

NEW WORKOUT



Times photos — KINFAY MOROTTI

Teresa Tapp, center, teaches her moves to Berei Brandenstein, 76, left, and Barbara Guardino, 61, right, during a T-Tapp class at Gold's Gym in Clearwater.

Quietly, calmly building popularity

■ The simple, quiet movements of T-Tapp are more tai chi than Taeko, but the exercise method is still catching on.

By MEGAN SCOTT
Times Staff Writer

SAFETY HARBOR — In this workout, there's no jumping, jogging or weightlifting.

There's no reverberating music. The only sound is Teresa Tapp's voice and the quiet slap of shoes on the wooden floor.

She talks quietly.
"Shoulders back, palms up, inhale, exhale."

"Grab the ankle, palm is up, exhale bigger. Knees bent, butt tucked."

It's as intense as Taeko, but calmer. Sweat drips. Muscles tighten. Fat

burns. Silently.

And folks in the Tampa Bay area can bypass the videotape or DVD because T-Tapp is right here in Clearwater. It is also spreading across the nation, thanks to the Internet, word of mouth and an article in January's *Woman's World* magazine.

Despite the name, tap dancing is not part of this routine. In some exercises, the women stand still and roll their shoulders back slowly, palms facing up. Other moves use more energy, such as hoedowns, in which women perform alternating knee lifts. The lawn mower involves yanking an arm back as if trying to start a lawn mower.

"T-Tapp is knowledge of how to use the body like a machine," Tapp said. "It's not just about burning calories. Throw out the scale. It's about inches. Don't focus on diet. Focus on movement. You need to move the

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Berei Brandenstein, left, and Barbara Guardino, work on moves during the T-Tapp class. Guardino joined the class after hearing Tapp at a fitness workshop. She T-Tapps, usually during the 6 a.m. class at Gold's Gym. "The night I heard her speak, everything made so much sense," Guardino said.

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body."

Women show up as early as 6 a.m. for Tapp's special classes.

They've bought into her methods.

Their T-shirts — and the messages printed on them — prove it.

One reads: *Work muscles layer by layer from the inside out. . . . Develop muscle density instead of muscle mass. . . . One clothing size a month.*

One Thursday afternoon, Tapp, 47, stands at the front with her back to her class. She wears a white unitard, slouch socks and aerobic shoes. Two women stand beside her. The others form the back row.

Barbara Guardino, 61, is a die-hard T-Tapper. The Clearwater resident T-Tapps about five times a week, mostly in Tapp's 6 a.m. class at Gold's Gym in Clearwater. She started T-Tapping four years ago after hearing Tapp speak at a fitness seminar.

"That night I heard her speak, everything made so much sense," Guardino said. "The next day I downloaded as much as I could from her Web site. I never went back to the fitness club."

Tapp has never been overweight. She's 5-foot-7, 130 pounds and wears a size 6. She loves red wine and eats bread. She moved to Safety Harbor 10 years ago to be with her fiancé, whom she met when she was in town giving a fitness seminar.

She developed T-Tapp in when she was working as a model scout for agencies such as Ford and Metropolitan. The workouts were designed to help models strengthen their backs, increase their energy and target areas of fat around their thighs, abs and butts. In 1999, she started an Internet site. She estimates that she has sold about 3-million videos.

Most of the people who follow the program work out at home, alone with just the videotapes or audiotapes. Believers of the program also use the Internet to keep up with one another, provide support and advice or chat.

Tapp prides herself on her straightforward, no-nonsense approach and 15-minute workouts



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Jill DeFronzo teaches a kickboxing class at Lifestyles Family Fitness, but is training to become a T-Tapp instructor.

that need only 3-square-feet of space.

Most of the movements Tapp developed because of her own needs. She suffers from scoliosis and has two chipped vertebrae, the result of a severe back injury that happened when she was in high school.

Like yoga, T-Tapp is much harder than it looks.

While there are only eight repetitions or less of each exercise, it's continuous movement, except for a couple of water breaks here and there. By the end of an hour class, even the 20-year-olds are red in the face.

The workout is more intense than many cardiovascular workouts, said Jill DeFronzo, who teaches a kickboxing class twice a week at Lifestyles Family Fitness near Westfield Shoppingtown Countryside. She favors Tapp's workout so much that she's training to be an instructor. She takes the class a few times a week.

"By far, her workout gives you much better results than kickboxing," said DeFronzo. "It tones you better. While it may not be as fun, you feel so much better when it's over."

Diane Varidin, 41, also subscribes to the T-Tapp program. She drives from Seminole to take the hourlong class. She also does the workouts at home.

Varidin started T-Tapping in May because she wanted to lose weight. The aerobics classes and weightlifting she was doing at the gym just weren't working, she

If you go

Teresa Tapp is offering a free seminar at the Safety Harbor Resort and Spa on Feb. 12, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. For information about T-Tapp, log on to www.tapp.com or call toll-free 1-877-827-7348.

said.

"After doing this workout 10 days straight, I lost 2 inches off my abs," said Varidin, an attorney. "I think it's the way she has this sequenced. Yoga, Pilates, tai chi . . ."

Tapp doesn't do infomercials. She depends instead on word-of-mouth promotion. She also has more than 1,500 informational pages on her Web site. The site receives more than 3-million hits each month. It even has a "try before you buy" section, which allows visitors to download and preview several of her copyrighted fitness moves before purchasing her videos.

It's the success stories that keep Tapp promoting her T-Tapp program. She is in the final stages of developing a video with sign language and closed-captioning and another video for people weighing more than 200 pounds. She is also working on a book about T-Tapp.

"I love helping people be the best they can be," Tapp said. "When you look good, you feel good. I feel like I have a gift. And when you have a gift, you have a responsibility."

Margie Weiss, left, and Barbara Guardino rest after their workout. Tapp created the workout for models, but developed the movements around her own back injury.

