



LEGAL HIGHS

Emma Freud tries nude dance classes

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‘Where are you going?’ asks my teenage son. ‘To get high,’ I say. ‘I’m doing a naked dance class on Zoom.’ He slumps against the wall and looks at his feet. ‘Noooo, Mum. Please. Keep your clothes onnnn.’

I lock myself in the bathroom and prepare for the thrill of carousing topless and bottomless with 20 total strangers in a FitSteps dance class, organised by British Naturism.

Wearing nothing but a huge smile, I stand in front of my laptop with my camera turned off. And there they are, my classmates: many elderly, some in bedrooms, some in kitchens, but all ready to blame it on the boogie while feeling the air between their thighs, as disco’s Mother Nature had surely always intended.

There are no polite intros (we’re clearly already beyond that formality) and, as we begin our first upbeat number, I instantly remember that bras were invented for a reason. Halfway through a sassy cha-cha, a comment pings on to the screen, ‘Cameras should be ON for the class.’ I realise I’m the only person hiding behind a name, but ignore the request. I’m there as a journalist, not a naturist, and am not going to expose myself online or my son will apply for adoption.

Suddenly a comment appears in the sidebar saying: ‘Emma, go to the breakout room.’ I sense I’m about to be ticked off by a uniformed security guard, so I pull on a dressing gown and click through to the naughty step. It’s something of a surprise to be greeted by a stern gentleman wearing absolutely nothing. ‘Turn your camera on,’ he instructs. ‘It’s not fair to the others. This isn’t a spectator event.’ I understand: hiding my naked body makes the rest of the class feel ashamed. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they instantly covered up; there’s a historical connection between purity, nudity and joyfulness, and another between sin, clothes and judgment.

I apologise, return to the disco, tilt the screen so only my head and shoulders are visible, switch on my camera and dance like nobody’s watching. It truly is utterly joyful.

There are four million naturists in the UK, and I get it. When we lose our clothes, we lose the markers by which we’re judged and by which we judge ourselves. None of the bodies on my screen would be considered flawless but, as we shimmied around our homes, nobody was judging imperfections, and I stopped being quite so harsh about my own.

We were fellow humans in nothing but our original packaging, launching our fabulous forms into a mighty and euphoric. *Mambo No 5. £5, bn.org.uk*