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Fitness: Re-Kinect helps people get past their limitations

BY MARIA HOWARD Special correspondent Sep 5, 2015



Mimi Conjar, a medical exercise specialist with Re-Kinect, works with Adrian Spears on exercises to build strength in surround muscles to reduce low-back pain. The sling around his middle helps take pressure off the back while he does the exercises.

Maria Howard

The gym at Re-Kinect doesn't have all the standard equipment. In fact, what catches your eye is an apparatus holding multiple red straps and slings that hang down toward a leather medical-office type bed.

"We get lots of jokes about the 50 shades of red," Amanda Harris said with a laugh.

The apparatus is made by Redcord of Norway and is used for rehabilitative exercises that can unload body weight for starters and then add it back in as weaknesses are overcome.

Harris, owner of Re-Kinect in Henrico County, uses the apparatus as well as other more traditional pieces of equipment to help people get back to their normal activities.

Her clients are people who have had injuries or medical conditions. They've gone to the doctor for treatment, and then sometimes gone to physical therapy for rehab. But they're still not 100 percent.

A personal trainer and exercise physiologist, Harris started Re-Kinect a couple of years ago because she saw that many individuals were frustrated with not being able to return to all of the things they wanted to do.

"We feel like we can create that transition really well," Harris said.

Insurance doesn't normally pay for Re-Kinect services, although the costs often can be reimbursed through health savings accounts and flexible spending programs, she said.

"The beauty of this is that the people who come to us are highly motivated," Harris said.

Maybe they can't swing the golf club the way they used to, or a nagging pain is keeping them from joining in on family activities.

Mimi Conjar, a medical exercise specialist who works with Harris, said she loves helping people get past their limitations.

"They tell me they can walk with their grandchildren again," she said, "or they can get out and garden again."

Harris agreed that the work is rewarding.

"It's fun to see people improve fast," she said. "I never get tired of it."

Referrals for Re-Kinect usually come from physical therapists or massage therapists.

When Harris worked at ACAC Fitness and Wellness centers in Charlottesville and Richmond, she oversaw a program called PREP — Physician Referred Exercise Program. She has always had a niche in rehab exercises.

At Re-Kinect, her specialty is “medical exercise,” meaning the work is tailored to meet the medical needs of the client.

An initial fitness assessment helps Harris decide what is needed, and then a follow-up every four weeks helps determine how long the client will need to be at Re-Kinect.

“We don’t want to keep them here any longer than necessary,” she said.

The goal is to fix the problem and have the client move on. Occasionally, clients who like the workout environment will ask to stay on. That’s when they transition into a wellness program, Harris said.

Re-Kinect serves clients of all ages with a variety of difficulties.

“I think my youngest right now is 14,” Harris said, “and my oldest is in the 80s.”

Patricia Martin-Nelson has been going to Re-Kinect for a long time to offset difficulties stemming from arthritis. She’s had a hip replacement and may need double knee replacement in the future.

“She has kept me strong,” said Martin-Nelson, motioning to Harris. “Incredibly so.”

Maria Howard is a group exercise instructor for the YMCA of Greater Richmond and the University of Richmond Weinstein Center. Her column runs every other week in Sunday Flair.

More from Maria Howard

