

Hands-On Mom

Melissa Wong juggles two daunting tasks with panache: Motherhood and her recent appointment as a senior STOTT Pilates trainer for South East Asia.

Here's how she does it!

By Kim Boey, CSCS and ACE certified instructor, fitness educator and coordinator at Fit for 2

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO THESE DAYS?

I'm the co-founder and education director for Pilatique Pilates Studio in Malaysia and Singapore, in addition to being an ACE-certified personal trainer and instructor trainer for STOTT Pilates instructor courses, where I teach and certify instructors who conduct mat and apparatus-based Pilates. I'll be delivering my second child in May.

YOU'RE REALLY BUSY! WHAT'S YOUR SECRET TO HAVING GOOD WORK-LIFE BALANCE?

I prioritize and keep tabs on work deadlines, planning backwards with some buffer for emergencies. I'm a very task-focused person and tend to wake up in the middle of the night to finish important work while my toddler is asleep, though I do remind myself to set aside time for rest. Moreover, I accomplish as much as possible when my son is at daycare so I'm able to enjoy every moment I have with him in the evening.

DO YOU FIND IT HARD STICKING TO AN EXERCISE REGIME, SINCE YOU HAVE A TODDLER TO CARE FOR?

Yes, especially since I'm also managing our Pilates studios. I have to really make an effort to workout, exercising on the Pilates apparatus at work or at

home with my stability ball, flex-band and toning balls (light-weighted balls). During the weekends, I push my son, Max, in a stroller and go for a walk while hubby goes for his run. I also walk in the pool, do light housework and keep up with Max. I do whatever I can, at all times.

WHAT'S YOUR 'PICK ME UP' WHEN YOU'RE FEELING DOWN?

Fresh morning air, chirping birds, gentle early morning sunlight, my son's little hands holding my fingers, his caresses and little kisses on my lips and cheek, my baby bump, hubby holding my hand while we go for walks, and groovy music.

WHAT'S YOUR PET PEEVE ABOUT BEING PREGNANT?

Puffy maternity dresses, and having to stop myself from carrying heavy loads.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO WOMEN WHO ARE PREGNANT, OR WHO HAVE A FAMILY?

Staying active is crucial. Try Pilates mat work or apparatus-based lessons, prenatal classes or even personal training at gyms, two or three times a week. If you're short on time, go for short morning or evening strolls, walk or swim slowly in the pool, or be creative and add on some movements while doing simple housework. Don't stop moving, but don't forget to rest sufficiently too.

Turn
the page
for Melissa's
workouts

Boost your mobility!

Upright exercises strengthen your lower body and increases awareness of upper body posture, which helps with mobility during and after pregnancy. **Melissa Wong**, co-founder of Pilatique, a Pilates studio in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, demonstrates 5 easy strength workouts you can do anywhere.

Photograph by Ting Yong Shen, Coordination by Adelina Tan, Art direction: Mei Leng, Hair & Makeup: A Cut Above Academy, Outfit: Model's Own



Lunges with tricep press

Quads, hamstrings, triceps, coordination and balancing skills

▶ Stand holding toning balls with arms by your ears and elbows flexed. Place one foot forward to lunge position and extend elbows, keeping elbows fixed in position [shown]. Step back to place feet together in standing position and flex elbows.

CAUTION: Balance is greatly affected by hormonal changes during pregnancy, so this exercise requires a lot of concentration while stepping forward and back. Make sure your steps are neither too small nor too big. Both knees should be at an angle of 90 degrees when fully flexed (gradually build strength to this level) and upper body maintained in an upright position.



Standing side-bend

Obliques, lower body stability and awareness of lower body alignment while moving upper body

▶ Stand on flex-band with legs about hip-distance apart, one hand holding flex-band and extending it up by the side of your ear. Flex upper body from waist up towards the opposite side of the arm that's holding flex-band, maintaining a sense of lengthening of spine throughout [shown].

CAUTION: Keep pelvis in the middle between feet and avoid shifting all weight to one side and swaying your pelvis to the same side of the arm holding the flex-band. Head and cervical posture should follow the alignment of flexed upper body.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES
Combines upper body and lower body workouts to promote awareness of individual upper and lower body joints, improve coordination skills, avoid the rounding forward of shoulders and over-extension of lower back, and strengthening of the lower body.

External rotation of shoulders

Shoulder alignment and stability, strengthening the back portion of shoulders which are often neglected and hence weaker, conditioning postural alignment which tends to round forward during pregnancy

▶ Place flex band over stability ball and sit on it, crossing the flex-band and holding it with palms up, elbows flexed at 90 degrees and upper arm perpendicular to trunk. Keeping upper arm and elbows fixed in space, rotate your shoulders outward [shown].

CAUTION: Do this exercise slowly and control both the turning out (pulling and tensing the flex-band) and turning in (releasing tension of flex-band) movements, as it works on the intrinsic yet crucial smaller muscles around the shoulders. Avoid rotating shoulders too much, pushing chest forward and losing control to maintain good upper body alignment.



Squatting with stability ball against the wall

Quads, hamstrings, co-ordination of arm movements

▶ Stand with stability ball between mid-back and wall, legs slightly wider than hip-distance apart, arms to your sides. Maintain upright position of upper body, squat as low as knees allow in-line with hips (gradually build strength to this level), and raise arms to shoulder height [shown]. Straighten knees and return to starting position.

CAUTION: Ensure lower back maintains neutral alignment and avoids going into extension throughout this exercise. Control both the movements of squatting and returning to starting position, keeping knee in line with middle of foot while squatting and keeping quads and hamstrings active throughout, avoiding the jamming or locking of knees while extending.



Fit For 2 Promotion

In April, enjoy a free muffin and ginger tea when you visit Fit For 2's adjoining cafe, at Lot 3f-1b, 3rd floor, Bangsar Village 2, Jalan Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, or call 02-2287 5001.