

PILATES Q&A



You know Pilates could be good for your business, but you're not sure how to start. You've got questions, and PFP brought in the experts to give you answers. *By Emily Attwood*



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Pilates increases in popularity, so does the appeal to personal trainers to add Pilates classes to their repertoire. Offering Pilates classes creates more choices for your existing clients, and because of the versatility of Pilates, you have the potential to reach a wider range of clientele than you currently are. So what's stopping you from taking this next step in expanding your career?

Maybe you're just not sold on the advantages of a Pilates program. Perhaps you don't know where to begin. Or maybe you're not sure you have the time or energy it takes to invest in a new program offering right now. Re-

formers, chairs, ladders, barrels, towers, bands, disks, balls -- you've heard of all of this Pilates equipment and you're wondering if you have the money or the space to get it all. But do you need it all?

PFP has brought in the experts to shine some light. We hope, after you've read what those in the Pilates business have to say on the matter, you have a better understanding of what it takes to start a Pilates program and have the confidence to get started. You might be surprised by how simple it can be.

The Benefits of a Pilates Program Your business is already doing fine with the current classes and training you offer, so what's the benefit of spending time to get certified and money on equipment to add Pilates?

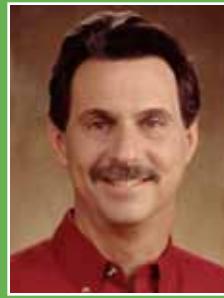


What benefit does Pilates offer to my clients?

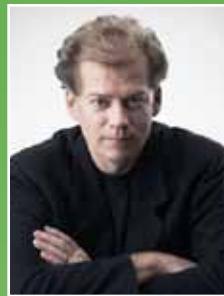
Lindsay: Pilates has become a top choice for fitness instructors because it has no age barrier or fitness requirements. This method of exercise produces longer, leaner muscles, improves postural alignment, increases core strength, balance strength and flexibility, heightens body awareness, and prevents injury. Pilates is not as stressful on the joints as other, high-impact forms of exercise.

Ken: Pilates allows personal trainers to offer a real service differentiator and a potential additional revenue stream. Plus, because the exercise method is so gentle on the joints, it can expand their customer base to include populations they may not have been able to work with before – like older adults or post-rehab clients.

OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS



Ken Endleman is Founder and CEO of Balanced Body, the world's leading provider of Pilates equipment, education and information. He has designed and redesigned countless pieces of Pilates equipment, many of which have become industry standards. For more information, visit www.pilates.com.



Lindsay G. Merrithew, President and CEO of Merrithew International Inc., has been the driving force behind the growth of its premier brand, STOTT PILATES. He has been instrumental in designing, producing and marketing the company's extensive equipment and video lines. To date, he has developed dozens of commercial products and has executive produced over 120 DVDs for the professional and retail consumer markets. For more information, visit www.stottpilates.com.



Stefania Della Pia is Program Director, Education & Master Instructor Trainer for STOTT PILATES, a Can-Fit Pro certified Personal Trainer Specialist and an ACE certified Personal Trainer. She has over 12 years experience working in the Pilates industry, has contributed to various health and fitness articles, and plays an instrumental part in the production of STOTT PILATES education materials and manuals.

Getting Started

The two barriers that fitness professionals most commonly raise when it comes to starting a Pilates program are getting the proper training and not knowing what equipment they need or not having the space for it.

Training and Certification You're already busy enough with your work, how can you find the time to invest in classes and get certified? Can you do it in a weekend? How do you know which program is right for you?

Ken: This can be seen as a time-consuming hurdle, but that's not necessarily true and it really depends on the trainer's background. While the ultimate goal is to become fully certified, it is the biomechanics of the exercise that are important to understand. For those who have a background in rehab or physical therapy, it might be possible for them to take a weekend training session and begin teaching while continuing their education as needed. But a trainer who has no background in Pilates or proper biomechanics does need to get a more comprehensive education before beginning to teach. However, many education programs are modular and can be done at the trainer's own speed.

Lindsay: It is important for anyone looking for good instruction or certifications to seek out organizations that provide in-depth knowledge and practical programming options to teach effective group or personal training programs to clients of any age or fitness level. Watch out for 'one-time' weekend programs that don't require apprenticeship hours or proper qualifications of the attendees' skills before giving them a certificate. Many of the people teaching these one-weekend certification programs possess little to qualify them to do so. The most well-respected certification programs specific to Pilates include observation, physical review, practice teaching, written and practical exams.

It's in the best interest of those wanting to certify to research the various organizations that offer certification and examine how comprehensive their courses and programs are. High-caliber Pilates certification shows clients and employers that instructors are well-qualified professionals who align with top organizations in the industry.

Equipment Most passionate trainers embrace the opportunity to expand their knowledge base, but the idea of spending a lot of money on a bunch of equipment, especially if you're confused about what you need, is downright painful. With so many different Pilates products out there, how do you know where to begin?

To start out:

Stefania: Not all pieces of equipment are necessary when starting out; many instructors start their instruction in Pilates with mat work and/or Reformer. The best products a trainer needs to begin teaching would be a mat, preferably one that is thicker and more cushioned than a Yoga mat, small cushions to accommodate various head positions and small pieces of equipment or "props" for added challenge. If cost is an issue, new trainers can use towels to replace head props, hand weights or light medicine balls in place of Toning Balls, tubing to replace some Flex-band exercises or an aerobic step or bolster (Yoga) to sit on to modify seated mat work exercises, but it is highly recommended that for proper execution of exercises and programming, the appropriate equipment is used.

Ken: Mats and props are good when starting out, but there are also other space-saving and economical pieces of equipment like arcs and springboards.

RESOURCES

TO HELP YOU GET STARTED:

Balanced Body

www.pilates.com
800.PILATES (800.745.2837)

Balanced Body University

www.bbupilates.com
877.PILATES (877.745.2837)

Pilates Method Alliance

www.pilatesmethodalliance.org
866.573.4945

STOTT PILATES

www.stottpilates.com
800.910.0001

When space is an Issue:

Ken: The size of the designated Pilates space obviously affects the amount of equipment a trainer will need to invest in. Reformers are the most popular piece of Pilates equipment, but they can take up room. Fortunately, most Pilates equipment providers have recognized this fact and designed Reformers specifically for the commercial sector. They can now stack, store or move much more easily than in the past.

But if you still don't have the room for a Reformer there are other options: Chairs provide a fun and challenging strength Pilates workout within a small floor space footprint. Balanced Body's EXO Chair has unique attachments for resistance bands. This allows clients to do a lot of Reformer work on a chair without it taking up as much space (or money) as a Reformer would.

Stefania: If space is an issue, STOTT PILATES V2 Max Plus Reformer is a very effective all-in-one large piece of equipment that can accommodate Matwork, Reformer, and Cadillac programming with its unique retractable rope system and vertical frame with travelling pulley system. Or a Stability Chair is smaller and an economical piece that is great for private sessions and small group classes.

Starting a Pilates program doesn't have to be complex or expensive—start your program with mat work and a few simple items, and as your client base grows, you can add more offerings to your program. Just make sure that you're growing, too, and staying up-to-speed on your certification.