



Christine Romani-Ruby

Why Pilates?

Since 1998, the top growth activities in the fitness arena have been: Pilates training, elliptical motion trainers, recumbent cycling and yoga. The exercisers have been predominantly women, between the ages of 25 and 60, who are seeking less strenuous and more user-friendly methods for staying in shape. With this demographic, kinder, gentler fitness trends continue to displace traditional exercise. Because of the gentle strengthening and stretching in Pilates, these participants are reporting that Pilates programs best suit their fitness needs. Although centers are adding Pilates to meet these needs, many fitness centers do not have enough trained instructors. Pilates training is involved and time-consuming, so one of the greatest challenges to a Pilates program is finding enough competent teachers to staff the program.

With a growth of over 500% since 1998, interest in Pilates is still strong. The *International Dance Exercise Association (IDEA) 2006 Fitness and Programs Equipment Survey* reinforced this continued growth by naming Pilates not once, but three times in their top ten list. (Pilates personal training was number one, Pilates and traditional strength fusion was number four and Pilates, in general, was number six.) Pilates was identified as the top area of equipment

growth by two-thirds of the 20,000 fitness professional respondents in 80 countries. And, Pilates participants are not only women. Men are starting to take an interest – with famous athletes such as Jason Kidd, Rich Beem, and Tiger Woods singing the praises of Pilates.

When Pilates was first introduced in the United States by Joseph Pilates in the early 1920s, the method was presented as a pathway to total well-being. “This will be the exercise that people will want and need in the new millennium,” wrote Pilates in his book, *Your Health*, published in 1934. He continually alluded to the public’s misunderstanding of physical training as it relates to health, and the unnecessary causes of human suffering that would shorten lives. He offered his vision as a method to lead mankind to universal health. He implored the public to employ a method of exercise based on correcting causes rather than merely treating symptoms that would “coordinate the body, the mind and the spirit, allowing them to perform their work with minimum effort and maximum pleasure.”

A pugilist, gymnast and bodybuilder, Joseph Pilates created a fantastic method of exercise – vigorous enough for athletes such as dancers and boxers, yet gentle enough for older adults. This



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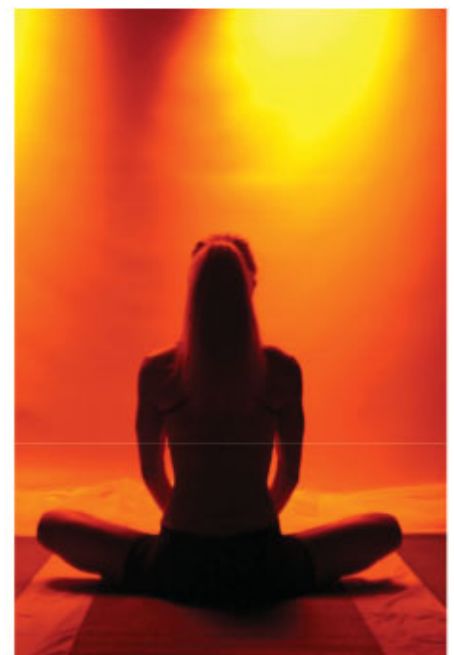
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seemingly ordinary man designed: 12 pieces of exercise equipment, over 500 exercises, and an instructional method that is sweeping the nation 50 years after his death. Pilates had a very sickly childhood, suffering from rickets and asthma, and his own personal health and achievements as an athlete were a testament to the success of his method. He wrote that the physical education teachers of his time did not even practice what they taught and their health was in a deplorable state. He encouraged them to “walk the talk” and not be mere preachers of what normal health should be. He appealed to the human race that it was their duty not only to attain health, but to maintain it. He was genuinely interested in the good of mankind and wanted most to empower people to take control of their own well-being. Joseph Pilates truly created his method for everybody – he even wanted for children in schools to benefit from it.

To me, this all sounds familiar. It sounds like what we, as fitness professionals, want today. We want fitness to be done as a method of prevention. It should be done to prevent things like obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure. It should be taught to children in the schools and practiced by young and old. It should be a necessary part of everyday life that can be completed gently, with ease. The mind should be involved, the spirit should be lifted. Joseph Pilates’ vision is one that we need to push to the consumer today. “It is your duty not only to attain health, but to maintain it,” said Pilates.

One in three American adults, aged 20 to 74, is overweight. One

in every five children, aged six to 17, is overweight. And, 39% of American adults report that they engage in no physical activity. I believe the fitness professional of today is singing the same song that Joseph Pilates was in 1920 – only we are singing more desperately. With this in mind, it is no surprise that interest in Pilates is growing. This gentle form of exercise answers the needs of today’s exercisers. Young, old, overweight, all can participate at their own level, competing only with themselves.

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So, no need to stop what you are already doing, just add Pilates. This method of exercise mixes well with strength training, cycling, aerobic dance, kickboxing, or yoga and movements can be assisted with the use of the equipment for those who are overweight, weak, or coming back from an injury. Truly a method for everybody, it is a place to start, or a place to which one can progress. It is a method of exercise to which to live. Pilates time has come. **CS**

Christine Romani-Ruby MPT, ATC is the Owner and Founder of Phi Pilates, the first educational company to bring a scientific method of Pilates education to the fitness community. For instructional DVDs, online courses, full Pilates training and equipment visit www.phipilates.com, or call Phi Pilates at 877.716.4879. We have the tools to get you and your teachers started and to keep your program growing.



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