



REVIEW

BODY LANGUAGE

Olivia Falcon on how to hold your head high through Christmas

So there I was in my socks, getting weighed and measured like a Christmas turkey at the gym when I got the news. I have apparently shrunk an inch, which at the tender age of 45 feels a little premature. Matt, my instructor, suspects this is down to long hours hunched over a computer and poor posture. Terrified of turning into the proverbial little old lady, I put Christmas shopping plans aside and called Ivana Daniell, a postural expert and movement coach.

An exceptionally perky 60-something, Ivana has the kind of body I would have been happy to have at 30, so whatever she's doing clearly works and I'm all ears. She tells me I have shrunk because I have lost elongation of my muscles. Sitting for long hours at a desk has caused my trunk to compress like an accordion between the meaty hands of a Bavarian mountain man. 'You also have poor postural awareness, weak core muscles and shallow breathing,' she observes.

Ivana believes the way we move today; shuffling rather than striding, pigeon-toed rather than plied, is a major health issue. Her aim is to rejuvenate clients by getting them to be functionally active and working at their optimum. She looks at your movement 'personality' – mine is introverted and sluggish. Her job is to reorganise muscles so they re-group in the right order to make your movements as efficient and dynamic as possible.

She doesn't believe in gyms. Her approach is to use your everyday life to become fit. A daily half-hour walk is mandatory and she kits me out with trainers, a backpack and an ergonomic saddle chair for my desk, which I am instructed to sit on at a 120-degree angle with my legs slightly apart, adjusting the height hourly so as not to stress my hip flexors. Interestingly I note Ivana doesn't like standing desks. 'Walking is great but standing still is not good for posture,' she says.

Ivana is also a stickler for something she calls proactive sitting time, this involves kegel exercises and other very subtle shifts to realign the body at your desk. She prescribes 'homework' (more postural exercises), which she tapes for me on my mobile phone, and gives me a series of diaphragmatic breathing exercises as she says I am an accessory breather, rasping shallow breaths into my neck and shoulders rather than using my full lung capacity.

I'm only a few weeks into my new routine but far more connected to my body – I feel fitter, taller and more alive.

Initial consult, £250; follow up movement education, £150. ivanadaniell.com ■

MIND & MATTER



1 SPRITZ
All I want for Christmas is Jo Malone London Rose and Magnolia Cologne. £104 for 100ml. jomalone.com



2 PULL
Offset gluttony with Advanced Nutrition Programme's virtuous crackers. £55. advancednutritionprogramme.com



3 SIT
The Back App chair is a saddle-style seat that activates core muscles. From £569. relaxbackuk.com