

HEALTHY LIVING

Circle of health

Get in the loop on the latest exercise trend

BY HELENA OLIVIERO
Cox News Service

When James Abele tells people he enjoys hooping, they often respond with, "Isn't that for kids?" or "Isn't that for girls?"

But Abele, an Internet consultant who lives in Atlanta, says, "Unless you've seen people doing this, it's hard to imagine. It's not just back and forth across your waist."

And while Abele and others in Atlanta's hooping community — yes, there's a whole community — do indeed hoop around their waists, they also hoop around their arms, legs, torsos, heads, wrists and feet. And these hooping enthusiasts aren't messing around with plastic, pink Hula Hoops. They use bigger, heavier hoops made out of irrigation tubing that are much easier to rotate around the body.

Hooping is back

According to hooping.org, an online magazine, the hoop is experiencing a resurgence.

The magazine gives some credit to the band the String Cheese Incident for tossing hoops out to fans during concerts in the mid-1990s.

But now the hoop has gone beyond just a concert prop; people are incorporating it into their exercise routines. Celebrities like Marisa Tomei, who used it to get in shape for her role in "The Wrestler," thank the hoop for their fabulous bodies. And Wii Fit has a hooping game.

The trend seems to be spreading from west to east, starting with California.

Lara Eastburn discovered hooping at a music festival in Louisiana back in 2002. "I've never been a dancer. I was embarrassed to dance in public," she says. But when she saw a hoop lying in the grass, she says she thought she could dance without technically dancing. "I had so much fun that I hooped for 12 hours straight."

After returning to Atlanta, she decided to make her own hoop. "I finally figured it out and I must have hooped four hours a



JESSICA MCGOWAN / COX NEWS SERVICE

Instructor Lara Eastburn gives tips on hooping it high during the class she teaches at Jai Shanti Yoga in Atlanta.

day for a year." In fact, she loved hooping and making hoops so much that she and a friend decided to start their own hoop-making company, Superhooper.org

Healthy hooping

Eastburn also teaches hoop dance classes at Jai Shanti Yoga in the Candler Park area of Atlanta. Abele became one of her hooping students about a year and a half ago. He says that taking one of Eastburn's classes is similar to going to a dance club and not leaving the dance floor for an hour.

But is it a workout? "Oh Gosh, yes," says Eastburn. "You're jumping, moving your arms; there's not a body part that you don't use."

Abele says, "The reason I like it as a workout is I don't feel like I'm working out; I feel like I'm having fun listening to music. I get my heart rate up and, 'oh, wow, I get some exercise.'"

And besides the cardio benefits, both Abele and Eastburn say that hooping allows them to meditate. "It's very much

about flow and it makes you focus on the present moment, not thinking about problems at home or what happened yesterday that didn't go right," says Abele.

"A lot of people, including myself, find it amazing for depression," says Eastburn. "I actually started hooping in the middle of a break-up."

Eastburn insists that absolutely anybody can hoop — even those with no coordination.

"Most people will say, especially adults, 'Oh, I can't hoop.' They're thinking of children's hoops. I can't hoop with one of those things either. But the way that these things are weighted and built, I've never seen anybody pick one up and not be able to do it."

She invites new hoopers to attend her "Hooping for Beginners" class. Eastburn has hoops beginners can borrow, so they can easily give it a try — whether it's for some exercise, relaxation or just a pick-me-up.

"It changes a bad mood in seconds," says Eastburn. "There's no way to hoop without smiling." ■



Hoopers James Abele and Cara Morantz participate in hooping class at Jai Shanti Yoga. Hooping has evolved from a kids' activity to an intense cardio workout.

Women seen as key to help men identify, deal with depression

BY CHRISTINE STAPLETON
Cox News Service

Pity the men, for there is nothing manly about depression.

Every belief a man holds about his masculinity is attacked by depression — his physical strength, sexual prowess and ability to provide and protect. All the traits that our society says makes a man manly.

Worse, most men do not know what's hit them. The symptoms of depression in men are so different than in women that many men are emotionally blindsided.

If asking for directions is difficult, imagine asking for help with your feelings.

"There is a huge amount of stigma for men," said Michael Addis, head of the Men's Coping Project, a study funded by the National Institutes of Health. "Depression is seen as a personal weakness and a character flaw."

"A man's beliefs about manhood will affect how he experiences depression, how he expresses depression and his willingness to accept treatment," Addis said.

Addis was one of four experts who recently spoke to a crowd of mostly women at the annual luncheon of Hope for Depression, held at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla. The organization, just 2 years old, is the passion of philanthropist and socialite Audrey Gruss, whose mother suffered from depression.

Women play key role

Why talk about men and depression in a roomful of women?

Because men will often first talk to the women in their lives, and women "are the ones who help bring them into treatment," said Dr. Steven Roose, a Columbia University psychiatry professor. A survey sponsored by the American Academy of Family Physicians found that 78 percent of all married men who visited a doctor had been influenced to do so by their wives.

And while only half as many men as women are diagnosed with depression, men are four times more likely to commit suicide. Why? Men act quickly on their suicidal thoughts and use methods that are far more deadly, such as guns.

What are the symptoms of depression in men? Some mirror those seen in women: Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and helplessness.

Showing symptoms

However, men with depression also exhibit other symptoms that often go unrecognized as depression: violent or abusive behavior; inappropriate rage; escapist behavior, such as overwork or excessive sports; risky behavior, such as reckless driving; isolation and withdrawal.

As for the best way to broach the topic of depression with men, Addis shared tips that he and his researchers use: make it an informal conversation and sit beside, not across from the man. Do not use the word "depression" right away. Instead, slowly work it into the conversation.

"Many men don't have the vocabulary to talk about their inner emotional life," Addis said. ■

