

Promoting Lasting, Positive Change

According to Culos-Reed, an 8-week exercise program can be a big success, but “maintenance is a huge challenge.” There are many things you can do to support commitment. “Encourage [clients] to do the kind of exercise they want to do,” she recommends. “The doctor might say walking is good for you, but unless you enjoy it, it doesn’t matter, because you won’t do it.”

Culos-Reed also encourages clients to have a workout buddy and recruit the social support they need to make exercise a priority. For example, the Yoga Thrive program invites cancer survivors to bring a support person to class. Like survivors, caregivers are often exhausted and stressed out by the experience of cancer treatment. They can benefit from exercise while supporting the survivors in staying active—and with this support,

survivors may be more likely to continue exercising after the program has ended.

The Yoga Thrive program also gives participants the tools they need to work out on their own. “We give them a DVD so they can work out after the program ends,” says Culos-Reed, “and we give them home-based equipment—like balls, bands and flashcards—so they can remember the poses despite chemo-brain fog.”

Cerrito stumbled on another solution to the maintenance problem when graduates of the LIVESTRONG program started showing up at the YMCA even after their 12-week session ended. They worked out alongside the current participants and offered them support. “It has spread to all of our branches. So many people finish the program, become members of the Y and join this graduate club. We hear over and over again that people in this

Inspire the World to Fitness®: Healthy-Steps®/The Lebed Method



In 1980, Sherry Lebed Davis was not thinking about launching a worldwide program for breast cancer survivors. She wanted to help just one person: her mother. Lebed Davis, a former professional dancer and owner of two dance studios, and her two brothers, both physicians, were concerned about how their mother was healing from breast cancer surgery. They teamed up to create a dance-based therapeutic practice that would help their mother recover from the physical and emotional side effects of cancer treatment. The simplified dance movements focused on improving lymphatic-system function, balance, range of motion, strength and endurance. Carefully chosen music and props—including hats,

boas and scarves—brought in the healing elements of play and joy.

The experiment—along with her mother’s recovery—was so successful that her mother’s doctor, head of the cancer center at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia, asked Lebed Davis to present the program to the cancer center surgeons. The program soon became standard care for every woman treated for breast cancer at the center. Research showed that, among breast cancer survivors, the method reduced swelling; increased energy level, range of motion and flexibility; and decreased depression.

For 10 years, Lebed Davis continued to teach the program—then called the Lebed Method—

at two hospitals in Philadelphia. When she moved to Seattle, she thought she was leaving the method behind. But in 1996, she was diagnosed with breast cancer herself. As she went through a difficult recovery, her brother Marc reminded her of their program. He told her to bring it back, this time for her own healing.

This was the push Lebed Davis needed, not just bring to back the program, but to expand

it and offer it to the world. She started teaching in six local hospitals, and as word got out, people from all over the United States began asking how they could learn the method. So Lebed Davis and her brother Marc Lebed launched a teacher-training program.

Although the program was designed for cancer survivors, the classes provided such a valuable experience—unintimidating, fun and healing on many levels—that individuals with other health challenges kept asking to join the classes. This led Lebed Davis to expand the method, and with her brother, she developed specialized programs for other conditions, including multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome, Parkinson’s disease and diabetes, as well as a

program for children with cancer or disabilities. “Healthy-Steps” was added to the name of the program to reflect the new, broader scope of its mission.

Healthy-Steps/The Lebed Method is now offered in more than 700 locations. The program is available in 14 countries apart from the U.S., with 18,000 classes taking place every week. Lebed Davis says, “Our program is really for special populations now. So many people are left out of the fitness market. I’ve seen students crying even basic fitness classes leaving because they thought it was the one thing they’d be able to do, but they couldn’t. This is something everyone can do. There are too many people with illnesses or chronic conditions who need fitness. We shouldn’t leave people out. It’s too important.”

Learn more about Lebed Davis’s program through the following resources:

- *The Lebed Method: Focus on Healing Through Therapeutic Exercise and Movement*, DVD by Sherry Lebed Davis and Michelle Mansfield (2006)
- *Thriving After Breast Cancer: Essential Healing Exercises for Body and Mind*, by Sherry Lebed Davis, Stephanie Gunning, Ann Campbell and David Ehlert (Broadway 2002)
- www.lebedmethod.com