



Brainwaves - the intelligent way to swim

Stress-related illness accounts for 13.4 million sick days each year in the UK. The annual cost to British industry is estimated to be £317 million. A new swimming technique that can help combat stress has been adopted by 'Brainwaves' a new business based in Union Mills.



Siân Griffith's swimming school, Brainwaves, is run from her dedicated pool in relaxing surroundings in Union Mills. She uses a swimming technique called the Shaw Method™ that helps to promote stress release and relaxation. She says that even the most unsporty can learn to relax and unwind after a stressful meeting or day at work by using her teachings.

During her research for her dissertation as part of her Business Studies Degree, Siân carried out a research project to prove that swimming can help combat stress.

Said Siân: "Legislation will soon be in place that will compel companies to start demonstrating a duty of care to their staff. Stress has wide ranging effects. I regularly observe people relaxing just by the act of being in water. My research proved that exercise, and specifically swimming, not only helps people reduce their stress levels but promote an overall sense of wellbeing that benefits them, their family their employer and society in general.

"The benefits of swimming can be observed in a variety of areas of life other than just a way of getting fit. These include reducing stress, changing an individual's perception of themselves and how they manage their lives. In turn, this can promote a sense of well-being, which enables individuals to develop an overall greater self-confidence and contribute to them achieving life-fulfilment and a better 'work-life' balance."

It may seem like a bit of a leap of logic to suggest that stepping into a pool can fix your life, but Siân sees learning to swim properly as a real catalyst for change. She says that for the majority of people she sees, it is less about sport or

competition, and more about relaxation.

"Swimming can act as one of the strings within an individual's bow, providing a stress reducing strategy that enables each person to create an oasis of calm and facilitates them to experience 'flow'. This state of flow enables an individual's problems and concerns to float away, allowing them to lose their sense of time and enjoy the experience of water."

A study by Vieliflex in 2005, sponsored by Standard Life healthcare, Philips and Unilever, found that a return on investment of 373% could be expected from investing in health programmes for employees.

The study targeted a group of employees with a 12-month health promotion programme including health assessments and personalised behaviour change sessions. The study showed a reduction in ineffective working time from 24.6% to 18.2% - a saving of £560 per employee a year.

Siân adds: "Humans may be designed for 'fight or Flight', but due to the work the majority of people do, there is nowhere to release our pent up anxieties. Exercise allows an individual to release negative tension, frustration and anger.

"Learning the ability to work with the water and not be in contest with it, in my view, is totally different to any other form of exercise."

Brainwaves' maxim is 'the intelligent way to swim' and it suggests that swimming can help break the spiral of stress and confront the problems of personal development.

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