

PILATES FOR EVERY EXERCISER

PEOPLE ARE FINALLY REALIZING THAT LOOKING AFTER THE BODY, MIND AND SOUL IS ESSENTIAL TO LIVING A LONGER, HAPPIER LIFE. PILATES IS SPEARHEADING THIS FITNESS FUSION FOR ALL AGES AND STAGES.

By Kerrie Lee Brown



The public's approach to health and fitness is constantly changing. Today, people are becoming more in tune with their bodies and want an all-encompassing method of exercise to meet their varying needs. Whether your desire is to sculpt a toned physique, prevent injury for athletics, increase overall strength, relieve stress, or get back in shape after the holidays - Pilates is for you.

Pilates is leading the fitness frontier as the ideal form of exercise to facilitate the mind-body connection for everyone. The Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association reports that there was a 602% increase in Pilates participants in the USA between 2000 and 2006.

"Pilates helps build strong, healthy muscles, improves blood flow, and engages all the muscles at the right time - therefore working your body inside and out for optimal body conditioning," explains Moira Merrithew, Executive Director of Education for STOTT PILATES®. "Pilates is ideal for anyone wanting to expand their exercise regimens to include overall toning and strengthening moves that also work the inner mechanism of the body. This goes for any age or fitness level."

Fitness facilities and gym owners are realizing this booming interest in Pilates and starting to incorporate comprehensive Pilates repertoire into their daily programs. According to the 2007 IDEA Fitness Programs and Equipment Survey, 68 percent of facilities surveyed have Pilates as one of their program offerings. This is a 49 percent increase compared to when IDEA first started tracking Pilates in 1999. As a result, Pilates is gaining momentum in the mainstream fitness market.

The appeal of Pilates for the average person, or newcomer to fitness, is that there are various programming options. Specific repertoires are available for sports fanatics who want to build core strength and improve their golf drive; elite athletes who want to prevent or attend to injuries; rehab and prenatal clients who want to enhance their fitness ability; new moms who want to get their pre-baby shape back; and mature adults who simply want to make getting out of bed easier. Every exerciser from school-aged kids to the active adult can reap the benefits of this form of exercise - and at the same time get a good workout.

Lindsay and Moira Merrithew have made Pilates more accessible for everyone



Many men are also incorporating Pilates into their athletic training. Lindsay Merrithew, CEO and President of STOTT PILATES says more and more pro athletes are turning to this method for rehab and strength conditioning purposes. “These are guys who go through intense training for their sport. Perhaps they are introduced to it while on the mend from injury, but most are sticking with it throughout the season. Either way, elite athletes are participating and the rest of the industry is taking note.”

PILATES TRANSFORMED

Pilates was still a relatively unknown method of exercise when the Merrithews first opened their Toronto studio back in 1987. Lindsay constructed Moira’s first piece of Pilates equipment called a “Reformer” out of sheer necessity. This machine was at first constructed out of wood, but soon Lindsay decided to design one made out of metal in order to accommodate adjustability issues among clients with differing needs.

“We thought of creating a Reformer that had adjustability to suit the user and that was both ergonomically and esthetically appealing,” explains Lindsay. They wanted to build a better “mousetrap” and so they did.

The Reformer is generally the first piece of equipment that Pilates instructors and enthusiasts gravitate toward for a stellar, body-sculpting workout. This machine is unlike the typical Stair Climber, Bike, or Treadmill – it’s designed to leverage specific Pilates movements to improve the overall mind and body connection. It also helps develop lean muscles overall, without adding bulk.

Today, Pilates enthusiasts can use Matwork and/or equipment-based Pilates programming to fulfill their health and fitness goals – and as a result, more and more facilities are implementing high-quality equipment and training into their locations to fulfill their unique needs.

EXERCISE FOR A LIFETIME

So remember, Pilates is for everyone. It’s a kinder, gentler exercise for your body with all of the benefits of strength training. No matter what age, ability or goal – those interested in enhancing their health, fitness, and lifestyle in general, are sure to enjoy what this method of exercise has to offer. **OSF**

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