



The Ancient *Art of Pilates*

In last month's issue, I explained the practice of yoga in great detail. This month, I'd like to take a closer look at another wonderful fitness program, which has gained popularity, Pilates.

Early in the 20th century, Joseph Pilates created an exercise system that is now hitting its peak in this country. His technique was known as "contrology", now better known just as Pilates. Through a lawsuit several years back, the name Pilates can now be used in general to refer to this type of exercise – not just to the lineage of Joseph Pilates' disciples.

Pilates, like yoga works on strengthening, flexibility, balance, core stability and spinal alignment. The pilates method is taught either on the mat or on equipment such as the reformer, Cadillac and chair and now B.A.R.R.E method.

The principles, whether on the mat or equipment, are: concentration, control, centering, flow, precision and breathing. Each principle is involved in every movement performed, from the basic to the advanced.

There is much talk of classical pilates vs. contemporary pilates. To put it simply, and for myself and most of my clients, classical Pilates can be very challenging and unforgiving for those who do not have healthy backs – the reason contemporary Pilates has evolved. In contemporary classes or sessions you will find modifications for exercises and of course, we have now seen the adjunct of adding or the fusion of different training methods. We have circuit pilates classes adding small equipment such as balls and bands, yoga-lattes, pi-you (both adding yoga movements to pilates), hydro-Pilates (water exercise), and most recently, B.A.R.R.E (ballet and reformer resistance exercises). To some, this is blasphemy to the original, but none- the- less not a bad way to train. There is also the argument of neutral spine vs. imprinted spine – all in technique and for safety and stability arguments.

A classical mat class will follow the true set of exercises, in order, that Joseph Pilates initiated. Exercises include the famous "one-hundred" which incorporates breath with heating up the body preparing it for more intense exercise. Another known exercise is the "teaser" – looking somewhat like boat pose in yoga – but transitioning from the floor to the v-sit. Most of the exercises are interchangeable from the mat to the equipment.

Pilate's classes are taught in groups, privately and semi-privately. It is usually encouraged or even mandatory that the pilates student be familiar with at least 10 mat sessions before being placed on equipment. A thorough evaluation of their health and a spinal evaluation should be performed before beginning a pilates program.

According to Joseph Pilates in 10 sessions you will feel a difference, in 20 sessions you will see a difference, in 30 sessions you will have a new body.

Certified Pilates Instructor, Kim Farinello says "after even just 1 session my clients have claimed to feel taller and leaner. I believe this is due to their new awareness of body alignment and movement during their sessions."

Whether you chose yoga or pilates, a combination of each, or both – make sure that you are comfortable with the class, instructor and location. Does your instructor just watch themselves in the mirror or do they assist and walk around during class? You can ask their credentials to see if they are trained or certified in that format. If you are not confident that the class is right for you – try another instructor or time – don't give up – your body's health depends on it. To get stronger, more fit and more flexible, try to incorporate yoga or Pilates several times a week faithfully and you, too will see the changes in your body



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