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# New Fitness Studio Specializes In Innovative Techniques



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**UPDATED** Apr 15, 2019 5:09 PM

By Frank S. Costanza

Gabby Lamia always thought she had two ways to deal with her scoliosis: learn to live with the discomfort created by her severely curved spine, or undergo surgery that could help straighten it and alleviate some of her pain, most likely at the cost of her mobility.

The 25-year-old pediatric nurse opted for the former, explaining that her mother, Marla, who also suffers from scoliosis, had a metal rod fused to her spine years ago. While the rod addressed the curvature of her spine, essentially forcing her to sit and stand straight, the procedure created a new set of problems for the mother of three, and left behind a scar that runs along most of her back.

"My Mom had the surgery, and she's constantly in pain from it," said Gabby Lamia, adding that her mother was the first to suspect that her oldest daughter had scoliosis while attending middle school. "She cannot really bend."

Lamia had to wear a back brace throughout high school, but did not let it stop her from being a gymnast or cheerleader. The problem was that her condition—she says the most recent x-ray of her spine shows its curvature at 44 degrees—was not improving with the aid of a brace. The Scoliosis

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Research Society, an international group that includes more than 1,000 of the world's leading spine surgeons and researchers, recommends surgery if spinal curvature exceeds 45 degrees in children and teenagers, or 50 degrees in fully grown adults.

"They basically said, 'Surgery is your only option,' and they were very positive about that," Lamia recalls her doctors saying, while also worrying that her scoliosis could shift her ribcage and affect her lungs as she grew. "My mother would mention to them things like physical therapy or exercise, and they would shoot them right down.

"I wanted to find anything I could do besides that to fix it," she added.

Lamia passed on the surgery and continued to live with the pain that was most difficult to endure while commuting from her home in Holbrook to Molloy College in Rockville Centre. Then, last summer, her boyfriend, Mike Misa, learned of the growing popularity of nonsurgical treatments for scoliosis patients, while navigating Instagram.

She said that Misa, who enjoys training, was directed to Gregory Bader, a functional patterns human biomechanics specialist who owns Evolving Human Movement in East Garden City, and, earlier this year, opened Hamptons MVMT, which operates out of Hamptons Jiu Jitsu on County Road 39 in Southampton. Among its customized fitness and training classes, Hamptons MVMT offers an appropriately titled "SCOLIOFIX" class that, according to the company website, utilizes advanced corrective exercises that train the body's muscles to decompress the spine and, with considerable work, straighten out its curvature.

At her initial consultation at Bader's Nassau County location, Lamia was instructed to walk and then run on a treadmill—Bader described it as "a hamster wheel" because it is only propelled by those using it—and then asked to complete other basic exercises so he could observe how they affected her back. Bader then massaged a section of her spine, which she describes as a "small hump," where the muscles overlap one another due to its curvature.

After reviewing her most recent x-rays, which will be compared to a second set to be taken this summer, following a year of one-on-one treatment, Bader had Lamia complete a series of low-impact exercises. Several incorporated a 25-foot-long cable machine with weights attached, and focused on decompressing her spine and alleviating the extra pressure on it.

"He showed me a few different exercises, and I literally felt better after about 10 minutes," she recalled.

Though not his typical client, Bader's initial assessment and examination of Lamia—a process that led to his creation of a customized low-impact workout regimen to meet her needs—is one of his trademarks. Unlike other personal trainers, Bader said he specializes in utilizing innovative, yet fairly basic, techniques in determining the best workout regimens for his clients.

And that starts with the simplest of requests: asking his clients to take a walk on his hamster wheel while he records them.

"The easiest way to explain it is that all humans walk, run and throw as a priority when it came to evolve their movement," said Bader, who earned his bachelor's degree in exercise science in 2015 from Adelphi University, which recruited the cross country and track and field athlete.

"Walking, running and throwing is my blueprint for training clients," he added. "Let's improve their gait cycles and their running cycles first. We originate the training around those things and in the simplest terms."

He then shares the slow-motion video with his clients so they can see, for example, how they are favoring certain muscles due to a previously undisclosed or misdiagnosed injury. Bader then has them take corrective action, so they are getting the most out of their routines.

He explained that his fitness blueprint focuses on incorporating "horizontal force" movements, including running and stretching, into his clients' routines, as opposed to other exercises, such as squats and deadlifts, that primarily work muscles needed to complete tasks that do not come as naturally to the human body. A reliance on more basic movements, with the addition of weight as a person progresses in the process, considerably reduces the chance of injury while allowing individuals to pursue their goals, whether they are trying to lose weight, build muscle or strengthen their overall core.

While some hardcore trainers focused on building muscle might say those exercises lack creativity or intensity, Bader insisted that such an assessment is incorrect. He noted that he gradually and carefully cranks up the difficulty by introducing new weights or incorporating other challenges into straightforward exercises, forcing his clients to exert themselves and burn more calories.

"Fitness is evolving," Bader said. "We're getting away from the body building stereotype of exercise, where people are building and adding on more mass. Now, more people are starting to exercise for their health, and a big part of exercising for your health is rotating things.



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"We're not really sacrificing intensity. It's just a different type of intensity," he added. "We can still use heavy weights. We can still work with heavy machines ... and load up the cable machines. My main priority is to make sure you can do this [exercise] at the lighter weight."

His form of training closely mirrors the philosophy and techniques of Naudi Aguilar, the founder of Functional Patterns, which Bader describes as a new style of exercise that is grounded in how humans adapt and evolve to their environment. According to Bader, much can be gleaned simply by observing an individual's posture, and what muscles are engaged, or disengaged, when they walk and run.

Once those observations are completed, he can focus on having his clients complete more complex exercises, including those that force them to rotate their spines and pelvises, or complete drills with more swinging and stretching movements.

Still, it is those initial assessments that enable Bader to craft tailored workout regimens for his clients. Even those who opt to enroll in group classes—Hamptons MVMT offers kettlebell, mace and club, muscle recovery and kickboxing classes—still receive personalized instruction based on their individual needs, according to Bader.

"It's not cookie-cutter training," he said. "I make sure that the person is exercising according to his or her needs. It's still personalized, even in the group classes."

Though he offers a scoliosis-specific class, Lamia has met one-on-one with Bader twice a week, for the last few months, at his Southampton location. She says the 60-minute sessions have immensely improved her overall flexibility, removing pressure from her back and spine. Bader has also observed marked improvement in his client, saying she appears to be much more comfortable working out and pushing herself in the gym.

Lamia says she is looking forward to having her next set of x-rays done this summer and is hopeful that all of her hard work, under Bader's watchful instruction, will result in a reduction in her spine's curvature.

"I can already feel it," she said. "I just feel better overall. I feel less compressed. I can move more. I don't really have pain anymore, and I know how to do things at home, like how to stand a certain way, to take the pressure off my back."

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