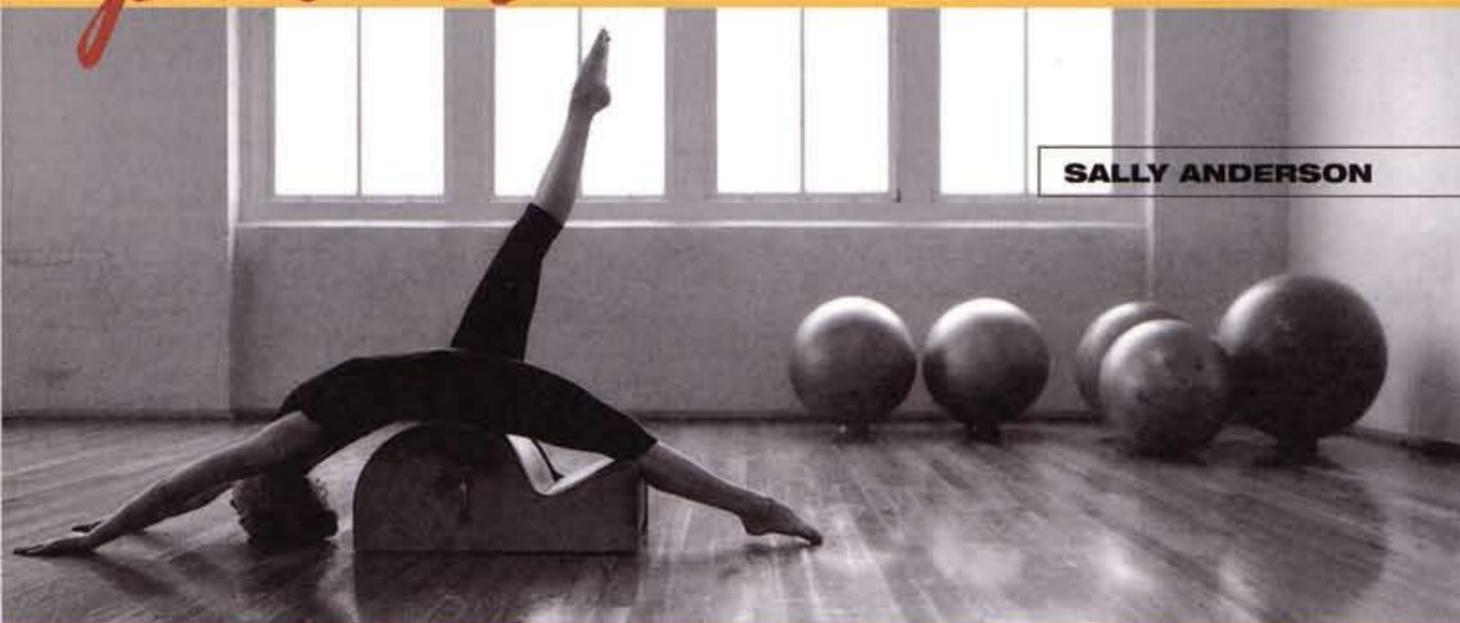


pilates



SALLY ANDERSON

The way to a stronger, more balanced body and mind

Can you imagine participating in an exercise program that you actually look forward to doing? Try also imagining not only finding an exercise program that you enjoy but one that also provides rapid toning of your body and leaves you feeling both physically and mentally refreshed. Pilates, the "thinking persons workout" claims to do this and more. Since its inception nearly a century ago Pilates popularity has been steadily growing with the past decade in particular seeing a surge in the general population's awareness and desire to benefit from it. This can be partly attributed to media coverage of celebrities such as Madonna, Julia Roberts and Sharon Stone as well as elite sports stars incorporating Pilates into their daily routines. Its main appeal however is the fact that people from all walks of life regardless of body shape, age, fitness level or injury can participate and gain benefits.

What is Pilates?

Pilates is based upon principles that combine both eastern and western philosophy. It is a method of body conditioning and postural alignment techniques, which focus on integrating the mind and breath. Using specialised equipment and specifically designed movement patterns, this method aims to restore musculoskeletal balance and strength. The combined effect of integrating both the strengthening of muscles and the use of the mind results in increased control, enhanced body awareness and specific re-balancing of the body.

History of Pilates

Joseph Pilates was born in Germany in 1880 and initially developed his method of healing as a way of improving his own strength and well being. From childhood he suffered from asthma that left him weak and prone to ill health. He studied and adapted techniques such as yoga,

martial arts, boxing, Greco-Roman wrestling and gymnastics which enabled him to become an accomplished gymnast by the age of 14.

In 1912 Joseph took his athletic skills to England where he worked as a circus performer until his internment in a Prisoner of War camp during World War One.

During his confinement Joseph extended his methods to aide in the healing of injured and sick POW patients by attaching springs to their hospital beds and developing a series of over 500 mind body exercises. This method formed the foundation for his style of body conditioning and specialised exercise apparatus. It was during this period that his reputation for prevention of illness and rehabilitation was built and having declined Hitler's offer to train the new German army Joseph decided to take his methods to New York City where in 1926 he opened the first Pilates Studio™.

What are the Benefits of Pilates?

The most profound benefits of Pilates are stronger abdominals and back, resulting in better posture, spinal support, pain-free movement and greater endurance. It is an ideal technique for rehabilitation of existing injuries and conditions, making it particularly appealing to those looking for ways to heal back and spinal injuries.

Pilates has the unique ability to provide an environment of non-weight bearing and non-impact techniques specifically targeting weak and traumatised muscles. For example the Reformer method is used to assist in back and spinal injuries by working the entire body against spring resistance while the client is supported in a horizontal position.

Prevention of injuries is also enhanced as the Pilates technique enables weakened muscles to re-balance and strengthen, which protects the joints and muscles from stress and strains.

Sally Anderson, director of Pilates International and one of Australia's leading experts in Pilate's says that "the eastern and western elements of Pilates provide both balancing and channelling energies that use a blend of meditative and physical empowerment." She speaks of clients feeling the rush of self-empowerment at the end of a session.

When instructed by a qualified instructor Pilates is a safe form of exercise that has rapid results. It is appropriate for any person regardless of body shape, age, fitness level or injury. The positive outcomes are an energised body, lower stress levels, and feeling uplifted emotionally.

Principles of Pilates

To appreciate how Pilates differs from many other fitness and health techniques it is important to understand the eight main principles of Pilates. They are:

Concentration

With many exercise programs you can switch off whilst executing the exercise. With Pilates, every movement is a thought process and every movement is controlled by thought. The "mind body" side of this technique is that you block out other thoughts whilst focusing the movement.

Breathing

Breathing is a huge part of this technique and it is often the hardest thing to perfect. The main rule to remember is that you breathe out on the greatest effort. The deep abdominal muscles are contracted to 30% of their maximum force and the breath is sideways through the ribcage.

Centring

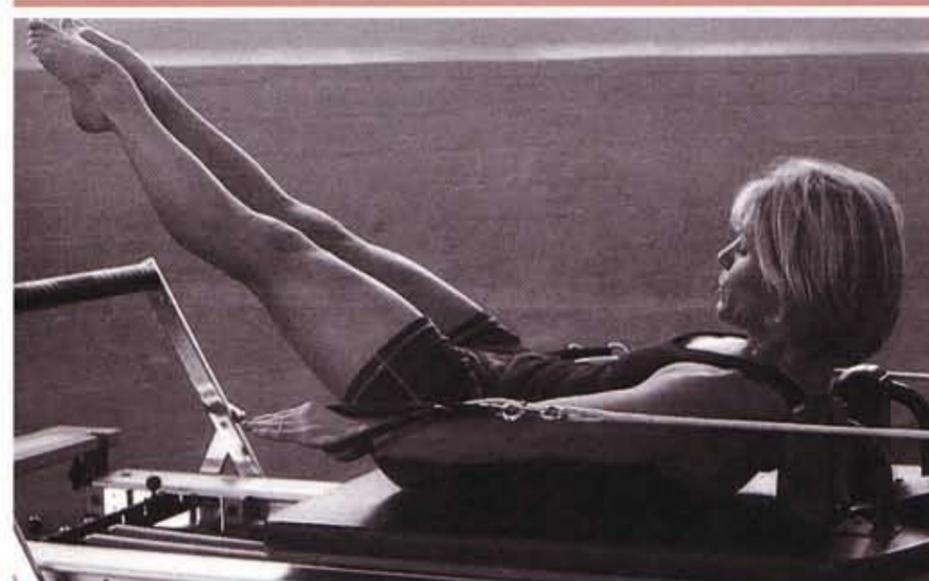
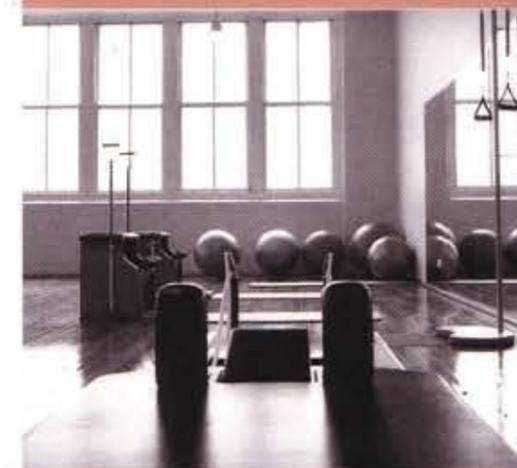
There is a huge awareness today about functional exercise and core control. Therefore the torso and back are given major attention. Every exercise is controlled by the contraction of the abdominal muscles.

Control

Working against gravity strengthens the body and the movements are slow and controlled.

Precision

The body is placed in a certain exact position at the beginning and the pathway of the movement is very specific.



Flowing movement

Pilates exercises use continuous, flowing movements with the same speed being used throughout the exercise. There is no jerking or throwing through the movement.

Isolation

The mind is challenged to find and isolate the working muscles whilst eliminating unnecessary involvement of other muscles.

Routine

The exercises are taught with repetition, which leads to results and skill refinement.