

FitStars: Pilates Guru Moira Merrithew

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Read on as we chat with Moira Merrithew about everything Pilates, including the biggest misconception people have about it!

Interview With Pilates Guru Moira Merrithew

- **FBG:** How do you feel about people learning Pilates from workout DVDs vs. one-on-one in a studio?
- **MM:** Educating instructors and doing what we can to enhance their professional lives is a major part of what we do at Merrithew. It is important to us that our instructors' clients are given the best possible all-round experience they can have when embarking on any of our mindful movement programs. Having the eye of a well-trained instructor is paramount to anyone progressing faster and to keeping motivated. That being said, not everyone has the opportunity to attend regular workout sessions, or they may want to add variety or an extra session to their existing routine. For these very reasons, DVDs add a lot of value to a person's overall well-being. There are so many great DVDs to choose from that the ability to exercise at home can be the key motivator to get that extra workout in the week. And that extra workout may make all the difference to weight-loss or any other fitness goal.
- **FBG:** How has STOTT PILATES changed in the past 25 years?
- **MM:** Over the years, we've worked very hard to ensure the STOTT PILATES methodology has synthesized the latest in exercise science and research to ensure our approach continuously evolves and is current with what is happening in the rehab and athletic performance world. We documented this all along the way as the basis for our education manuals and DVDs to make it clear and concise for instructors. It was also very important to us that our instructor base knows our teachings are based on current research findings and not what was thought to be accurate 20 years ago.
- **FBG:** Can you tell us more about the new mindful fitness brands Merrithew Health & Fitness has started?
- **MM:** Lindsay, my husband and co-founder of Merrithew, was the first to recognize the potential we had to do more. He thought that as our company is a leader in the mind-body category, and with the expertise we have in our instructor trainer base, that it was natural for us to develop other brands of mindful exercise. ZEN•GA is a synergistic blend of mindful movement modalities such as yoga, Pilates, meditation and dance and is supported by exercise science and the newest findings in fascial fitness. Research is reinforcing the importance of fascia, and with ZEN•GA, we aim to enhance elasticity and create a more youthful, resilient and fluid body. CORE Athletic Conditioning & Performance Training is a training program that focuses on

functional fitness, targeting core strength and kinesthetic awareness, which together leads to improvements in total-body strength and power. It's really about kick-starting the metabolic system! And we're in the process of rolling out our new barre program—Total Barre—which is high-energy and focuses on strength, flexibility, stamina and dynamic stability by combining elements from Pilates, dance, cardio and strength training. We've applied our years of experience and scientific research to develop a program that is driven by music. Music, when used appropriately, has been proven to increase coordination, motivation and to improve movement quality. There are countless ways to keep your classes interesting and fun just by the choice of music you use. The addition of these new fitness brands to our premier brand STOTT PILATES allows us to provide our community of instructors with more programming options for their own practices and for their clients. We want to satiate the appetite for mind-body fitness.

- **FBG:** What's the number one misconception people have about Pilates?
- **MM:** There are two widely held misunderstandings: 1) People think you need to be flexible to do Pilates and; 2) People think it is very passive. Pilates is the perfect form of exercise for someone who wants to safely increase their mobility and flexibility. It is a complete fallacy that you need to be flexible. When taught well, Pilates programming can be modified for any body type to insure major focus is placed on conditioning our local and global stabilizing muscles—the muscles responsible for the deep stability (strength) surrounding our joints—not only our core, but all our joints. If these muscles are not well conditioned, our larger global muscles—the major mobilizers/movers of our joints—become very tight and imbalanced, as they then end up having to support our weak joint structure. Exercises are modified for different body types in order to facilitate this conditioning, and the result is increased strength with more mobility. By stretching a muscle over and over to try to increase flexibility, the joint can become destabilized and a person can end up with more tension in the end and lose flexibility. As for passive? By working these deeper muscular layers of our inner core, you can't help but feel like you are working hard. Working with your own body weight and light tension where there is less support will increase the inner core strength—and, believe me, you will feel it.
- **FBG:** What's the best advice you can give someone about Pilates?
- **MM:** Try it! Pilates is a fantastic complement to any other workout or conditioning method that you choose because of the effective training of our deep stabilizing system. This approach to exercise not only helps avoid injury but also will facilitate quicker results in any other athletic endeavor, as well as it helps to avoid chronic pain that can occur from bad postural habits.
- **FBG:** What's your workout and healthy living routine like?
- **MM:** The major thing I've learned is that if I don't work out regularly, physically I feel sluggish and mentally I don't have focus, drive and concentration in my daily tasks. My workouts have changed a lot over the years, as I continuously try to experience the new and different modalities and approaches that enter the market. On a regular basis though, I like to mix it up and find interval training a great way to do that. A little time on the treadmill, some light weights and some time on our V2Max Plus Reformer, adding the Jumpboard & Cross-Bow and Cardio-Tramp Rebounder—that's my idea of a perfect workout.

Lots of new types of exercise for us to try! Which workout sounds best to you? —Jenn

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