

Ask The Professionals

If you have any questions these professionals can answer, please write to:

"Ask The Professionals"
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Milton Therapeutic Massage Clinic



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I have a desk job and suffer from chronic neck and shoulder pain. What could be causing this?

Most people with desk jobs will inevitably suffer from neck and shoulder pain in their careers. The human spine is simply not designed to sit in a chair for 8 hours a day. Most commonly, the pain comes from improper posture that leads to spinal curvature problems. In this case, a head-down or head-forward posture for long periods of time leads to a decrease in the concave curvature in the back of the neck. This is called **loss of cervical lordosis**. The hallmarks of this condition are chronic neck and shoulder pain, headaches, and limited range of motion in the neck. The muscles in the back and sides of the neck, especially underneath the skull, are very tight and sore, with spasming. Serious problems such as arthritis and degenerative disc disease can arise down the line when spinal vertebrae adapt to the straightened curvature, change shape and degenerate at an accelerated pace.

The condition is not irreversible. However, it does take time to improve. Naturally, the faster you catch this problem, the easier it will be to treat. It involves deep tissue work and manipulations to stretch certain muscles and ligaments, with daily exercises to reestablish proper curvature. The client will also be educated to correct contributing postural issues and given instruction to ergonomically set up their workstation.

Clinic Hours: Mon.-Fri. 8-8 • Sat. 10-2 • Closed Sunday



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CAN EXERCISE FIGHT DEPRESSION?

Entering into the New Year has brought along with it many New Year's resolutions...the most popular being 'start exercising'. What many of us do not know is that aerobic exercise may be doing more than just helping us trim away those extra pounds from Christmas.

A recent study indicates that 'aerobic exercise may be just as effective as medication at relieving depression...' This study 'adds to growing evidence that exercise can significantly improve mental health at modest or no cost.' The study compared three groups: antidepressants only; antidepressants plus group aerobics; exercise only. 'After 16 weeks, patients in all three groups were equally likely to have recovered.' But what was surprising were the findings in a 6 month follow up study that 'exercisers held a surprising edge. Of those who had recovered after 16 weeks, only 8% relapsed to depression, compared with 38% who took pills and only 31% in the combination group.'

Health is defined by the World Health Organization at "optimal, physical, mental and spiritual well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This definition recognizes the intrinsic link between physical, emotion and spiritual health. Exercise produces brain chemicals, such as serotonin and endorphins that can contribute to the feeling of well being. In this study it was found that only 50 minutes of exercise a week halved a person's chances of being depressed. Physical activity is key to all aspects of our well being. Addressing symptoms with only medication is of limited value and certainly comes with the risk of side-effects present in all medications.

Lifestyle factors are paramount to good physical, emotional and spiritual well being. As a family chiropractor, one of my goals is to help people make healthier lifestyle choices. Regular chiropractic adjustments are important to help our body adapt to life stresses as effectively as possible. **Subluxation** patterns develop over years as we place **chemical, physical and emotional** demands upon our systems. Interference in nerve flow and control result in compromises in overall health. Minimizing unnecessary medications and exercising regularly is of great benefit to your systems, especially your nervous system. Lifestyle changes take time but the benefits are well worth the results. Your health is your greatest asset so invest in yourself and make a commitment to better health.

MONEY CONCEPTS

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Q: I took an RRSP Home Buyer's Loan to buy my new home. Do I have to pay it back?

A: Many people borrow from their RRSP's to purchase their first home. This helps with the home purchase; but it hurts the value growing in their RRSP. Canada Revenue Agency will advise when repayment must begin. Generally, this will be two years after borrowing from your RRSP.

It is important that you repay your RRSP loan. The sooner you repay it, the sooner your retirement assets will start growing again. When you took the money from your RRSP as a home buyer's loan, there was no tax paid. Now, you must pay back at least 1/15 each year until the loan is paid in full. There is no interest due on the loan; however, if you fail to make your payment, the amount will be added to your income for the year and taxed at your highest marginal tax rate.

It is not necessary to repay the home buyers loan back to the same financial institution that you took it from. You are free to make the repayment into any RRSP that you have. Many people set up a monthly payment program into their RRSPs so that their home buyers loan is repaid simply and easily. Topping up this amount for your current year's new RRSP contribution is a good idea too. It's easier to make 12 smaller payments than one huge one.

Need help figuring out what to do about repaying your RRSP loan? Money Concepts has GIC's, Mutual funds and Segregated funds to meet your RRSP needs.



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Inner Sanctum Yoga Studio



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Is all yoga the same? My doctor has suggested it would be a good way to control my stress levels, but there is so much to choose from I don't know where to begin, how do I decide?

Excellent question, thank you for asking. All yoga is not created equal, there are many variations being taught by people with different amounts of experience and training, some teachers have only a weekend course behind them. When shopping around there are a number of things to keep in mind.

- Traditional yogic teachings approach yoga as a lifestyle encompassing body, mind and breath;
- It takes many years of practice and dedication to become a solid yoga practitioner;
- Focus only on physical strength, cardio-workouts and attainment of postures does not adhere to the whole-body philosophy of yoga teachings by providing balance between physical movement and inner quiet.

When shopping for a yoga class, ask questions.

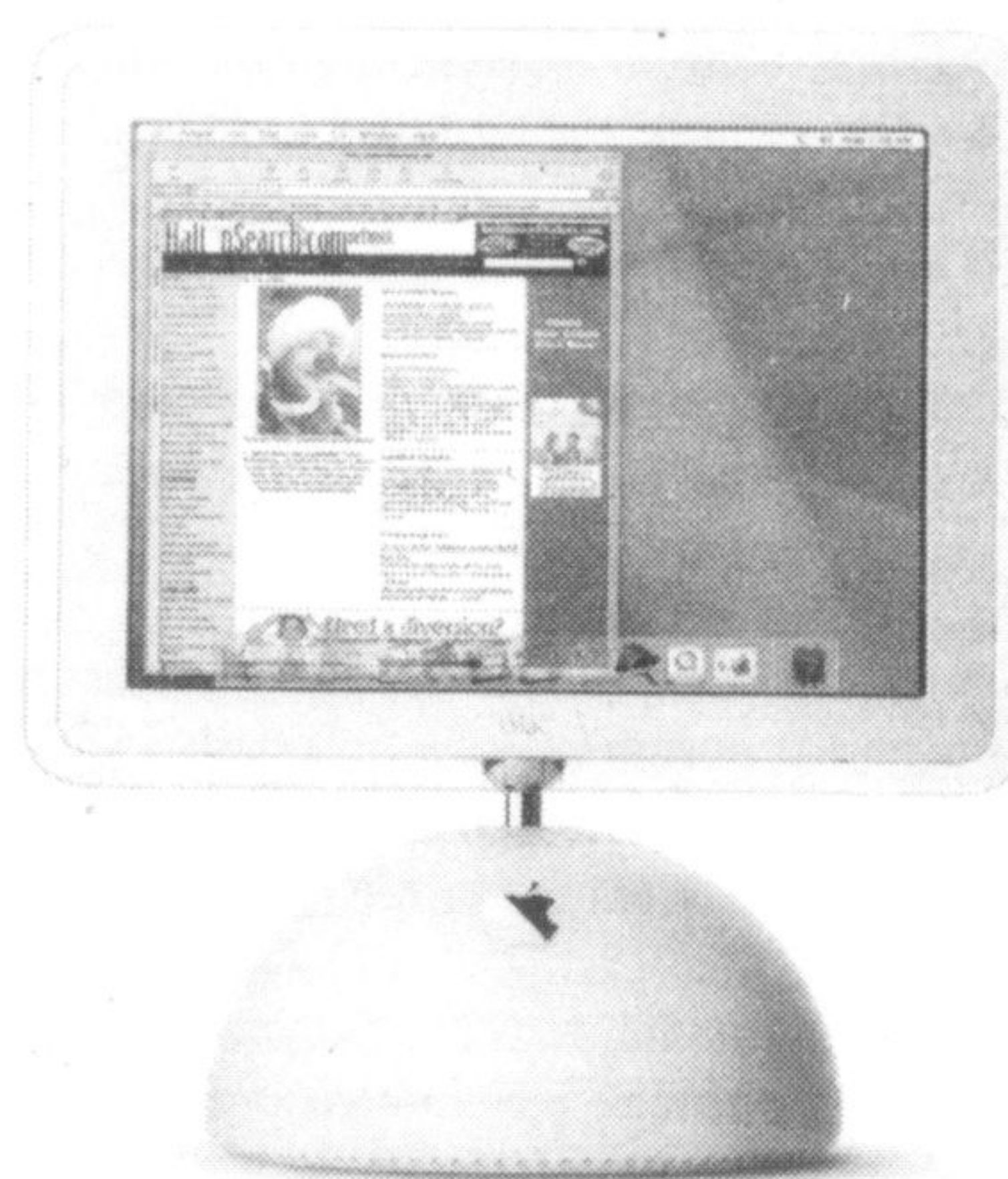
- What background and experience do the instructors have?
- Where and how long did they train?
- Do they teach meditation and relaxation techniques as well as postures?
- Can they accommodate special needs (i.e., arthritis, fibromyalgia, depression, injuries, or any other challenge you may have)?
- Can you try a single class before making a commitment? Personality and teaching style needs to mesh with your expectations.

Once you decide to try a class, maintain responsibility for your own well-being. If anything hurts (particularly neck, low back or knees) stop and let the instructor know. If you are asked to continue anyway or do something that still doesn't feel right, stop again and/or leave. You cannot work through pain without incurring injury.

Yoga is a personal process. There should be no expectations, demands or competition within the class. You should be allowed to work at your own pace, accommodating and adjusting postures to meet your own abilities and needs. A yoga class should feel wonderful, energizing and calming at the same time. When you leave you want to be looking forward to the next time; yoga is after all, a gift we give ourselves!

Wendy Sammut is the owner and principal teacher of Inner Sanctum, Milton's full-time yoga studio specializing in traditional yogic teachings; offering classes, workshops and retreats year-round.

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CANINE GRIEVING

Firstly, we do not know how much dogs understand about death, but many clients have told me instances whereby the remaining pet has suffered lethargy, loss of appetite and weight, and has generally been upset or perhaps acting "strangely". One has to remember that not only has the pet lost their best friend, but also he or she has lost a pack member. The surviving dog may be the leader, and hence has no one to follow him or her around. Conversely, the surviving dog may be the follower, now without a canine leader.

Putting aside human grief for this article, I would like to offer some advice to owners who are currently, or who may deal with this sad experience in the future.

The mere fact that you, as the owner, have already established a wonderful bond with your pet(s) will help you to help the dog find a new position in the social order. This special bond will allow your dog to look to you for what may now be missing in their life. Some clients reported that their relationship with their surviving pet improved tenfold, and other clients noted that they began to see a difference, but wonderful, personality emerging.

Interestingly, whilst we may be awash with grief, it is important to point out that the surviving pet may actually be less stressed. Dogs can impose a considerable amount of stress on each other, in their relationship, and we as owners, may be naively unaware.

In my experience, I have found that the best way to deal with a grieving dog is to lavish him with attention. I found that after my "Rudy" (Golden Retriever) died, "Rosie", my Black Lab became very depressed, as they were very close. The rescue plan, which seemed to work for me, was to take Rosie for many more outings and visits. She was quite old herself, but I engaged her mind by teaching her new tricks. We played hide and seek in the house and the garden, and I attempted to find her new places to walk in the woods. I also took her out for short car rides, which she loved, and I spend many quiet moments grooming her with a soft brush. I attempted to make her life more interesting.

The purpose of the above suggestion is to strengthen the bond with you and your dog, and to help your dog make the transition to a new stage in their life. Some clients found that they could encourage the 'loss of appetite' by placing treats inside a safe food dispensing toy, eg. a 'Kong' or they would hide treats in the house and play 'go seek'. All dogs are different, but my advice would be to indulge in the things you know that your dog loves doing, and then some.

Being a Black Lab, Rosie never suffered from loss of appetite in her grief. She remained the piglet she always was!

If you feel that your grieving pet is not responding to your efforts, you should contact your veterinarian, who will be able to assist you further.