PENNY WESTON

Slowing down when it comes to exercise

Y ou might be forgiven for thinking that the more exercise you do, the better it is for you, right? But since giving up her daily HIIT classes for a more holistic approach to her mental health and physical wellbeing, Penny Weston, 35, who runs MADE, a 360 wellness centre, says she's happier than ever.

Penny began exercising in her late twenties in a bid to help her ill health. "I had chronic asthma, was anxious and as I worked long hours, I tended to eat pretty poorly. When I was about 26-27, I had a collapsed lung and lots of stomach issues - that's what motivated me."

Penny continues, "I started exercising and it took me about three years to feel confident to go on my own. Eventually I managed to come off all the asthma medication and was a lot healthier."

But fast forward to her early thirties and Penny had become addicted to exercising every day. "It was a good thing that I was healthier - I don't want to say heavy exercise is bad for everyone - but it became too much for me. I didn't need to exercise as much as I did. I even did a strength class the day I went into labour."

However, after a difficult labour, an emergency C-section and an infection, Penny was diagnosed with PTSD as well as suffering from sleep deprivation and a twisted pelvis. Being forced to slow down made Penny explore more mindful ways of moving her body – and her mind.

"I did stretching, then meditation and started to look at healthy recipes. Now if I wake up and I've had a bad night's sleep, the first thing I do is a brain dump. I write everything down, to get some perspective, and then I'll do something with movement - on the low end a big walk and on the top end a training session. As cliché as it sounds, now I use exercise as therapy."

"I enjoy life more as well. If you go for a walk or you're doing a meditation, you're not thinking 'I've got to go to the gym, I've got to get this workout done'. They're healthy practices you can have in your daily life without it being so intense."

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