



Dancing with Life

The Nia Way to a Healthy and Happy Pregnancy

by **Debbie Rosas Nia Technique, Inc.**
www.nianow.com



In **Nia** we teach women to approach their **pregnancy** as a joyful, natural part of life and living. A pregnant woman is not sick or weak; she is merely in training for one of the biggest events of her life – an event that will require physical endurance, mental focus, emotional intent, and spiritual trust. It is the event of giving birth. Starting at the moment of conception, the life she carries will need the tools of her attention, love, awareness, and sensitivity. **Nia** is a way to prepare and sharpen these tools to help feed the growing life inside of her.

The Nia Tools

1. The Art of Awareness – Developing a Relationship with Pleasure

In **Nia**, our philosophy is that a pregnant mother is connected to and a part of the life growing and developing inside of her. The baby and mother are viewed as separate, yet connected. They are one. A mother's awareness, understanding and recognition of this sensation of oneness is how she learns to safely **dance** with her own body and baby. Throughout her **pregnancy**, **Nia** teaches her how to create a loving relationship with her changing body and unborn child. The mother-to-be dances and learns to become body-aware. She is taught to listen to the voice of the body – sensation – as the way to recognize both the sensations of pain and pleasure. She learns to seek pleasure and guide her movement choices to make decisions that will eventually feed and nourish both her body and baby.

2. Adaptability – Learning to Flow and Find The Path of Least Resistance

The **Nia** program teaches mothers to remain body-centered and connected to their bodies' way of moving. Personalizing everything is how mothers learn to adapt to physical changes. As a mother learns to adapt her body to **Nia** movements, she prepares herself for what will be her greatest feat in adapting and adjusting – birth. The art of adapting to the needs of her baby in pursuit of birthing requires sensitivity to personal needs while adapting to meet the needs of the baby.

3. The Art of Listening – Developing the Skill of Responsive Communication

Learning to listen to body signals is vital to being safe and comfortable during **pregnancy**. It is a skill mothers need to develop in order to prepare for delivery. In the practice of **Nia**, a mother is given the opportunity to tune into her own body sensations. She is reminded to listen to the voice of *her* body, which now includes her baby. Internal voices and sensation are body messages that say, “slow down, breathe more deeply, rest into the earth, stop, drink water, soften your knees, feel and connect to me, and find more comfort.” Learning to listen and respond in loving and pleasurable ways makes it possible for a mother to communicate more clearly and successfully with her body, her child, and her care-givers. Responsive communication says, “Listen-respond, seek pleasure, and choose the path of least resistance.”



4. Touch – Developing an Energetic Relationship with Your Baby

In **Nia**, mothers are encouraged to touch their belly. Touch is a way to send love to the baby through fingers and hands. It is a way to create an energetic relationship with the unborn child, energetically sending energy waves into the womb, which is home for the baby. Touch begins to unite a mother with her body and baby and uses human connection as a healing and energy resource.

5. Love – A Magical Healing Elixir

The moment a pregnant woman begins to **dance Nia** she begins to create a moving conversation with her baby. Movement is how we sustain life. It is the way energy moves and is recycled. **Nia** encourages a mother to consciously fill her body and baby with love as she dances, making available to her and her baby a magical healing elixir.

6. Less is More – Learning to Energize, Not Deplete

Moms-to-be are taught to “work-in,” rather than “work out.” Moving slowly, doing less in a more conscious way, allows mothers to become familiar with the natural changes that are taking place in her body. By staying sensitive to the needs of her body, a mother can create an environment that is nurturing to both her and to her baby. **Pregnancy** is a time to get acquainted, to nurture and to care-take. Mothers can maintain an optimum level of fitness without compromising themselves or their babies if they become sensitive to how little it takes to energize the body and how going further can deplete the body. A mother needs energy to create life!

7. Education – The Way to a Stress-Free Pregnancy

To help mothers to safely workout, education is a must. For example, elevated body temperature can bring on early labor and/or induce spontaneous abortion in some women, especially in the first three months of **pregnancy**. Learning to move without overheating is a must. Shade is better than direct sunlight, and wearing cool, cotton, non-binding clothing will allow the body to perspire more easily. Drinking water is a must.

Regarding mobility and stability, a pregnant mother’s body produces the hormone *relaxin*, which makes everything in the body looser, particularly the joints, lower back, and pelvic region. For this reason, it is important to watch for signs of joint instability and adjust movement accordingly by slowing down or reducing the range of motion.



8. The Body's Way – Following the Map of The Body

The Body's Way, the body's map and design that dictates function, teaches body wisdom. It is a wisdom that guides without language, driven by sensation and personal exploration. As her baby increases in size in utero, a mother's center of balance will change. By sensing ease, balance, comfort, and pleasure, the Body's Way will guide her to adjust foot motions, the foundation that supports her and her baby. A mother learns to trust the Body's Way by listening and responding to her body's needs to slow down or move less in preparation for childbirth.

9. Modify – Personalizing the Moves

Nia incorporates three levels, or three choices of movement, so that as body weight increases, the way a mother moves can be adjusted to accommodate change. The intensity should also change so that mothers work at the lower end of their target zone to avoid becoming short of breath. It is more important to breathe deeply and continuously so that as **pregnancy** moves along, the increase in volume of oxygen needed to feed her baby can easily be delivered. The additional demand on the mother's cardiovascular system requires pacing. Working more slowly will help to deliver the necessary oxygen to the baby and herself. Ultimately a mother wants to get energy from her workout, not lose it. If she leaves feeling fatigued, the pace was too much.

10. FloorPlay – Getting Down to Earth

FloorPlay, the **Nia** floor program, uses the element of play to guide movement. The floor is viewed as a place to move and rest on. Gravity is the energy we use to stimulate deep relaxation, build functional strength, and improve flexibility. Depending upon fitness level and size of the abdominal area, mothers are encouraged to modify all floor movement to avoid back strain. If a mother is new to exercise, it is advisable not do any extended leg moves or leg lifting. Many exercises are more comfortable when performed on the side, especially in the third trimester of **pregnancy**. FloorPlay encourages agility, is guided by pleasure and comfort, and uses sound and breathing to engage the core and strengthen the back. Pillows and kneepads can be used for support.



11. Safety – Learning to Know Your Own Body

Safety is the responsibility of both the teacher and mother. A teacher provides information, the moves, and the science and craft. The student is responsible for choosing how to do the move, while respecting her body. Stretching can be modified to avoid hyperextension or over-stretching of the ligaments and tendons. Often when lying directly on the back, the weight of the abdominal region may press on the aorta and cause a decrease of blood flow to the heart. Instead, a mother should lie on her side and shift positions often to allow the energy to move freely. A pillow placed underneath the hip sockets can relieve pressure from the back.

12. Body Image – Learning to Soften and Expand

As a mother's body changes, she will notice softness and a significant weight gain in the buttocks and the thighs. This is natural during **pregnancy**. The body must soften and expand in preparation for delivery. No exercise will get in the way of this natural process. Most of this additional weight will subside after delivery. **Pregnancy** is not a time to worry about body image or the perfect shape. More importantly, **pregnancy** is the time to have a positive image of your body as a sacred container for creating life. Soft is the sensation that feeds your baby with tender loving care!

13. Comfort – Learning to Take the Pressure Off

During **pregnancy** the low back becomes overtaxed. A simple move such as a pelvic tilt on all-fours is a great way to take the pressure off the back and lower spine. For example, resting on pillows under your bent forearms is a nice way to modify the all-fours position. The sensation of relaxation in choosing a posture is key.

14. Shake a Leg – Avoiding Leg Cramps

Leg cramping during **pregnancy** is common. In **Nia** class, it is recommended that mothers avoid pointing or flexing their feet to an extreme. Shaking and elevating the legs throughout the day is beneficial. Cramping, often due to the changes in circulation resulting from dehydration and nutritional deficiencies, can be avoided by drinking plenty of water, eating a healthy diet, and getting regular massages.



15. Tone the Pelvic Floor – Kegel Exercises

To ensure proper support for the baby and for your internal organs, the pelvic floor muscles must remain strong. By design, the pelvic floor forms a figure eight. Slung in loops around the vaginal and urethral sphincter in the front, and around the anal sphincter at the rear, muscles and other tissue supports are anchored in a firm fibrous node called the perineal body between the anus and the vagina. Ideally this muscle floor is firm and supportive. As the baby grows, this once-firm elastic muscle, which forms a straight line between the bone of the pubis and the coccyx, becomes weakened. During **pregnancy** the voluntary and involuntary pelvic muscles are in a continual state of partial contraction, and the once horizontal line of the pelvic floor begins to sag as a result of the continual downward pull from the baby. Unless active attempts are made through muscle re-education to bring the pelvic floor back to its supportive role, maintaining the pelvic organs in their upright position will be hindered. Over a long period of time, excessive sagging can result in serious structural changes, and consequently, some impairment or loss of pelvic function. Kegel exercises for toning the pelvic floor isolate the muscles of the pelvic floor. Tone and support can be reclaimed by voluntarily tightening these muscles, a feeling compared to stopping urination in mid-stream, holding, and then releasing.

16. Eat Right – Now is Not the Time to Diet

A pregnant woman requires three hundred more calories of optimum nutritional value per day. When exercising, a mother must eat sufficient amounts of wholesome foods and drink sufficient amounts of purified water in order to maintain her own health and the development and health of her baby. Foods that are fresh, organic, unprocessed and rich in vitamins give the baby and mother the very best. Seek variety and balance.



Postpartum—Taking Care of Your New Body and Life

We encourage moms to wait at least four weeks after delivery before returning to a **Nia** class. This is the time for mothers to get to know their baby. It is a time for them to gradually adjust to sleep, relationship, food, body, and life changes. There is no rush. Our philosophy is that it took nine months to give birth, so take nine months to rebirth your body before you stress it to strengthen it. Feeling fatigued is normal, so naps are a must. When a woman returns to class, modification of the moves is necessary. Nursing mothers require five hundred more calories a day and should remember that retaining five to ten pounds of extra weight is nature's way of storing fat for milk.

In addition, a loss of abdominal muscle tone will occur postpartum, but will return. Toning of the abdominal muscles can begin by merely lengthening the exhale, making sound, laughing for sixty-seconds, and by doing round-downs, the reverse of a sit up. Most of all, we encourage mothers to be patient and loving with themselves, their baby and their new body. Birth is a magical experience, one that touches us forever. Physiological changes due to **pregnancy** can remain up to six to eight weeks after childbirth and may continue longer if the mother breast-feeds. Hormone levels do not return to normal until after the breast-feeding period. Remember, mild mood swings are normal. If they persist or seem abnormal or extreme, one should seek care immediately.



A. Nia Tips to Mothers Re-entering the World of Fitness

1. ***Begin to exercise slowly and regularly.*** Your schedule will be busy, and even a short walk can be beneficial to your body, mind, emotions and spirit. Any movement you do will begin to create mental and physical changes. Increase frequency, intensity and duration slowly over time.
2. ***Avoid strenuous exercise.*** Over-doing things will deplete your energy and your enthusiasm. The most harmful effect of exercise is over-doing. Often mothers experience an invisible pressure to return to their same fitness level and regimen they had before **pregnancy**. This stress is not necessary and does not honor where you and your body are now. Be patient, and the body you desire will manifest itself. Allow nine months to create a new body and a new life.
3. ***Stay in tune with the fluctuation of your energy levels.*** Take time to sense the level of energy you have available at any time. This sensitivity and awareness will tune you into what you can do and can help you avoid illness and fatigue. On low days, choose easier activities that give you energy.

Examples of energy-giving activities—

- Walk and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the season. Feel the exhilaration of being out in life.
 - Lay down in a favorite place with a tiny pillow or towel rolled up and placed under the back of your head, under the small of your back and under the knees. Relax and listen to your favorite music as you slowly breathe fully and deeply, in and out for five minutes.
 - Take a warm bath in your favorite salts. Once out, rub oil over your body to help stimulate the flow of energy through the meridians.
 - Read from your favorite book of poetry for ten minutes and relax your mind, emotionally connect, and physically sense peace.
4. ***Find activities that encourage you to move consciously.*** Postpartum mothers often experience the feeling of doing things quickly and without conscious thought. Their life is all about multi-tasking. They feel there is not enough time to do or to experience things. Choose experiences that give you time to nourish your body, mind and spirit. Some suggestions are swimming, **Nia**, tai chi, yoga, a **dance** class, or hiking. The goal of movement is to create a healthier being. It does not require working fast.
 5. ***Warm-up and cool down.*** Many times mothers come in late and leave a class early. Even so, warming-up and cooling-down the body are essential components in any fitness program. Make this time for you and your body a priority.



6. **Continually monitor yourself.** Perceive your exertion and avoid over-doing and becoming out of breath. If your goal is to lose weight, work at the lower end of your target zone. It is more beneficial to exercise longer and slower as the metabolism of your body will change and burn fat more efficiently. Slow and steady exercise at your proper heart rate is needed to burn calories and create change. It is also a way to keep yourself energized.
7. **Drink plenty of liquid before and after the exercise to avoid dehydration, especially if breast-feeding.** Lethargic feelings may result from dehydration. At home, keep a pitcher of water on the counter and drink it throughout the entire day. For a change of taste, squeeze some lemon, lime, or orange in the water. If you work at a computer, make sure you have water on hand. Make it part of the things you do when getting ready to leave the house. Prepare for the baby and you so that you have water in the car.
8. **Build your exercise intensity gradually over nine months.** If running, gradually increase your time by only 30 seconds a day. If walking, increase the speed and distance slowly. When in exercise or **dance** class, feel free to do only 15 minutes and hang out and watch or stretch. Respect what you can physically and emotionally do!
9. **Put your mind at ease.** When you feel ready to resume exercise, consult your physician. Inform your doctor of any unusual occurrences and put your mind at ease by getting the go ahead to workout.
10. **Connect with people.** Participate in activities that bring you in contact with other people. There are “Mommy and Me” classes and group exercise activities, including **Nia** classes, that will help you remain connected to people and other mothers.
11. **Workout at home.** Exercise videotapes are a wonderful resource for working out when you can’t leave home. Use a variety to keep yourself motivated and interested. The **Nia** library has many to choose from.
12. **Stand dynamically.** Over the nine months of **pregnancy**, your posture changed. For many women the enlarged abdomen can create a lower back curvature called, lordosis, which can cause low back pain. It is important to begin moving your entire spine. The bed is a great place for moving the spine, strengthening the abdominal muscles, and stretching the low back. Move freely in the bed as if your whole body was a spine. Then draw one knee at a time into your chest, and hold the stretch for thirty-seconds each side, breathing naturally. The soft surface of the mattress is excellent for round-downs and you can rock back up into a sit up easily. Repeat several times in the morning, at noon, and at night. Consistency is more important than heavy repetitions.
13. **Wear extra leg support if needed.** If a mother has varicose veins, or spider veins, she can reduce edema of the feet and ankles and help prevent pooling of the blood in varicose veins of the legs by wearing good supportive legwear such as hose, tights, or leggings.



14. **Perform Kegel exercises regularly.** Due to the increased pressure of the enlarged uterus on the bladder and weakened pelvic floor muscles, leaking often occurs during exercise. There is no need to be concerned unless it continues. Wearing mini-pads and performing Kegel exercises can help. The contraction of the pelvic floor involves subtle combinations of movements and muscles. The pelvic floor works as a unit, moving up and in toward the midline of the body to create a squeezing and lifting effect. The sensation of a Kegel is similar to holding back urination, where the pelvic floor muscles contract and interrupt flow. Learn to self-initiate this sensation and work up to ten contractions, three times a day or begin with the number of repetitions you can effectively perform.
15. **Give your body a rest.** Whenever possible, relax and rest. Seek any moment of stillness and reap the benefits of stopping and meditating. When you sit, rest. When you nurse, relax in the chair. When you breathe, breathe deeply and fully. Smile. Shrug your shoulders. Yawn. Undulate your spine. Close your eyes and visualize images that stimulate deep relaxation.



B. Nia Exercises to Help You Get Back Into Your Body

1. For the abdominal muscles

- Abdominal Round Downs
- Rock and Rolls for the Spine
- Pelvic Tilt Melt
- Vocal Cat Curl for the Spine

2. For the back and spine

- Alternate Knee Hugs on the Back
- Tic Toc Rolls with Arm Reach
- Spinal Massage Rolls on the Mattress
- Cat Curls
- Easy Spinal Twists
- Hamstring Softener

3. For energy

- Breath Work/Sounding
- Body Shake/All Parts
- Fire Rub /Hands On
- Pillow and Towel Supports
- Visual Dreaming

4. For body, mind, and spirit

- **Dance** around the house for twenty minutes to your favorite tunes.
- Briskly walk with your baby and friends in various locations.
- Exercise and meet new friends.
- Run while pushing the baby carriage.
- Work out at home with a favorite fitness video.
- Sing and laugh to release tension.
- Write a horoscope about you filled with loving ideas and thoughts.
- Surround yourself with nourishing and healing colors...pinks, yellows, and greens!
- Go out to lunch, or send flowers to yourself.
- Treat yourself to a manicure, pedicure, or massage.
- Go to a movie in the middle of the day.
- Rent a comedy to watch on a rough day and laugh a lot.



Nia Stories

1. A Nia Class for Moms and Babies

Beverley Drumm **Nia** White Belt teacher Ypsilanti, Michigan

I discovered **Nia** when I was 4.5 months pregnant with my first child (and aged 37). I took classes until I was about 7 or 8 months and then came straight back to **Nia** with my 6-week old baby – a “Mommy & Me” class, run by another **Nia** mom, Samantha in Charlottesville. At first I loved **Nia** just for what it was – the world music, the moves, the self-discovery, and the release. I didn’t even think about the benefits to baby and me. I didn’t have the best birth. But, coming back to the Mommy & Me class was wonderful – again, to keep me sane, fit, in touch with other women, have time for me, to be able to stop and nurse whenever I wanted, change a diaper, or **dance** with my baby – it gave us a wonderful connection. Often, we would line our babies up along the mirror wall and **dance** to them – they cooed and smiled, and only rarely cried. Yesterday I turned 40 and now I have a 1-year old little girl, as well as my 3-year old boy. Now I teach **Nia** four times a week. During my second **pregnancy**, I danced **Nia** throughout – I found out I was pregnant the very day before starting my White Belt! I was always able to adapt **Nia** to my very big belly, I never ached anywhere. In fact, during both pregnancies, I had no significant physical pains or discomforts to speak of. Towards the end of my **pregnancy**, I used **Nia** to envision an easy; empowered birth, to pull in the power I would need, to imagine myself as a mother, goddess and woman warrior. Well, birthing the second time around was so much better – thanks to **Nia**. I had no medication (the first time had had an epidural), the birth was quick, painful (of course) and yet I was strong, VERY vocal and controlled throughout. As I pushed the baby out, I was squatting in woman warrior pose and sounding out my power. I had come into myself, found my voice. My voice is such a strong part of me now. My children are beautiful and very chilled out. They both love music and movement – surely no accident, as they listened and moved with me throughout my pregnancies. **Nia** is just medicine and manna for pregnant ladies.

Nia Technique | LaLeila Rohner | Lizenzierte Nia Brown-Belt Lehrerin

Dipl. Wellness-Trainerin II | Dipl. Beckenbodentrainerin nach C. Amherd | Erwachsenenbildnerin SVEB 1

laleila@feel-nia.ch | Postfach 314 - 4102 Binningen | 079 370 46 76

www.feel-nia.ch - www.nianow.com



2. A Nia Trainer's Experience

Helen Terry, **Nia** Black Belt Teacher/Trainer Houston, TX

First of all without **Nia** I wonder

- a. whether I would ever have considered having a child and
- b. whether I would have been able to conceive

My **pregnancy** was a great experience - thanks to **Nia**! First trimester was challenged with morning sickness and weight loss (I lost 25 lbs. in the first trimester!). The worse thing was when the doctor took me off teaching **Nia** for 4 weeks - I then felt WAY worse - my joints ached, my fatigue increased and I was more emotionally unbalanced. I was SO RELIEVED when I received permission to return to **Nia** and teaching. Second trimester was fun and energetic. My **Nia** practice became more grounded from my added weight - I enjoyed what the **pregnancy** brought to my technique. The smile line of **Nia** helped me relax my sacrum and open up my hip joints. I think this helped me through the labor process. I'm delighted that I was able to teach full time at the hospital and teach four **Nia** classes a week all the way through my **pregnancy** until two weeks AFTER my due date! Fortunately I was only a short walk away from labor and delivery. I checked in at 12:20pm and Liliana was born at 1:05pm! I was back in a private room with the baby by 1:35pm! My relationship with my body through sensation helped me ground and be present to the birthing process. My ability to breathe and relax certainly helped alleviate much of the natural birth "pain." A phrase from Ida Rolf helped me: "Pain is merely my resistance to change" - the more I was able to accept and breathe into this, practice visualizations (I was imagining being in Cozumel, snorkeling underwater, looking at colored fish), the more I could relax into the labor. I recommend to anyone who is considering getting pregnant, begin to attend **Nia** NOW. Like any movement program it is recommended that you continue anything you have been doing BEFORE you get pregnant so get proactive - start **Nia Pre-Pregnancy**. Practice listening to your inner guide as well as the words of your teacher. Embrace level one and all the wonderful grounding opportunities and timing it provides - experience the movements as simplified as possible - give yourself time. Welcome the opportunity to slow down and still get a great workout. Play with your mobility, stability, flexibility, strength and agility with the wonderful development your **pregnancy** provides you with, specifically with the gained weight and improved range of motion.



3. Pregnant Now and Teaching

Mandy Whaley **Nia** White Belt Austin, Texas

I am currently 16 weeks pregnant with my first baby and teaching three **Nia** classes per week. I love practicing **Nia** while pregnant. Everyone is telling me that I am really calm for a first-time mom - and I attribute that to practicing **Nia**. I found that **Nia** really helped me during the first two months when I was feeling sick and lethargic. I always could depend on several hours of feeling good after a **Nia** class. I also felt like I "wasn't myself" for periods of time during those first months. Practicing **Nia** provided a grounded and centered feeling in a time of a lot of change. I am also very comforted by the knowledge that **Nia** gives me an effective and safe way to stay in shape cardiovascularly while I am pregnant. I know that will be a huge benefit during labor and delivery.

This is a little more anecdotal and less concrete...but I thought I would throw it in anyway. I am fairly sure that I conceived during a week that I was in Santa Fe going to a lot of Holly's classes. We danced Miracle [A **Nia** routine], and while introducing the focus she told us to pick a personal miracle and hold that in our mind -- my miracle was that I wanted to conceive. I found out several weeks after returning home that I was pregnant. I attribute it to how happy and relaxed I was that week practicing **Nia** everyday.

4. Nia is Perfect for My Joints

Kelley Atkins Certified **Nia** Brown Belt Teacher Longboat Key, Florida

I danced **Nia** from point of conception to the day before birth. I loved doing **Nia**, as it was a way for me to get a great workout through all the changes that my body went through each trimester. I taught a minimum of six classes a week during my whole **pregnancy** and I easily altered my movements on days my energy was low. **Nia's** low-impact movements felt good on my joints. The movements, like swaying my hips and moving with Tai Chi energy, felt soothing to my baby and me. I liked the primal movements and sounds as it helped me awaken this part of myself that I knew I would need for birth. In my third trimester I slowed down more, and took out shimmies and vibrations and just modified them. I really focused on deep breathing as I felt the baby taking up more space and breathing became more difficult. Because **Nia** emphasizes feeling sensation and honoring oneself by making choices that will feel comfortable and pleasurable, doing **Nia** was always possible and enjoyable no matter what. During this time, and after my baby was born, I was highly emotional and doing **Nia**, expressing with movement my feelings was life saving!



5. I danced Nia all the way through a high-risk birth

Krystie Bryant **Nia** Teacher Houston, TX

Nia enabled me to:

- 1 - get pregnant
- 2 - stay healthy during the **pregnancy**
- 3 - relax & **dance** during the actual birth to delivery a healthy baby
- 4 - recover quickly from an unplanned C-section

To start with, I was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian disease about four years ago. In addition to weight gain, the disease created fertility problems for me. The stress of my job and the traveling I was doing at the time were the causes of my poor physical health. I found **Nia** in Austin about the same time that I was diagnosed. Doing **Nia** in combination with quitting my job allowed me to get pregnant after trying for a year and a half.

That being said, I danced through the entire **pregnancy** and birth of my one-year old daughter, Cordelia. Since I was about 75 pounds overweight at the time of conception, I was told by the doctors that I would probably be a high-risk **pregnancy**. I danced everyday, religiously, and I am happy to report that I had a very normal **pregnancy**. I did not experience high blood pressure or **pregnancy**-induced diabetes.

I danced **Nia** in my head during the birth of my daughter. She had some complications after 24 hours of labor, so I had to have a C-section. I was walking the very next day. My doctor and midwives were shocked to see me strolling - VERY SLOWLY - but walking none-the-less to visit my daughter in the NICU - neo-natal intensive care unit. I was dancing again at home within a week. **Nia** helped me to have a quick recovery. I was back in class about two weeks later. Cordelia had a rough start, but she is in great health now, and loves to **dance**! She is a healthy **Nia** baby, and a year after the birth, I weigh 25 pounds less than my pre-**pregnancy** weight.



6. *The Body's Way Tools of Nia*

Roseanne Russell **Nia** Teacher Wakefield, MA

I taught **Nia** up until my 38th week of **pregnancy**. And, danced up until I gave birth, honestly -- in the delivery room! (I had a hypno birth and very understanding midwife!) During my **pregnancy**, **Nia** helped me connect deeper to what was happening within my body.

Physically, I was more aware of sensations and how my body was making the adjustments I needed to make. I felt strong and fit – but, from the inside to the outside. **Nia** helped me become strong inside – supporting the baby from within, and thus supporting my own physical needs. **Nia** provided a strong foundation for which I was able to find balance, not only physically, but emotionally as well. (I also did not gain any more weight than I needed to for the baby and myself. This I attributed to my **Nia** practice and my already active lifestyle pre-**pregnancy**.) Physically, the core movements are incredible for connecting to an always-changing body. Weight-shifting sensations of rocking and swaying were beneficial.

Emotionally, I was able to explore where my emotions were taking me in a safe environment. To understand that the roller coaster of emotions were just “a roller-coaster of emotions,” and instead of being afraid of them, I was able to acknowledge them, and sometimes try them on for size – safely.

Spiritually, I was able to connect deeper to another spirit within me. "RAW" (Relaxed, Alert, and Waiting) was an incredible tool. Looking back, I see how being in that state of RAW allowed me to enjoy my experience of being pregnant and prepared me for giving birth. Not to mention prepared me for being a parent!

As a result, my son has a deep connection to movement that was evident in his first 3 weeks. He was soothed immediately by our dancing together – the moves he found familiar that comforted him in the New World he was living in. I tell my students how much babies love dancing with their moms. It is a wonderful opportunity to introduce another part of themselves to their baby, to share their joy. I can only imagine how magical it must be for a child to be surrounded by the joy of a mom while dancing and celebrating life – outside of her, as well as inside. It can be the first of many gifts to share the best part of you with your baby right from the start of life. Our own mommy baby mantra!



7. A Mid-wife's Thoughts on Doing Nia During Pregnancy

Lu Russo-Ellis **Nia** Teacher Houston, TX

In 1999, women I was caring for wanted to know what childbirth preparation they should take. I went to a couple of the more traditional preparation classes but wasn't satisfied. I knew that a good childbirth class had to offer not only guidance through the physical but also the emotional, spiritual, and social transitions a woman goes through when she becomes a mother. I had never seen these other aspects covered as clearly and as well as with Birthing From Within (BFW). I knew BFW was going to help women to prepare for birth, not only physically but with their heart and soul. I also realized that BFW was lacking bodywork to really make that happen.

At the very same time, I found **Nia** ----CLICK. I was overwhelmed with how many similarities there were between the two. For example, the concept of "holding the space" that is used in **Nia** is also one of the greatest gifts a midwife can give when she is "with women." This is our way of empowering the laboring woman and to allow her to have her disheartening moments without rescuing her. Instead, we learn to be quiet, trusting, and relaxed. The kind of support a woman needs at that moment comes from a positive intention – holding the laboring woman in a safe place with genuine support.

I came to believe that **Nia** should be integrated into the BFW childbirth classes. And that's exactly what my friend and fellow **Nia** teacher, Kristie Bryant, and I did. Our classes are beneficial to not only prenatal or postnatal women, but the techniques also assist in the actual labor process.

8. Doing it My Way

Laura Karanko **Nia** Teacher Finland

One of my pregnant students found it wonderful that **Nia** gives the students the opportunity to always do it their way. I encourage them to open up the A-stance to a sumo and reach down only as much as feels good. Reminders to keep the body weights in-line also helped. Another one of my students said to me, "I used to do traditional aerobics, jogging and other kind of high-impact exercise. After I had my first child my relationship to my body deepened and it just said NO WAY! Whenever I went to aerobics class, I still wanted to move, but there was nothing out there that felt good. **Nia** was exactly what my body had been longing for: it's fun, keeps me fit and it's gentle! I can be in contact with my body, be a mother and still enjoy a real exercise."



9. Exercising My Heart

Tara **Nia** Teacher Phoenix, AZ

I taught **Nia** until maybe a week and a half before I went into labor and I felt really comfortable and safe doing almost all the **Nia** moves that I normally would do. I modified a lot: smaller steps, lower kicks, nothing airborne. I started teaching **Nia** again after six weeks but only one or two classes until gradually taught more. I did feel concerned sometimes that I wasn't presenting "Level 3," but I had some seasoned students, including my mom, who could demonstrate Level 3 for me. All of the **Nia** squats I did during **pregnancy** helped me a lot during labor. Also, I integrated sounding into my labor and that was the most beneficial thing I did to deal with the pain. I think exercising my heart during **pregnancy** made for an easier labor and my daughter was really strong and ready to move around when she was born. Shortly after she was born (hours) - she tried to pick up her head and the nurses were amazed at her strength. She has always been really physical and expressive.

10. A Mother of Four

Yannet Lehner Ofan Blue Belt **Nia** Teacher Milwaukee, WI

As a mother of four children I have always been physically active. My first three pregnancies I taught and danced between 10-20 classes a week. I stopped when labor began, not a minute before. Dancing and working out made me feel great. It helped me through my **pregnancy**, during labor and with my recovery after having the baby. I remember friends of mine that were not physically active complaining all the time. They were tired, did not like the way they felt or looked and were always in some kind of pain. These three pregnancies I was not familiar with **Nia** yet and was mainly teaching **dance**. I should mention that I felt wonderful and loved every moment of my journey.

My fourth **pregnancy** was so different in so many ways. I just got my **Nia** White Belt, was not teaching at all, felt nauseous all the time, was dizzy and had headaches constantly. I could not give up **Nia** during this time. I had a big problem how to continue taking classes when physically I am so limited...I knew the importance of being physically active. I had three children at home that each one of them was and still is full of life, energy, and alertness. They were like this from day one. I know it is due to their exposure to music, dancing and sense of pleasure I had with our journey together.

Nia helped me a lot. **Nia** teachers with similar experience gave me advice on how to still maintain the joy and get the full **Nia** experience. I had to adjust my moves. I needed to understand that I could not continue the way I was before. Once I did, it worked. Many times I worked Level 1 as opposed to 3. Some classes I needed to sit down and move only with my arms, hands, or fingers depending on what I felt. I moved with my natural time. Surprisingly I got a lot out of it. It was a whole new sensation for me. I was a student and learned many new things about myself and about sensations I have never felt before. I actually liked working with Level 1. My pulse went up and I still got a workout.

Nia Technique | LaLeila Rohner | Lizenzierte Nia Brown-Belt Lehrerin

Dipl. Wellness-Trainerin II | Dipl. Beckenbodentrainerin nach C. Amherd | Erwachsenenbildnerin SVEB 1

laleila@feel-nia.ch | Postfach 314 - 4102 Binningen | 079 370 46 76

www.feel-nia.ch - www.nianow.com



Maya was born and after a month (the earliest I went back to being physically active) I went back to classes. Maya danced with us until she was 11 months old. Whether she was sitting, crawling, or in my sling dancing with me she loved every moment of it. The group I danced with liked her presence and felt in a way like they know her. She definitely knew them and the music. This time recovery was my fastest. I lost the weight, got in shape, and feel my muscles and body is stronger than ever before. My body changed with **Nia** especially after getting my Blue Belt.

My advice...

Listen to your body; sense what it needs, understand there is a new relationship you are developing with your creation- a magical and beautiful one. Respect your natural time, listen to your spirit and mostly enjoy every moment.

Nia Technique | LaLeila Rohner | Lizenzierte Nia Brown-Belt Lehrerin

Dipl. Wellness-Trainerin II | Dipl. Beckenbodentrainerin nach C. Amherd | Erwachsenenbildnerin SVEB 1

laleila@feel-nia.ch | Postfach 314 - 4102 Binningen | 079 370 46 76

www.feel-nia.ch - www.nianow.com



About the Author

Debbie Rosas is the Co-founder and Co-creator of the **Nia** Technique and is an internationally recognized health and fitness expert. After two pregnancies left her with an unfit body, Debbie began teaching traditional aerobics in Marin County, California in the mid 1970's. There she developed a highly successful fitness company, The Bod Squad, which grew to over one hundred classes a week, with over fifty teachers. However, she was unsatisfied with limited benefits available from the conventional approach to cardiovascular fitness that left many people unable to participate, particularly pregnant women. In the early 1980's, at the height of the "no-pain, no-gain" fitness mentality, she and her partner, Carlos Rosas, began to explore a kinder, gentler, safer way to work out – one that focused on comfort and pleasure, while still providing fitness and health benefits. Their exploration of the **martial arts, dance arts, and healing arts**, led them to blend movements and philosophies that encouraged students to expand their awareness of the body. Additionally their East-West approach made it possible to integrate the mind, emotions, and spirit. The result was the creation of **Nia**, a well-being fitness and lifestyle practice that uses The Body's Way as a map that empowers people to achieve their own level of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Practiced by thousands of people around the world, what makes **Nia** so user-friendly is it that regardless of age, fitness level, physical condition, or limitations, everyone can participate. Nia's creative approach to moving to inspiring music creates a magical experience. **Nia** is like chocolate, you just have to taste it!

For more information about the **Nia** Technique, to find a teacher in your area, or to order **Nia** workout videos or NiaWear, please visit www.nianow.com. To find out how to become a **Nia** teacher call 1-800-762-5762 to request an introductory package.

You'll find **Nia** Moves and exercises in Debbie and Carlos's new book, *The **Nia** Technique: The High-Powered, Energizing Workout That Gives You a New Body and a New Life*, released January 2005, by Broadway Books, a division of Random House.

Nia: Changing People's Lives

Through Movement We Find Health