

PILATES POPULARITY ON THE RISE

Q&A WITH CERTIFIED PILATES INSTRUCTOR LIZ BREALY

LIZ BREALY, IS A BRITISH CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR IN PILATES, AN EXPERT WHO KNOWS THE GREAT BENEFITS OF THIS PRACTICE FOR BOTH THE BODY AND SOUL. PILATES HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY POPULAR AND TRENDY SINCE THE MID-1990S, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT OFFERS A "WAY TO SCULPT THE BODY WITH FEWER RISKS OF INJURY AND A MORE RELAXED APPROACH TO EXERCISE." PILATES CAN BE ONE'S MAIN BODY WORKOUT, OR IT CAN BE BENEFICIAL FOR ATHLETES OF OTHER SPORTS. BREALY SHARED HER EXPERTISE WITH A&E THIS MONTH.



Side Leg Series with Fitness Circle

In layman terms, what is Pilates?

There are many different methods of Pilates. I teach Stott Pilates, a contemporary approach to the original exercise method pioneered by the late Joseph Pilates. Pilates is an exercise method, designed to elongate, strengthen and restore the body to balance. Based upon an anatomical understanding of the body's muscular and skeletal systems, the Pilates teacher creates a comprehensive exercise program for the client. Classes focus on specific areas individually while using exercises that integrate the whole body to re-educate and restore it to optimum muscular and skeletal function. It is this holistic approach that sets Pilates apart from many other

forms of exercise. Osteopaths, physiotherapists and general practitioners recommend Pilates as one of the safest forms of exercise today.

Tell us a little about yourself. How did you get interested in Pilates?

I have a background as a Personal Assistant but have always exercised. In 1984, I qualified as an Exercise to Music Teacher, teaching aerobics and legs, bums and tums for a number of years in the UK. I was first introduced to Pilates in the UK but did not take it up seriously until I moved to Kuwait. I joined the C Club in Salmiya, which had an experienced Pilates instructor. I attended group and some private classes there.

What made you decide to become a Pilate's instructor?

I enjoyed my Pilates so much that I decided to take it up as a career!

What are its benefits?

Pilates is one of the safest forms of exercise today. There are so many benefits to Pilates. Mainly it increases core strength and stability. [See page 32.]

Is it recommended for everyone?

Pilates can be beneficial for just about everyone, regardless of age or fitness level. If you have an injury or medical condition, ensure that you have permission from your doctor or medical practitioner prior to your first class. On occasions, a specialist practitioner (doctor or physiotherapist) may refer you to a Pilates class.

Explain the benefits to women who have just given birth.

Pilates helps the mother rebuild her strength immensely during the postnatal phase. The great thing is that you can achieve a strong "core" and a healthy back by having classes three times a week. There are three major benefits of Pilates in a postnatal exercise routine. Pilates strengthens the abdominal wall. This in turn, strengthens the "core" by flattening the stomach, which is beneficial to everyone, not just moms in the postnatal stage. Regaining good posture is crucial for the new mother due to the fact that she has to carry her baby around. Pilates is known to improve flexibility and lengthen muscles, which consequently enhances body posture. Some Pilates exercises also strengthen the muscles of the arms. This way, the new mom will have

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enough strength to lift her baby without complaining of fatigue and soreness. Women should allow at least six weeks after childbirth before resuming or starting Pilates, and they should get an OK from their doctor.

What results should

one expect?

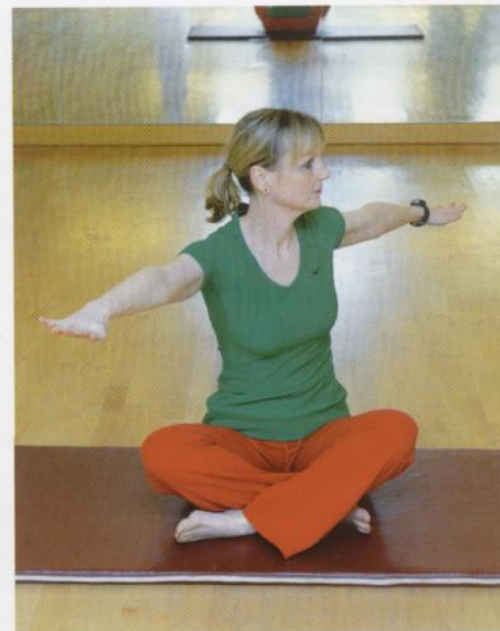
You can expect an increase in strength, flexibility, mobility, balance, and body awareness, as well as a decrease in back pain or other general pains.

How long will it take before you see results?

The average active person doing 2 to 3 classes per week should see some results within 10 to 12 classes. This will vary depending on each individual and other factors, such as the number of classes a person takes each week, whether they are private or group classes, whether they participate in other physical activities, and whether they have any existing injuries.

How has it enhanced your own life?

I have developed longer, leaner muscles, increased



Spine Twist



Single Leg Stretch

body awareness, better posture, no lower back pain (caused by bad posture), and flatter abs.

Is it similar to yoga?

Without going into too much detail, in some respects Pilates is like yoga. Both are considered mind/body type methods of movement; both emphasise deep breathing and smooth, long movements that encourage the mind/body connection. The difference is that while yoga requires moving from one static posture to the next, Pilates flows through a series of movements that are more dynamic, systematic and anatomically based. The goal with Stott Pilates exercises is to strengthen the postural muscles while achieving optimal functional fitness.

Explain some of the exercise techniques.

Most of the Pilates exercises are done lying on a mat. Small equipment can be added, such as a stability ball to work on balance, coordination and strength and a Flexband and Fitness Circle to make exercises easier or more difficult.

Where do you give your classes and how can interested clients reach you?

I teach at the C Club in Salmiya, and I also teach privately in homes.

What do you suggest for newcomers to Pilates?

Start with a certified Pilates teacher. Ask to see a copy of their certificate and ensure they teach the basic principles of Pilates: breathing, pelvic placement, rib cage placement, scapula movement, stabilization, and head and cervical placement. These are key to performing the exercises safely and effectively. These principles help you to become more body aware and gain better results from your workout.

What should one wear to a Pilates class?

You should wear comfortable, nonrestrictive clothing. Footwear is not necessary.

What has been your best experience with teaching Pilates?

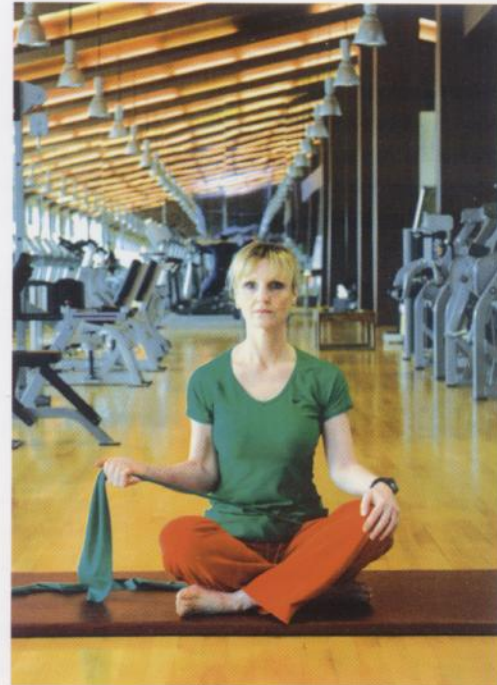
One of my clients recently said:

'Pilates has not only changed my body, but given me great confidence. I love the way my body continues to change with the help of my Pilates workout. It works every muscle in the body, and I have never had a better workout. I look forward to every session with Liz and she explains the exercises so well.'

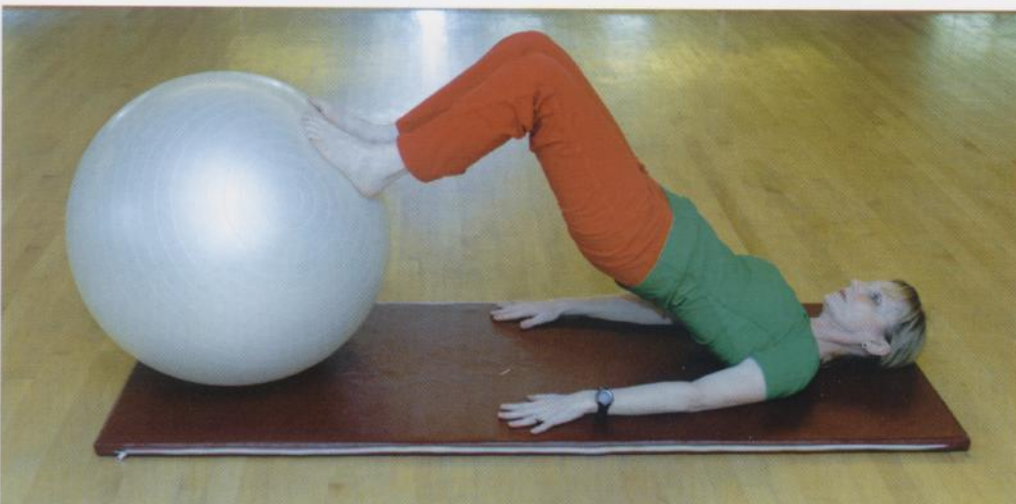
This particular client has achieved great results, but she was also very

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dedicated and combined her Pilates workout with some cardio sessions and a sensible eating program to gain maximum results.



Side Arm Work with FlexBand



Shoulder Bridge with Stability Ball

Benefits of Pilates

- Longer, leaner muscles (less bulk, more freedom of movement)
- Improves postural problems
- Increases core strength, stability and peripheral mobility
- Helps prevent injury
- Enhances functional fitness; ease of movement balances strength and flexibility
- Heightens body awareness
- No-impact, easy on the joints
- Can be customized to suit everyone, from people recovering from injury to elite athletes
- Complements other methods of exercise
- Improves performance in sports
- Improves balance, coordination and circulation