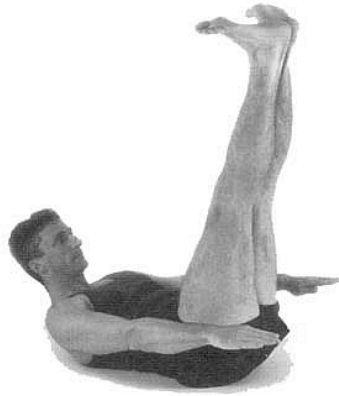


Pilates Matwork available at FIT 4 LIFE

Fit 4 Life now offers the world famous Pilates. What is the Pilates Method? Don't we often read it as being the workout preferred by the Hollywood stars?

The Pilates Method is about movement. It is not about aerobics or bulking muscles. It is to get muscles that you work during the routines to work for you in your everyday movements; it's about enhancing your mental and physical beings in unison, and producing the ultimate balance and harmony for mind & body.



The main difference of the Pilates Method is that not just the exercises, but also the intent of the exercises. Often the journey through the movement of the body parts holds more importance than the destination. Joseph Pilates, the creator of the Method originally called his body conditioning "Contrology" and the intent of the work is reflected in the name it was first given.

According to Tatiana C. Ling, Malaysia's first certified Pilates Matwork Instructor from the Pilates Institute of Australasia, to simply go through the motions as many

people do when they hit the gym or aerobic classes is not enough when you partake a Pilates workout. It is similar to Yoga in that awareness of breath is a central part of the flow of the exercise. It relates to Yoga also, in that the mind should be fully engaged with the activity of the body, not just zoning off and letting the arms and legs get on with it. Pilates offers a trimmer waist, flatter belly, better posture based on balanced muscle tone and awareness, more regal carriage, less fatigue and lower incidence of back pain and injury.

The Pilates Matwork Routine is a series of continuous exercises for every part of the body. One principle becomes strongly apparent during the exercises - no movement can be performed correctly without having a strong center and total concentration on the movement being performed. The key to the Pilates Method is a strong abdominal core, from the deep inner layers of muscles to the ones on the surface. Combined with pelvic stability these areas are the origins from which to create a strong mid section of the spine, both front and back, thus stabilizing the torso. From this stable and firm central area all movements can flow with less effort and more grace.

The initial challenge is trying to focus on more than one thing at a time: keeping the abdominals firm, relaxing the shoulders, breathing correctly with the movement, isolating a particular muscle - it all seems a bit overwhelming at first. As you progress through the sessions it all begins to make sense and you find that you are able to perform movements, which once seemed clumsy and awkward, with fluidity and ease.

Toning, conditioning and controlling the weak muscle groups require some effort. They usually do not work when you want them to; they are the 'flabby' ones you never thought you would get (it always happens to someone else!). These weaker muscles, usually the abdominals (especially the area below the navel), the back of the arms, the buttocks and back and inner thighs, will not work even at the gym! With Pilates, focusing on these smaller muscle groups may not produce immediate results, however they do last longer once achieved.

Weak muscles in some parts of the body also have an opposite effect. Opposing muscles may be too tight, creating imbalances such as poor posture, scoliosis or even a twisted pelvis. For example, poor posture with rounded shoulders would indicate tight chest



muscles (pectorals) and weak back muscles between the shoulder blades (rhomboids). The muscle lengthening movements for the tight chest muscles in each exercise work on strengthening the weaker back muscles so control is gradually achieved in both front and back during the same movement.

Pilates has also become a tool for improving sport performance. As the body extends its range of movement and attains strength in these extended ranges, injuries become less frequent. As an example, female classical dancers are very mobile and flexible, with lean muscle fibers, however their strength in the full range of their movement is somewhat limited; at the other extreme, a tri-athlete may be very tight with short, bulky muscle groups therefore reducing their flexibility. Pilates attempts to correct these imbalances by giving greater strength to the dancer without reducing their mobility nor creating bulky muscles: and by improving the flexibility of the tri-athlete without reducing the strength and endurance required for their performance.

compiled by

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