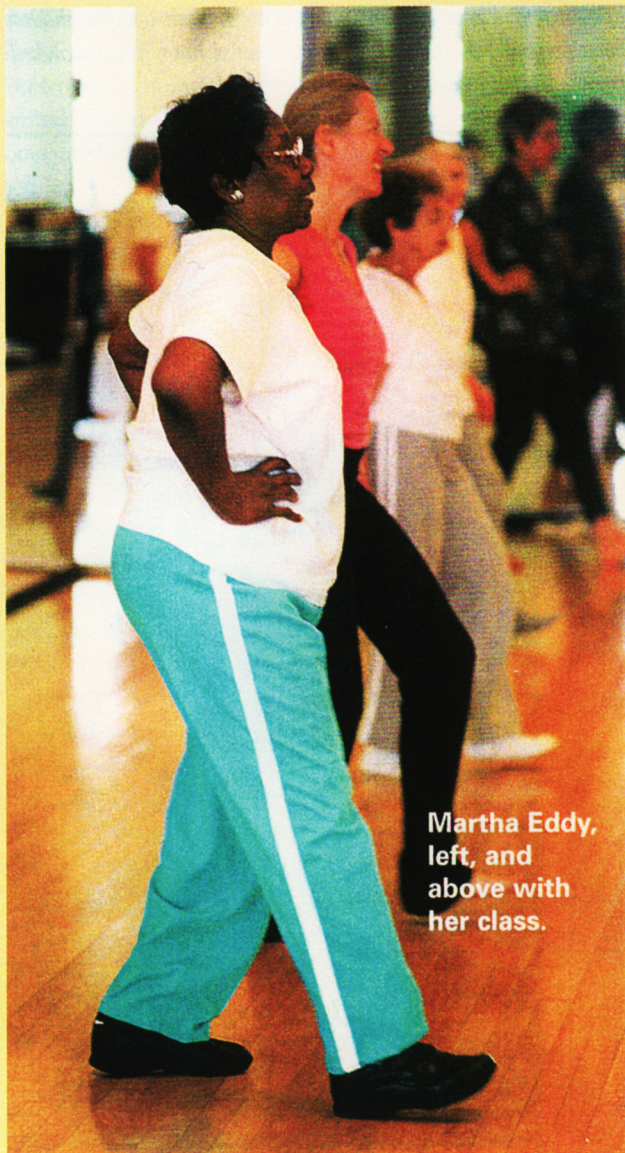
With proof that exercise aids physical and emotional well-being, conferring survival advantages to boot, a quiet revolution is under way. From aerobic dance and yoga to weight training and Pilates, gentle, restorative techniques now help survivors journey back to health. Below we profile four notable programs and techniques at the vanguard of the new movement in survivor fitness and health.

MOVING ON AEROBICS: DANCE FOR SURVIVORS

NEW YORK CITY

Following her surgery for breast cancer, New York psychologist Allison Rosen needed to get back to work, but fatigue and depression were getting the better of her. Spending her days on the couch, she found the only thing that could lift her energy or motivate her to move was music. So she did some investigating and found a large body of research connecting music and mood. Inspired, she spoke to friends, who ultimately helped her reach Martha Eddy, a Ph.D. movement scientist specializing in recovery from illness. Eddy had found there were no programs combining music and exercise for breast cancer patients and decided to design one of her own.

The result: the innovative dance exercise program called Moving On Aerobics, sponsored by St. Lukes Roosevelt, Beth Israel, and St. Vincent hospitals in New York City, with classes available at Gilda's Club and other venues as well. The gentle rehab program set to music by Eddy is designed to lift mood, strengthen the cardiovascular system, restore range of motion and energy, cleanse toxins and alleviate pain in joints. But the



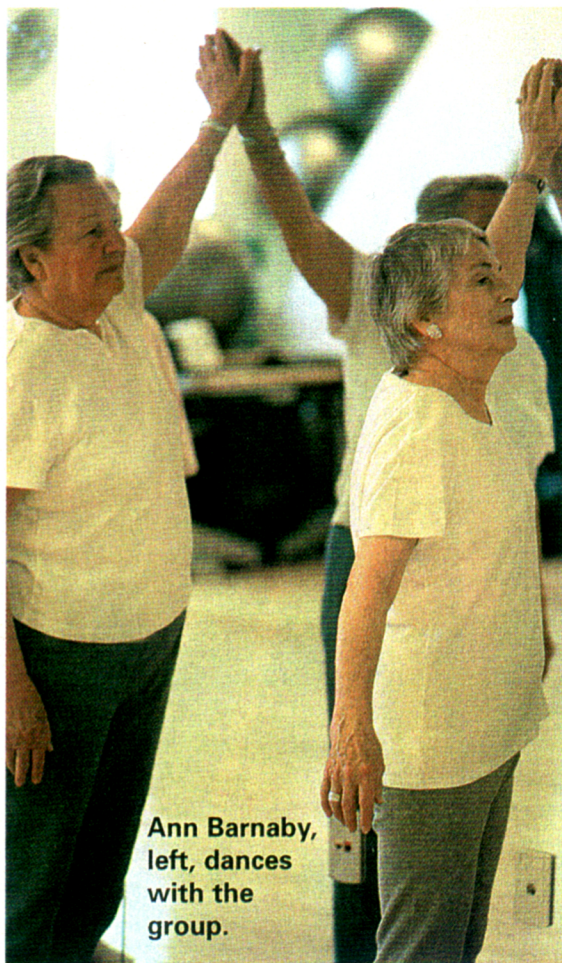
Martha Eddy, left, and above with her class.

Ann Barnaby, 84, New York City, diagnosed with stage I breast cancer in 1990.

Treatment included lumpectomy and six weeks of radiation.

Exercise program: Moving On Aerobics in Manhattan.

The physical benefit of Moving On Aerobics exercise is great. It relieves the stiffness and pain caused by my lymph node removal. It also keeps us fit and healthy. Emotionally, meeting women who have been through the same ordeal is of great comfort—to be able to exchange our feelings about what we have all been through...being violated by cancer. I have made wonderful friends in the group.



Ann Barnaby, left, dances with the group.

first step for patients is psychological: Eddy has them slow down and notice the way their breath moves in and out of their lungs and through their body so that they can get in touch with their physical selves. "I have them touch the rib cage so that they can feel where the breath is coming from. This promotes body awareness," Eddy says.

After patients acclimate, they learn a series of gentle movements that exercise key areas, including the arm, shoulder and rib cage, where range of motion has been limited by surgery or radiation. Using a variety of musical styles, from African and reggae to Motown and disco to country, Eddy leads patients through stretches and teaches them to swing, sway, arch and contract. She avoids damaging larger, overused muscles by working with smaller muscle groups first, generally through a series of three-dimensional movements, including spirals. For instance, patients will exercise rotator cuff muscles surrounding the upper arm bone before they exercise the larger, often-overworked trapezius, pectoralis and deltoid muscles. Even if these muscles are not affected by the incision, they are often taxed when women attempt to compensate for weaknesses caused by surgery, Eddy explains. "Using this technique," she says, "we help them recover more gradually, but in a more enduring way."

Every aspect of the workout has a purpose strategically planned by Eddy, based on the research she has done. During aerobic training Eddy incrementally increases the tempo of the music; soft and lilting rhythms might give way to rock as the patient becomes stronger and more fit. The workout stimulates the lymphatic system and helps prevent lymphedema by having patients contract their bodies as they inhale—a method that research shows gets the lymph fluid moving, Eddy says. Joint pain can be relieved through dance movements that include loose shaking-out. "We do that as an accent, one of the moves within the dance," she explains.

The music is especially effective in tapping the mind-body connection to improve mood. For instance, quiet warm-up music helps patients relax. Lifting the chest and breastbone to an upbeat rhythm can bring a sense of elation. "We need to be gentle," says Eddy, but one part of the workout involves "keeping patients rocking as long as it doesn't hurt."

The advantage of aerobic dance: The music is uplifting and enhances mood.