

The Pilates taught by Mary German is in the style of Eve Gentry, a master teacher of movement who studied with Joseph Pilates for over twenty years. She co-founded the Institute for the Pilates Method, in 1991, to perpetuate the movement techniques developed by Joseph Pilates. Eve Gentry continued to teach until her death at age 84. In her later years she began working with people in post-injury and illness situations. She developed ways for people with limited possibilities to move pain free, increasing strength, endurance and flexibility, and increasing ease and grace in their movements. The following article explaining Pilates was written by Margot McKinnon, of Body Harmonics.

### **What Is Pilates?**

Pilates, pronounced Pi-laa-teez, is an 80-year-old method of physical conditioning that features hundreds of exercises completed either on a mat or on various pieces of specialized equipment. For many decades Pilates has been popular with athletes and dancers who face high performance demands. In the past decade, the general public has flocked to Pilates because it is a challenging yet gentle workout for the whole body. Pilates is often referred to as the thinking person's exercise. To gain maximum benefits, during each exercise you think, sense, and feel what your body is doing. For example, during any given exercise you may be asked to feel how your spine is moving, how your abdominal muscles feel, whether you are straining anywhere. With Pilates you learn to focus intently on all muscles and joints that are working. This stimulating exercise technique for both the body and mind is now recognized globally and is a suitable means of conditioning and rehabilitation for people of all activity levels.

### **Why Was Pilates Developed?**

Pilates was first developed by Joseph Pilates. As a child, Joseph suffered from asthma, rickets, and rheumatic fever. He developed a method of conditioning to overcome his ailments and it worked so well that he eventually became a competitive diver, skier, boxer, and gymnast. Over the years, his method caught the attention of countless athletes and dancers, including the New York City Ballet, tennis star Chris Evert, and members of the San Francisco 49ers. Today, Pilates is practiced by many looking to develop and maintain peak condition for optimum health. How does Pilates Work? In a nutshell, Pilates teaches people that effective exercise is about quality rather than quantity and that our bodies are integrated systems made up of interrelated parts. To truly target specific muscles or actually get joints to move properly means paying attention to efficient body mechanics. Strengthening muscles and improving joint mobility does not happen by doing more repetitions faster and harder. Pilates is not about numbers. Rather it is about positive physical changes occurring because people begin to understand how muscles and bones work together. The strong, integrated, Pilates-trained body is built on awareness, attention to detail, and the realization that you must always work with your body rather than against. No pain, no gain has no place in a Pilates session.

### **Who Benefits From Pilates?**

Pilates-based exercise can be adapted for just about anybody - from elite athletes to those looking to keep their bodies fit and healthy to people who may have injuries. Athletes and dancers use Pilates to stay highly tuned, injury free, and ready for peak performance. For the

general public, Pilates offers a refreshing change from more traditional types of exercise. You become stronger, more flexible, and rejuvenated WITHOUT jarring or straining your body in the process. For those in rehabilitation, Pilates is unsurpassed. The modified Pilates exercises are restorative, safe, and beneficial.

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