

Cutting-Edge Pilates Programming for Instructors

By Kerrie Lee Brown

As fitness professionals, you know more than anyone how important physical fitness is to overall wellness. With the rise of obesity and society's consistent embrace of fast-food indulgencies, the fitness professional's role has become an integral part in people's lives.

Whether your desire is to help clients sculpt a toned physique, prevent sport injuries, increase overall strength, relieve stress or get back in shape after pregnancy, the fact is that more and more people are turning to some form of exercise to help, assist and/or alter their lifestyle. In other words, no matter what form of exercise you choose to teach or what training regimens you utilize, staying on top of your programming is a must in order to keep up with your changing clients' needs.

Different forms of exercise such as cross-training, circuit training, split days, interval, group exercise and personal training are staples in most clubs. However, the popularity of mind/body exercise is what's attracting all ages and life stages. Pilates has become a top choice for fitness instructors because it has no age barrier or fitness requirements.

"Pilates is a kinder, gentler exercise for your body with all of the benefits of strength training," says Moira Merrithew, Executive Director of Education, STOTT PILATES. "At the same time, [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."

The Key to Success

There are over 10 million participants in North America alone, and quality instructors are a rare commodity. Proper training and education is pertinent for instructors to learn the most up-to-date repertoire.

Pilates instructors have the opportunity to teach a method of exercise that is growing in popularity every day. Also, they have the potential to retain more clients and, in turn, become more profitable. As a result, facility owners are realizing this boom in Pilates and looking for the most qualified instructors to help bring in members. So they're incorporating comprehensive Pilates programming into their daily fitness schedules.

People who are interested in certifying in Pilates are often not aware of their options for professional instruction, programming and long-lasting education. However, there are many high-caliber licensed training centers around the globe to assist in the process.

“High-caliber locations have been carefully selected to deliver elite training curriculum and education and are staffed with top certified instructor trainers and the best equipment on the market,” explains President and CEO, STOTT PILATES, Lindsay G. Merrithew. “These centers adhere to standards of operation that ensure consistent delivery of programs and services for those wanting to pursue a career in this exercise method.”

Rehab, Sports and Special Populations

Pilates instructors enjoy the fact that this contemporized form of exercise allows them to cater to a wide range of clients. Specific programs are now 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.

“We make sure that all of our instructors are well-versed in our curriculum and keep up with their continuing education credits,” adds Moira. “We know how important current programming is, and we want to make sure our instructors are prepared to instruct any client who walks through their door.”

Many men are also incorporating Pilates into their training. Mr. Merrithew says he foresees more and more males turning to Pilates for athletic conditioning and strength training, which means specific programming is essential for different body sizes, weights and athletic needs. “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 – and making it a regular part of their program.”

Pilates is the perfect modality for rehabilitation from a sports-related or other injury. When a Pilates practitioner trains a client with a knee injury, the body is seen as a whole, and the movement patterns are designed to strengthen from the deep stabilizing muscles to the large mobilizers, integrating the mind/body connection throughout.

Since the basis of Pilates is postural alignment, core strength and stability and mobility of the periphery (arms and legs), most exercise progressions begin in lying or sitting positions. Movements can begin with simple breathing exercises that focus on deep, efficient and mindful breath. The idea of focusing the mind on what the body is doing can afford staggering benefits.

The variety of exercises available as well as the ability to modify these movement patterns allows professionals to target a specific muscle or muscle group. By changing the angle or strength of resistance injuries can be precisely addressed. Specially designed Pilates equipment can help facilitate these adaptations.

Exercise for a Lifetime

Pilates enthusiasts can use mat work and/or equipment-based Pilates programming to fulfill their health and fitness goals. As a result, more and more facilities are implementing high-quality equipment and training into their locations to fulfill their unique needs – and instructors, now more than ever, have access to the most up-to-date repertoire on the market.

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. And the best part is that today, instructors can reap the benefits of cutting-edge programming and stay on top of their growing clients' needs.

Kerrie Lee Brown is Vice President of Communications for STOTT PILATES. Over the past ten years, she has enjoyed an exciting career in fitness journalism. Kerrie is the former editor-in-chief of Oxygen: Women's Fitness and American Health & Fitness magazines and has overseen numerous successful magazine launches and revamps. Kerrie holds a Bachelor of Arts, Communication Studies and Political Science Degree from Wilfrid Laurier University and a Bachelor of Applied Arts, Graduate Journalism Degree from Ryerson Polytechnic University. To contact Kerrie, email kerrielee.brown@stottpilates.com.

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