

Pilates Training

Pilates, pronounced “pill-ah-tees,” is a physical fitness system developed in the early 20th century by Joseph Pilates in Germany.[1] As of 2005 there are 11 million people who practice the discipline regularly and 14,000 instructors in the United States.[2] Pilates called his method Controlology, because he believed his method uses the mind to control the muscles.[3] The program focuses on the core postural muscles which help keep the body balanced and which are essential to providing support for the spine. In particular, Pilates exercises teach awareness of breath and alignment of the spine, and aim to strengthen the deep torso muscles.

History of Pilates

German born Joseph Pilates designed a system of exercise based on aerobics and yoga postures of Surya Namaskaras.

Pilates was formed by the part Greek, part German Joseph Pilates during the First World War with the proposal to improve the rehabilitation program for the many returning veterans. Joseph Pilates believed mental and physical health are essential to one another. He recommended a few, precise movements emphasizing control and form to aid injured soldiers in regaining their health by strengthening, stretching, and stabilizing key muscles. Pilates created “The Pilates Principles” to condition the entire body: proper alignment, centering, concentration, control, precision, breathing, and flowing movement.

Joseph Pilates wrote two books concerning the Pilates method, *Return to Life through Controlology* (1928) and *Your Health: A Corrective System of*

Exercising That Revolutionizes the Entire Field of Physical Education (1934).

Principles

Pilates claimed his method has a philosophical and theoretical foundation. He claims that his system is not merely a collection of exercises, but a method developed and refined over more than eighty-five years of use and observation.

Mind Over Matter

According to practitioners, the central aim of Pilates is to attempt to create a fusion of mind and body, so that without even engaging the mind, the body will move with economy, grace, and balance.



Breathing

Joseph Pilates believed in circulating the blood so that it could awaken all the cells in the body and carry away the wastes related to fatigue. For the blood to do its work properly, he maintained, it has to be charged with oxygen and purged of waste gases through proper breathing. By this standard, if you stop breathing during exercise, there is an error in your practice. Full and thorough inhalation and exhalation are purportedly a part of every Pilates exercise. Pilates saw

forced exhalation as the key to full inhalation. “Squeeze out the lungs as you would wring a wet towel dry,” he is reputed to have said. Pilates breathing should be done with concentration, control, and precision. Proper and effective breathing, practitioners assert, not only oxygenates the muscles, but also reduces tension in the upper neck and shoulders. Pilates breathing is described as a posterior lateral breathing, meaning that the practitioner is instructed to breathe deep into the back and sides of his or her rib cage. When practitioners exhale, they are instructed to note the engagement of their deep abdominal and pelvic floor muscles and maintain this engagement as they inhale. Pilates attempts to properly coordinate this breathing practice with movement, including breathing instructions with every exercise. Joseph Pilates stated, “Even if you follow no other instructions, learn to breathe correctly.”

Centering

Pilates called the very large group of muscles in the center of the body – encompassing the abdomen, lower back, hips, and buttocks – the “powerhouse.” All energy for

Pilates exercises is said to begin from the powerhouse and flow outward to the limbs. In other words, the Pilates technique asserts that physical energy exerted from the center should coordinate movements of the extremities. Pilates felt that it was important to build a strong powerhouse in order to rely on it in daily living. Modern instructors call the powerhouse the “core”.

Concentration

Pilates demands intense focus. For instance, the inner thighs and pelvic

floor may be assessed when doing a standing exercise that tones the triceps. Beginners are instructed to pay careful attention to their bodies, building on very small, delicate fundamental movements and controlled breathing. In 2006, at the Parkinson Center of the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, Oregon, the concentration factor of the Pilates method was being studied in providing relief from the degenerative symptoms of Parkinson's disease.[4]

Control

Joseph Pilates built his method with rocks on the idea of muscle control. To him, that meant no sloppy, uncontrolled movements. Practitioners are of a movement, but proper form for safe, effective results.[5]

Precision

Practitioners assert that every movement in the Pilates method has a purpose. Every instruction is considered vitally important to the success of the whole. To leave out any detail is believed to forsake the intrinsic value of the exercise. The focus is on doing one precise and perfect movement, rather than many halfhearted ones. The goal is for this precision to eventually become second nature, and carry over into everyday life as grace and economy of movement.

A qualified Pilates instructor is expected to understand the technique well enough to adapt it to the real-world capabilities of his or her students. Students with physical disabilities, for example, should be given a Pilates regimen intended to improve their methods of physically compensating for their ailment.

Flow or efficiency of movement

Movement is expected to be kept continuous between exercises through the use of appropriate transitions. Once precision has been achieved, the exercises are intended to flow within and into each other in order to build strength and stamina.

Flexibility

A controlled experiment[6] gives some support to claims that Pilates enhances flexibility.

Use

Traditionally, Pilates is performed using a machine, classically known as the Pilates reformer, which provides exercise resistance to build strength, develop proper alignment and posture, and increase flexibility. Presently, however, mat Pilates, which does not make use of the reformer is becoming increasingly popular. In the absence of the reformer, an individual's core strength is garnered as resistance to increase flexibility and further develop the core muscles.

Precautions

Pilates during pregnancy can be a highly valuable and beneficial form of exercise, but the use of Pilates in pregnancy should only be undertaken under guidance of a fully trained expert.[7]

References

1. ^ Pilates, Joseph (1945 - Re-released 1998). Pilates' Return to Life through Contrology. Incline Village: Presentation dynamics. ISBN 0961493798.
2. ^ Ellin, A. (2005-07-21). "Now Let Us All Contemplate Our Own Financial Navels". New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/21/business/21sbiz.html>. Retrieved on 2007-09-20.
3. ^ Pilates, Joseph (1945 - Re-released 1998). Pilates' Return to Life through Contrology. Incline Village: Presentation dynamics. ISBN 0961493798.
4. ^ MSNBC, Pilates may give relief for Parkinson's patients 2006.
5. ^ Pilates, Joseph (1945 - Re-released 1998). Pilates' Return to Life through Contrology. Incline Village: Presentation dynamics. ISBN 0961493798.
6. ^ Segal NA, Hein J, Basford JR. The effects of Pilates training on flexibility and body composition: an observational study. Arch Phys Med Rehabil 2004;85:1977-81.
7. ^ Royal College of Midwives (2005). "Pilates and pregnancy" (.pdf). Volume 8, Number 5, pp. 220-223. Royal College of Midwives. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/rcm/rcm/2005/00000008/00000005/art00015>. Retrieved on September 11 2007.
8. ^ US District Court - Southern District of NY, Opinion 96 civ. 43 (MGC) October 2000[1]
9. ^ Wall Street Journal, "Is your Pilates Instructor a Health Hazard?", March 15th, 2005 [2],