

# Pilates... Shaping Our Future

By Kathleen Keller



Pilates has been evolving for close to 100 years. It started in Europe as rehabilitative therapy during World War I and came to New York in the 1920s. Here it transitioned into exercise for dancers, boxers and horseback riders and filled the exercising needs of that time. From there the snowball effect took place and there has been nothing short of exponential growth ever since. Today, Pilates is considered mainstream fitness.

## How Does It Compare?

Yoga and weight training are two of the many disciplines that Joseph studied so there are definitely similarities. The Pilates Method gives you the stretching benefits of yoga but uses resistance springs to give you the added benefit of weight training.

While Yoga focuses the breath to the abdomen, Pilates directs the breath to the sides and back of the lower rib cage. This modification of diaphragmatic breathing allows optimal core abdominal strength while maximising oxygen during exercise.

Pilates teaches control of the body and that capacity spills over into all other physical activities. This means that in addition to playing your sport more effectively or getting rid of that nagging back pain, you would also carry your groceries better and pick up your kid with greater ease.

Body builders and weight trainers are attracted to the exercise because it teaches the body to move more efficiently, helps decrease risk of injury, develops better symmetry by working some of their smaller muscles and builds stronger core body strength. It isn't about brute strength; it's about developing more control, stretching, and quicker recovery time after hard workouts.

## Anyone Can Hang A Pilates Shingle



Assisted side stretch on the Ladder Barrel.

The Pilates industry is largely unregulated. The closest we have is the Pilates Method Alliance (PMA) from America. They are working toward a global standardisation. With demand for instructors exceeding supply, some studios and clubs resort to hiring substandard personnel. This puts people at risk, as any part of the body can be vulnerable if exercises are performed improperly.

You may find gyms offering "Drop-In Beginner Mat Classes" with 20 or 30 people per class. International standards dictate that these are a no-no. An instructor cannot effectively teach and correct more than 10 people at a time. The

work is progressive; every time you come, you should be building on what you learned last time.

When choosing your instructor, verify the school they went to. The closer in lineage they are to Joseph Pilates himself, the more reputable the school. Ask if they did an Apprenticeship. No Apprenticeship is a red flag, (like a pilot learning to fly and then taking you up without doing any test flights and practice landings!) It takes about 10 years to become a Master Pilates teacher but it takes a lifetime to really know the work!

The beauty of Pilates is that so many different populations can practise it. All over the world newspapers, magazines and TV are providing endless and appreciative coverage;

noting how many celebrities and athletes practise Pilates, and more recently, the role it plays in core conditioning and senior workouts, and the general trend towards less strenuous exercise. As Pilates is more about strength and flexibility; it can change lives by re-educating the body and correcting faulty postural habits. Pilates is truly in a class of its own. ●

*You are only as old as your spine feels ...Joseph Hubertus Pilates.*

Special thanks to Body Logic Pilates & Movement Studio (T: +603 4256 4688), Kuala Lumpur and the three apprentice trainers who provided assistance in our photo shoot. For more information on Pilates you can refer to [www.pilatesmethodalliance.org](http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.org) and [www.australianpilates.asn.au](http://www.australianpilates.asn.au).

Teaser Exercise on the Reformer (foreground) and Teaser on the Cadillac. Trainers pay close attention to alignment and breathing.



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