

PilatesStyle™

April/May 2025

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The Cotrones

LA's Powerhouse Couple!

Hilary Opheim's

Pilates Paradise

Get Certified

with the NPCP

The Teaser:

6 Principles in Action

2025 = Pilates Instructors

Building your

HOME STUDIO

Risa Sheppard

50 Years Instructing



INTRODUCTION BY JOSEPH PILATES

(FROM RETURN TO LIFE THROUGH CONTROLOGY)

Our interpretation of physical fitness is the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind, fully capable of naturally, easily, and satisfactorily performing our many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure.

To achieve the highest accomplishments within the scope of our capabilities in all walks of life we must constantly strive to acquire strong, healthy bodies and develop our minds to the limit of our ability. This very rapidly progressing world with its ever-increasing faster tempo of living, demands that we devote ourselves intelligently and sincerely to the task of acquiring thorough control of our own bodies and minds.

The acquirement and enjoyment of physical well-being, mental calm, and spiritual peace are priceless to their possessors if there be any such so fortunate living among us today in this very unsettling world. However, it is the ideal to strive for, and in

seeking you will discover the true basis of happiness.

Contrology(Pilates) is not a system of haphazard exercises designed to produce only bulging muscles. Just the contrary, it was conceived to limber and stretch muscles and ligaments so that your body will be as supple as that of a cat and not muscular like the body of a brewery-truck horse.

Nor does Contrology demand your body to do more than it is naturally capable of. Instead, it guides you to use your body as it was designed to be used.

By reawakening thousands of otherwise dormant muscle cells, Contrology correspondingly reawakens thousands of dormant brain cells, thus activating new areas and stimulating further and better use of your mind.

The mind, when housed within a healthful body, possesses a glorious sense of power.



“ Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. ”



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COVER PHOTO CREDIT: Sam Cotrone

PART 1:

THE SCIENCE BEHIND CONTROLOGY (PILATES)

By Charles Arthur Blount, BS, Kinesiologist

The elevator doors opened, and I was immediately in the hallway on the 16th floor of a high-rise condominium building in Westwood, California. I walked down the long, quiet corridor as I had done a million times before, never really knowing what I'd find on the other side of my client's door. Or better yet—I did know what...or who I would find.

I had recently met Elenor Gibbs at an anti-aging clinic in Beverly Hills. She pitched a technology to me that I had never conceived of or encountered in all my years studying kinesiology and exercise physiology. It was a therapy based on what she called the fusi-motor system—the complex of nerve systems between your brain and your muscles that forms your experience of yourself.

You see, we are not just our brains. Our brains are in our heads. Our minds are in our bodies. That whole thing about how smiling can make you feel happy? That's the fusi-motor system at work.

As I rounded the last corner toward my client Stanley's door, it opened—and Elenor came marching past. She stopped, turned, and screeched at me:

"Today we are going to challenge your conservative Southern Baptist upbringing. Today, we are going up Stanley's ass!"

My heart sank through all sixteen floors. I feared what I had gotten him into—and myself. My mind flashed forward to a courtroom, where I stood in front of a jury trying to explain how we had inserted an electrical device into an 88-year-old man.

"Mr. Blount, did you or did you not assist in placing an electrode up an 88-year-old man's anus—yes or no, please?" Exactly. It would not end well.

But this wasn't her first pass at elderly abuse. At least she had the sense to ask him first. He said yes. She did the dirty work. And just like she said, it activated his sympathetic nervous system—he began to sweat profusely.



What in the world was I witnessing? What kind of sorcery was this?

At the time, Elenor was in her late 70s and had lived quite a life. She had at least three kids, one of whom had become a famous yoga instructor. After what I saw, I understood how he got into it—growing up with parents like his.

Elenor and her late husband had run a clinic in Los Angeles called The Clinic for Neuromuscular Diseases. They'd worked with some pretty well-known clients, including Larry Flynt. She had a degree in psychology and a master's in some form of human movement from UCLA or USC.

After insurance laws changed, they could no longer bill insurance—and it led to the end of their clinic. Still, in her studies and travels, Elenor had come to understand the human body in a way few others did.

As a kinesiologist, I had read about Golgi tendon organs and studied the stretch reflex mechanism in school, but we never really explored how these systems interact with the brain. Elenor and her colleagues had taken this much, much further.

It was a very hands-on approach. I always felt that because it couldn't be packaged into a 30-minute session or sold as a pill, the practice didn't thrive. Sometimes we'd spend two hours working on Stanley—with remarkable results, I might add. Remarkable.

Elenor had aligned herself with a very interesting man named Saul Liss. Saul had earned his PhD in biological engineering in his 70s and had invented a unique kind of electrical stimulation device. It was categorized as a TENS unit, but this wasn't the usual kind with leads that make muscles contract.

No, Saul had patented the frequency of the human synapse. Essentially, he owned the ability to run a current through a nerve at a frequency that matched the human nervous system. This had a profound effect on patients. That technology is now known as the Fisher Wallace Cranial Stimulator, used for treating depression.

The device could optimize existing neurological systems—and even reawaken those that had been compromised by trauma or age. The units were small black boxes, like iPods, with two leads. We'd carefully place them on the patient's body to drive current through the synapse.

In the case of an 88-year-old man, it could “flip on” nerves and make them young again.

So essentially, what Elenor was doing was activating old or damaged nerves—and then guiding the patient through large, expansive movements to link the brain to long lost conceptions of movement.

One of the wildest things I ever witnessed was when we placed about a dozen of these devices on Stanley, strategically positioned around his ribs to mobilize his thoracic spine. His thoracic region had rotated, twisting his rib cage.

About ten minutes into the treatment—current running through his intercostals—his ribs began to pop like popcorn. It was startling. Once again, I was picturing the courtroom. But it helped him. It allowed him to breathe again.

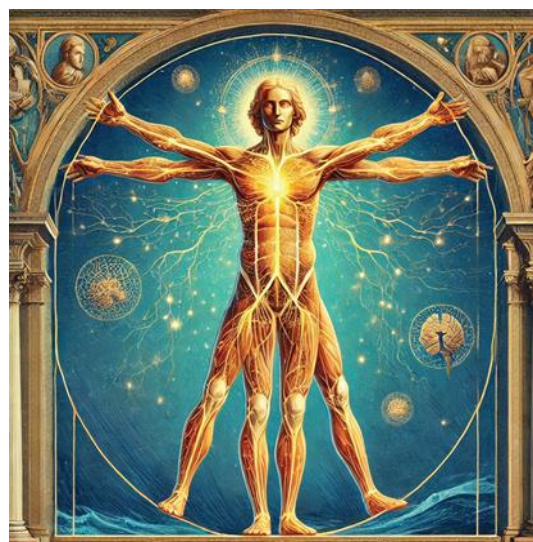
That alone could be a book.

But the cornerstone of Elenor's work was the fusi-motor system. It changed everything for me. It completely shifted how I looked at the human body and how we connect with ourselves.

It explained how I had personally changed as a young man through fitness. It gave me a new understanding of neurological disease. It was so far ahead of mainstream thinking about muscle and self-awareness that I didn't know what to do with it.

But I came to find out someone had already developed a method to explore this system—many, many years ago.

His name was Joseph Pilates.



“ Today we are going to challenge your conservative Southern Baptist upbringing. ”

THE LOS ANGELES
POWER (HOUSE) COUPLE!

Sam and Susannah Cotrone

By PilatesStyle Magazine

In the heart of West Hollywood, where the fast pace of Los Angeles meets the grace of classical movement, Sam and Susannah Cotrone have created a Pilates sanctuary rooted in discipline, tradition, and artistry. Their studio, tucked beside a versatile dance space, is a haven for those seeking more than just fitness — it's a space where classical form meets personal transformation.

With a shared background in ballet, the Cotrones bring decades of experience and a refined eye to their teaching. "Our classical ballet training has greatly influenced how we teach Pilates," they explain. "Disciplined movement practices like ballet or gymnastics create a strong foundation for understanding Pilates, which also demands precision, control, and consistency."

Their approach goes beyond choreography and cueing — it's about seeing movement with trained eyes. They're able to spot subtle misalignments others might miss, from shoulder shifts to postural imbalances. This attention to detail allows their clients — whether beginners or seasoned performers — to refine their movement patterns with confidence and control.



“The most rewarding part is building relationships with clients who truly value the impact of Pilates.”

STAYING TRUE TO THE SOURCE

Walk into their studio and you'll immediately notice the distinctive Gratz equipment — the gold standard in classical Pilates. "Gratz is essential to maintaining the authenticity of Pilates," Sam notes. "Joseph Pilates designed his method around this equipment, and the unique spring tension and construction create a deeper, more effective workout."

It's this commitment to tradition that sets their studio apart. By anchoring their practice in the original method, they preserve the legacy of Pilates while ensuring their clients experience it as it was meant to be.

A LIFE BEYOND THE STUDIO

Their work has brought them into the lives of high-profile clients, often in extraordinary ways. "We've traveled on private jets, stayed in beautiful hotels," Susannah shares. "But the most rewarding part is building relationships with clients who truly value the impact of Pilates."

Balancing these glamorous opportunities with daily studio life and family has been no small feat. Still, the Cotrones remain grounded. "Our priority has always been maintaining a stable studio environment where we can connect with our clients regularly."

THE POWER OF CLASSICAL PILATES

In an age where modern Pilates has splintered into countless variations, the Cotrones continue to champion the classical method — not out of nostalgia, but out of respect for its efficacy. "The biggest misconception is that classical Pilates is rigid or outdated," Sam says. "In reality, its focus on control, precision, and proper sequencing makes it not only effective, but safe."



Their belief is that once instructors master the classical system, they gain the tools to adapt safely to any client or setting. "It's the foundation that gives instructors and clients the freedom to evolve."

A DYNAMIC DUO

Together for over 25 years, Sam and Susannah have developed a seamless partnership in and out of the studio. "When one of us faces a challenge with a client, the other offers support or a new perspective," Susannah says. "It creates a more dynamic, thoughtful experience for everyone."

This harmony is felt by their clients and mirrored in their teaching. Their complementary styles blend structure with intuition, form with fluidity — a reflection of their deep bond and shared vision.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LIFESTYLE

Situated between Beverly Hills and Hancock Park, their studio benefits from a prime location that draws a diverse, discerning clientele. "Being close to Melrose and surrounded by restaurants and shops makes us accessible to people looking for a premium fitness experience," says Sam.



And while their location brings visibility, it's their reputation for excellence and authenticity that keeps clients coming back.

PILATES FOR THE LONG RUN

Their philosophy around longevity and injury prevention is simple: take care of your body, and it will take care of you. "Pilates builds strength, improves flexibility, and enhances body awareness — all essential for dancers, athletes, and anyone who wants to move well as they age," says Susannah.

But they stress that longevity isn't just physical. "Nutrition, rest, and mindfulness are all part of the equation."

PASSING THE TORCH

As second-generation teachers trained under legends like Romana Kryzanowska and Jay Grimes, Sam and Susannah feel a strong responsibility to carry the torch. "Each generation brings new ideas," Sam notes. "But preserving the method's integrity ensures Pilates continues to evolve without losing its foundation."

They've turned that mission into action through their instructor training program, which draws students from around the world.

MORE THAN A WORKOUT — A WAY OF LIFE

For those wanting to integrate Pilates into their lifestyle, the Cotrones emphasize consistency and quality. "It's not about doing more," Susannah says. "It's about doing it well — and doing it often."

To them, Pilates isn't just movement; it's a mindset. One rooted in balance, intention, and self-care.

LOOKING AHEAD

The future is bright — and focused. The Cotrones are doubling down on education, expanding their school, and mentoring the next wave of classical instructors. "We're constantly refining our methods and finding new ways to connect," Sam says.

Yet, their core mission remains unchanged: to evolve, while remaining rooted in tradition. "By staying true to the method, we're ensuring Pilates continues to thrive — not just as a fitness trend, but as a lifelong practice."

In a city obsessed with the next big thing, Sam and Susannah Cotrone offer something rare — mastery, mindfulness, and a deep respect for movement that endures. ■



STUDIO SHOWCASE:

Hilary Opheim Pilates

By PilatesStyle Magazine

1. You opened your studio on Wilshire Blvd in Santa Monica in 2020, right before the pandemic. What was that journey like, navigating a brand-new business through such a turbulent time?

After moving to LA, I had just opened the studio at the beginning of the year when we shut down in March. I only had a few regular clients in LA at that point, and a new teacher training class had started. The new class began mid-February, thinking we would all meet up again for the next session in April. Obviously, that didn't happen because of the lockdown, but since things went virtual a lot of my old clients in Houston started virtual privates as well as my new clients in LA, including my podcast cohost and now studio partner Davita Paul. Davita and I only had one session in person in the new studio before everything shut down! So, for the next two years, we worked every week via virtual sessions.

I am lucky in the fact that I had been running a Pilates studio for 15 years before landing in LA and I knew it would take me a year to re-build my schedule so I was prepared for a different teaching year than normal, even though this particular situation was new. I was very lucky with the community with the support and guidance of fellow Pilates studio owners that I had known before moving here guiding each other through the pandemic and other issues.



2. Being located at the edge of Brentwood and Santa Monica, how do you think your neighborhood influences the energy and clientele of your studio?

I chose this location for the studio specifically since it's very centered and accessible to most of West LA. I have clients and students from the surrounding neighborhoods of Brentwood and Santa Monica, as well as Westwood, the Hollywood Hills, Culver City, and South Bay. The studio location has a very laid-back and positive vibe due to the walkable area with the shops, cafes, and beach so close by. Since the neighborhood is calm and vibrant, the clients and teachers all feel that positive energy in the studio as well.

3. You've been mentoring new Pilates instructors for 20 years—what do you look for in someone who wants to become a teacher, and how has that evolved over the years?

The number one thing is always curiosity and passion. I have found that over the years Pilates has changed so much as an industry overall. So, if the students come to the teacher training program curious about the work of Joseph Pilates as the full system, as well as have a passion for the work because Pilates has helped them or someone they know, then they are coming to it with a deeper purpose than just looking at it as a fun or easy job like what they see on Instagram. I think social media has created an image that people assume is what being a Pilates teacher is, but it is so much more than what we see online. I tell teacher training students that they are coming to an educational program. It is their Pilates college. Teaching Pilates is more than just a job—we are teaching movement and helping people, and these clients trust us with their personal issues and their bodies.



4. As someone who's been in the Pilates world as long as PilatesStyle magazine has existed, how do you think the industry—and the way it's perceived—has changed over the years?

I love how the industry has grown and expanded, with so much of the public aware of Pilates but, with social media, there is another view of Pilates and what it means to be a teacher or what Pilates actually is. For me, it is important to keep the system and history of Pilates visible for newer teachers to be aware of not only Joseph Pilates, but also Kathy Grant, Eve Gentry, and all the Elders who worked with Joe and added to his work with their own unique aspects. I think it is important for those of us who have been in the industry for a long time to keep teaching his original work, from Contrology to today. I don't think any movement or Pilates style is wrong, since different things work for different people. However, when it comes to clients and teachers, it's important to understand the differences between different approaches to be able to decide what they want and what works best for them.

5. You're a classical Pilates instructor. What keeps you grounded in that tradition, and what would you say to newer instructors who are exploring different styles?

I actually like to say I teach the traditional method. I have taught in many studios including some that were more rehab-focused and contemporary, but the traditional feels like home for me. I have found in my teaching and for those who take Pilates, in the traditional approach, they best see the “why and how” of the method for their own bodies, continuing to grow, improve strength, and have autonomy. Because of this approach to the Method clients feel the changes for themselves. I have found that clients never get bored. I never struggle to think of things to do in sessions because the building blocks of the comprehensive system keep the clients interested. And for me, seeing how they are moving and figuring things out keeps me passionate, enjoying each session with them.

“ I hope that the teachers coming up continue to learn and grow throughout their teaching journey. ”

6. Many instructors struggle with balancing teaching clients and mentoring other teachers. How do you approach that balance in your own studio?

I have been in a teaching studio now for 20 years. When I first started my training and mentoring programs the clients were a bit uncertain of being observed by students in the space. However, creating a community in the studio where the clients know the students and the students know the clients is key. The students respect the teachers and their clients in the space is also vital, watching and learning from a working studio. In terms of how I balance my own time in the studio, the client is my first priority when they are in the space with me for their sessions, and in the weekend trainings the students and mentees are my focus. I do try to have time off so one day a week I make sure I am not in the studio or teaching, and I do try and keep one weekend free each month.

7. You have your own podcast—can you tell us what inspired you to start it and what kind of conversations you're most passionate about having on that platform?

Davita and I found that a lot of the conversations we would have in the studio on thoughts and experiences around Pilates were always fun and inspiring conversations for us. In each of our careers, our paths have been similar so we have parallel views even though our approaches are slightly different which makes for interesting dialogue. I had previously done a little podcast, but it was just a fun little thing that never really held my interest previously as I hadn't found a partner like Davita. Our ease together was something that I appreciated so I asked her if she would be interested and she agreed. We decided we would chat on topics that we found interesting in our industry. The podcast is us sharing the conversations we used to have just

the two of us. As we shared this project we heard such positive feedback from other teachers appreciating it, and now we even have listeners sending us topics they want to hear about which is so fun. This has also led to our workshops which we started last year and are excited to be doing more this year to support teachers' continuing education. We are now developing ongoing mentoring and workshop programs to continue to build an educational and positive Pilates community for teachers through our studio.

8. With so much online content now, how do you think in-person training and mentorship continue to offer something unique, especially in the Pilates world?

Those students who are wanting to learn to teach Pilates, not just for the job, but to really dive deep to understand and learn the full system and how to teach and see what clients need, want to be in person for their training experience. While we do make use of some online tools, the in-person training is deeper, more connected experience for the students. Being in person allows for more mentorship which is key with the support and community from someone to guide them through, not just in a class feeling lost. So many of us came into Pilates teaching through an environment with a Mentor and always in person, with all the hours in the mentor's studio connecting with them and observing for a full year or longer. When the pandemic hit and I had to do teacher training virtually, so much got lost including the connection students have with me as well as with each other. Pilates is a movement practice and it is important to be in the studio observing the client and the exercise from all angles. Being in the studio gives the students the ability to feel supported to ask questions or discuss in a way that I find gets lost virtually.

9. What advice would you give to someone opening a studio today—especially in a competitive and health-conscious market like Santa Monica?

I always give the same advice to those who come into my teacher training program. Davita and I even just recently chatted on this on our podcast for Season 6 Episode 5, “Types of Teaching Environments”, that’s coming out next week. Before opening your own studio or running your own business, even as a self-employed teacher renting someone else’s space, it is important to teach Pilates for many years, in many different environments and have experiences with many different clients and meet many different teachers. There is so much to learn on the business side of owning a Pilates studio. Both Davita and I each taught Pilates for a very long time before opening up our own businesses. My first studio was 567 sqft. We each taught at boutique studios, country clubs, and fitness centers. We even both were Fitness Directors for 10 years, hiring, firing, pay roll etc. which helps learn about having staff, making schedules, and dealing with clients and teachers. Social media can make it seem easy and quick, but the reality is very different. It takes a lot of work beyond teaching and time to build. For some teachers owning the business may seem like a great idea at first, but if your passion is just teaching, running the business side of things can take time away from clients depending on what type of studio it is. So go work for different businesses, go out and teach, experience it all, then decide what you want to do.



10. Looking ahead, what are your hopes for the next generation of Pilates instructors—and where do you see your role in shaping that future?

I hope that the teachers coming up continue to learn and grow throughout their teaching journey, continuing to learn and understand the history of Pilates. There are enough people doing Pilates that as an industry we can be kind and supportive of our fellow teachers, no matter what style they practice. I want to continue inspiring and helping those who want to teach. With Davita, the goal of our podcast and workshops is to support teachers looking for community within Pilates and to inspire all teachers to continue learning and improving to always teach with an updated, evidence-based approach and improve experiences for our clients. ■



THE NATIONAL PILATES CERTIFICATION PROGRAM:

Setting Standards for Pilates Teachers

By Lolô Arrieta, LMT, Certification Program Manager, National Pilates Certification Program

The National Pilates Certification Program (NPCP) offers the only accredited, third-party credential for the Pilates profession, ensuring that instructors meet the standards set by the profession. As a certifying agency, NPCP does not offer training but provides an independent examination process that validates an instructor's competencies to teach Pilates. Below, we answer key questions about what makes NPCP distinct and how it continues to support excellence in the Pilates industry.

1. What sets the National Pilates Certification Program apart from other Pilates certification organizations?

The NPCP is unique in its commitment to maintaining an independent, third-party certification process that adheres to nationally recognized credentialing standards. Unlike teacher training programs affiliated with specific schools, NPCP operates as an unbiased certifying agency. This ensures that all certified teachers meet uniform, objective competency standards, regardless of where they received their training.

2. How does the NPCP ensure that certified teachers maintain a high standard of teaching and continue their education throughout their careers?

In support of professional development, the NPCP requires certified instructors to complete continuing education credits (CECs) every 2 years to maintain their certification. This ensures that teachers stay updated with industry advancements and refine their teaching skills. Additionally, the NPCP approves quality continuing education workshops to support teachers in their professional growth.

3. Can you explain the process and rigor behind NPCP certification compared to other Pilates certification programs?

This question suggests that what the NPCP offers is the same or like with what training programs offer, and this is incorrect. Without getting too deep into the weeds, schools do not offer certification, at least not by definition in the US. See institute for credentialing excellence at nationalpilatescertificationprogram.org. The rigorous process we engage is the same any third-party certification must go through. In general, we need to construct an exam that validates competency based on current practice. How do we do this? We engage Subject Matter Experts (Pilates teachers from everywhere) in committee work overseen by a psychometrician, in the various processes that include validation of every step of the way. We offer an overview of the process on our website.

4. What are the core principles and competencies that an NPCP-certified teacher must demonstrate that may not be required by other organizations?

There is no other organization like the NPCP. Once again, the question suggests we compete/function as a teacher training program; we do not. To surmise what has previously been stated, our required competencies are the sum of all. This is achieved through the engagement of Subject Matter Experts that represent diverse lineages, schools, regions, languages, and countries. This is what makes the NPCP a third party, and what makes the required competencies unique; there are no “other organizations” like the NPCP.

5. How does NPCP certification impact a teacher’s credibility and career opportunities within the Pilates industry?

Holding an NPCP certification significantly enhances a teacher’s credibility and career prospects. Many studios, wellness centers, and fitness institutions recognize NPCP as the benchmark for quality professionals. This certification serves as a mark of commitment and professionalism, making NPCP-certified teachers highly sought after by employers and clients alike. Moreover, being NPCP-certified allows teachers to join a network of professionals committed to upholding the integrity of teaching Pilates.

6. Does NPCP work with or require third-party accreditation, and how does this enhance the credibility and recognition of your certification?

Yes, the NPCP certification is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), a distinction that underscores its commitment to industry-leading standards. NCCA accreditation ensures that the NPCP follows best practices in credentialing, including fairness, validity, and reliability in its examination process. This accreditation elevates the recognition and credibility of NPCP certification, distinguishing it as a trusted credential worldwide.

7. How does the NPCP support the Pilates community and ensure the preservation of authentic Pilates teachings for future generations?

The NPCP actively fosters the growth and integrity of the Pilates community by promoting continuing education, ethical teaching standards, and adherence to Joseph Pilates’ original methodology. By maintaining high certification requirements and encouraging lifelong learning, NPCP helps preserve the authenticity of the practice while also adapting to modern advancements in movement science. Through the engagement of Subject Matter Experts regularly, we assure that the current teaching of the method and the value of its underpinnings are kept current.

CONCLUSION

The National Pilates Certification Program sets standards for the Pilates Profession through the engagement of Pilates professionals in the field, offering an independent, third-party exam that upholds industry standards. By emphasizing assessment, ongoing education, and third-party accreditation, the NPCP ensures that its certified teachers are among the most respected professionals in the field. Choosing the NPCP certification is a commitment to professional integrity, continuous growth, and the preservation of Pilates teachings. ■





THE TEASER:

Pilates' Signature Move and the Ultimate Expression of Its Six Principles

By PilatesStyle Magazine

In the world of Pilates, few exercises are as iconic—or as challenging—as the Teaser. Often featured in photos and videos, this V-shaped position—legs extended, torso lifted, arms reaching forward—is more than just a visual showpiece. It's a powerful embodiment of all six Pilates principles: breath, centering, concentration, control, precision, and flow.

Whether you're a student, teacher, or longtime practitioner, understanding why the Teaser is so foundational can deepen your practice and sharpen your teaching.

1.

BREATH: FUELING THE MOVEMENT

The Teaser demands a deep connection to the breath. As you roll up from the mat into the V position, your exhale helps engage the deep abdominal muscles, especially the transverse abdominis. Inhaling at the top keeps the torso lifted and buoyant. The breath isn't just a rhythm cue—it powers the movement, stabilizes the core, and keeps tension from creeping into the shoulders and neck. Controlled breathing also brings focus and calm to an otherwise intense position.

2.

CENTERING: MOVING FROM THE POWERHOUSE

At its core (literally), the Teaser is all about the center. You cannot fake your way through it using arms or legs. Everything—from the initiation of the roll-up to the balance at the top—is driven by the powerhouse: abdominals, lower back, hips, glutes, and inner thighs. Without strength and awareness in this zone, the movement collapses. Mastering the Teaser means mastering control from the inside out.

3.

CONCENTRATION: THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

The Teaser requires full mental engagement. There's no "going through the motions" here. From the timing of your breath to the alignment of your spine and limbs, every part of the movement demands attention. The moment your mind drifts, the form falters. The exercise teaches you to stay present—and rewards that focus with better performance and less strain.



The goal is to move like water—*connected, fluid, and uninterrupted.*



4.

CONTROL: NO MOMENTUM ALLOWED

Joseph Pilates originally called his method "Contrology" for a reason, and the Teaser illustrates this beautifully. You don't swing up into position; you articulate the spine slowly, vertebra by vertebra. The legs don't flop or jerk—they extend with purpose. The arms float, the torso lifts, and the body suspends itself with quiet strength. Every inch of the Teaser is about controlled effort, not brute force.

5.

PRECISION: IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

A truly classical Teaser is crisp and symmetrical. Feet are pointed, knees are straight, arms reach parallel to the legs, shoulders stay away from the ears, and the back maintains its curve without collapsing. Achieving that level of polish takes practice, body awareness, and often, years of refinement. But even in its early stages, the Teaser teaches the importance of precision—the kind that carries over into all movement, in and out of the studio.

6.

FLOW: SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS AND GRACE

Though it might feel static, the Teaser is part of a sequence. Whether you're doing Teaser 1, 2, or 3, or moving from the Roll-Up into the Teaser and beyond, flow matters. The lift up should feel natural and continuous, the arms should float with grace, and the return to the mat should be just as smooth as the ascent. The goal is to move like water—connected, fluid, and uninterrupted.



WHY THE TEASER MATTERS

The Teaser isn't just a test of physical strength—it's a litmus test for your Pilates practice. It shows where you're strong, where you're imbalanced, where you're holding your breath or rushing through transitions. It asks you to combine every foundational principle into a single, powerful expression.

And when it clicks—when the Teaser lifts from the mat with breath, control, and precision—it becomes more than a movement. It becomes a moment of mastery. ■

PRO TIP FOR INSTRUCTORS:

Use the Teaser not just as a goal, but as a teaching tool. Break it down into components (Roll-Up, Leg Lowers, Spine Articulation) and explore each principle in isolation before integrating them. This helps students build confidence and clarity—and gives them a deeper appreciation for what Pilates is really about.

The next time you practice or teach the Teaser, don't just think of it as a challenge. Think of it as a celebration—of the six principles, of the Pilates method, and of the potential within the human body.

PILATES AS A CAREER?

Why 2025 Might Be the Year to Say YES

By PilatesStyle Magazine



New global survey reveals booming opportunities for Pilates instructors and why it's becoming the ultimate feel-good side hustle—or full-time calling.

If you're looking to start fresh in 2025 with a career that blends wellness, flexibility, and purpose, Pilates may be the path you didn't know you needed. A new global survey from Balanced Body, one of the world's leading Pilates education and equipment providers, reveals that the world of Pilates isn't just growing—it's thriving.

The study, which surveyed 800 Pilates instructors around the world, paints a promising picture for anyone thinking about a career change—or simply adding a new, rewarding side hustle to their routine.

PILATES STUDIOS ARE BOOMING

The post-pandemic wellness wave has given rise to more than just meditation apps and walking challenges—it's fueling real growth in boutique fitness. According to the survey:

- 77% of Pilates studios report growth
- 67% are regularly selling out classes and session slots

This demand surge isn't just great news for studio owners—it's opening the door for a new wave of instructors to enter the field.

STUDIOS ARE HIRING—AND LOOKING FOR YOU

If you've ever thought, "I'd love to teach Pilates, but studios are probably full," think again.

- Nearly 40% of studio owners say they need more instructors
- 30% are actively hiring right now

That means whether you're newly certified or just starting to explore teacher training, there are real job opportunities waiting—and the field is more accessible than ever before.

INSTRUCTORS LOVE THEIR WORK

Beyond job availability, the survey uncovered something even more important: deep, genuine career satisfaction.

- 89% of instructors strongly agree that they love their job
- 92% would recommend becoming an instructor to others

In a world where burnout is rampant and job-switching is common, these numbers stand out. Teaching Pilates gives instructors a sense of purpose, creativity, and personal wellness that many careers don't offer.

FLEXIBILITY IS BUILT IN

Pilates instruction is one of the few careers where you can design your schedule around your life—not the other way around.

- 84% of instructors enjoy a flexible schedule and work when they want
- On average, instructors work 4–5 hours per day, or 15–20 hours per week

Whether you're a parent, a student, balancing another career, or simply want more autonomy, the flexibility of teaching Pilates makes it ideal for part-timers and full-timers alike.

WELLNESS THAT WORKS BOTH WAYS

The benefits aren't just for the clients. Many instructors report improved mental health, stronger bodies, and deeper self-awareness as a result of their work. Teaching becomes part of their own wellness practice—a win-win that's hard to beat.

WHY 2025 MIGHT BE THE PERFECT TIME

With studios expanding, hiring, and selling out classes, Pilates presents one of the most exciting career paths in the wellness world today. Whether you're looking for a meaningful full-time profession or a part-time passion project that pays, now is the time to explore Pilates instructor training.

Because in 2025, work-life balance isn't just a goal—it's a movement. And Pilates might just be the career that moves with you. ■





What is Cueing in Pilates?

By Hillary Opheim and Davita Paul

Cueing is such a buzzword for Pilates teachers! We all want to ensure we're cueing the "right" way, learning those magic words that will bring the client with us, clicking their understanding of the exercise to the output of their body movements, and creating a perfect Pilates performance.

In the industry, there are countless workshops on this topic, advertising to teachers to learn those perfect cues, how to cue properly, how to cue better, how to be an expert in cueing, and how crucial cueing is in teaching Pilates.

As a newer teacher, it can be overwhelming to think that we're missing some cueing links that everyone else knows. As an experienced teacher, it can feel demoralizing to assume that we can never quite cue the same as other teachers who seem to flow cues poetically and effortlessly through their classes. Many of us start to second-guess what we're saying to clients.

For clients, this can become confusing when teachers try to say too much, pick overly unique and creative cues, or try to do too much at once to perfect a client before they've even been able to move and try. This can become frustrating for both the client and the teacher when it's just not working.

Do you ever find that golden cue that suddenly helps a client connect to the work, only to find that in the next session that connection is forgotten or lost? Or that some cues work for some but not for other clients? And that for some clients no matter what cue you try, nothing seems to connect them to the work in the way you intend.

The truth about cueing is that there is no simple, magical way of teaching that will make things work. Cueing is a thought process, a journey, a conversation.

CUEING IS A CONVERSATION.

Quite simply, cueing is a conversation between the client and the teacher, in finding the phrases and statements that connect the client to our intentions for that session based on what we're seeing in the client that day.

If we're always trying to be taught the "right" way to cue, we're forgetting that there is no one right way. If we're trying to cue like all the other teachers, we're missing out on our unique voices. As teachers, we know our clients. We know their tendencies, goals, frustrations, and needs. How we work individually with them, honoring their needs is the key. The conversation is between what we observe in the client's movement, what we're trying to communicate, and how the client interprets what we say. That is the skill of cueing. That conversation requires being present in the session to watch and hear the client, and to adapt what we say depending on how the client responds physically or verbally.

Now, that doesn't mean learning new and creative cueing techniques is not necessary. We do agree that cueing effectively is an important element in the art of teaching Pilates, and it is always beneficial to take on new workshops to learn new ways of thinking, to keep learning, and to keep updated on new research. However, the advertised language for learning cueing in the industry has become too overwhelming, overbearing, and specific. There has been a shift toward teachers thinking we have to say specific things a certain way to be a master instructor, and this language inhibits a teacher's growth in finding their voices and learning how to effectively communicate with their clients.

The truth about teaching Pilates is we can't "fix" someone with a perfect cue, and we won't be able to correct everything all at once. While word choice can be important, different methods work for different clients. For any one client, there are better cues that help them find their best movement quality, and there are worse word choices that can confuse them or have no impact at all. So what are we actually trying to do with cueing in our sessions?

Pilates teachers aim to find the right cues for the individual client to help them find the best quality within their movement, to help them connect to their body and the intended goal of the exercise.

1. Pilates teachers must direct the client on what to do in the exercise. Keep this simple.
2. Guide the client to move to begin feeling the body in the exercise. Allowing the client to connect to feedback from the loaded springs, gravity, and/or body weight.
3. The Pilates teacher can start to layer in cues on how to move, what to think about, and other corrections to help the client find their best movement quality in that exercise based on what is observed as the client moves.

We are aiming to guide the client in completing the exercise in the most effective and efficient way, with good quality, and safety.

So, what is the right way and wrong way to cue when teaching Pilates? The truth is there is no clear answer...

When we are teaching, we are trying to talk to clients in a way that makes sense to them, in the language they speak, picking the words that make an impact for their

“Cueing is a thought process,
a journey, a conversation.”

unique needs and understanding. We want to connect to the client in the jargon that makes the most impact for them to connect to the method of Pilates.

Learning to communicate effectively takes time. As we're working with clients we're learning the language that works for them simultaneously as the client is learning the language of Pilates. Pilates is a practice, a constant journey of learning for teachers and clients alike.

By focusing on cueing as a conversation between teacher and client, and remembering that it's a journey of constant learning and development, we can remove all the concerns around picking the perfect cues or finding the right cueing methods. It's okay if a client is confused or not perfect in their practice.

The client can ask questions, and the teacher can offer a different perspective or approach to develop the client's understanding. This can open the door for the conversation and practice to deepen and develop.

Clients can only process up to three different directions at one time. So if they're thinking about the coordination or choreography of an exercise, breathing, and a correctional cue, the next direction they're given will replace one of the other things they were thinking about. Since new layers of cues will inevitably replace previous ones, teachers need to prioritize cues in order of importance for the individual client, what we notice from that client in that exercise.

There are different elements to effective cueing including varying word choice, tempo, imagery, intrinsic cues focusing the client internally to what they feel, versus extrinsic cues focusing the client beyond their body, and many more. Knowing the different options of what cueing can be, gives us all the tools to pick from to discover what may work in a particular moment for a specific client.

Sometimes we will hear another teacher give a directive to their client that seems like a great idea, but then when we try it for our session it might not connect

in the same way for the person we're teaching. That doesn't mean the cue is generally wrong, it's simply not working for that individual. There are so many cues with anatomy, imagery, and cues that have been around for years that have become outdated with updated science but that are still ingrained in common Pilates jargon. It simply all comes down to the client and what and how they communicate and connect with us.

As we teach, we need to look at the body and how it is moving, but also listen to what the client says, how they speak, and how they relate back to us with their body and movement. We can then continue changing the conversation as needed to get them to connect and understand the movements we are teaching. Cueing as a conversation takes time and is a process in our teaching journey. We are constantly learning from the clients we teach, and each day the conversation can be different in how and what we are cueing for them and what's needed. Keeping the conversation simple can allow for flow in the session as a give-and-take between the client and teacher.

We believe that cueing is a lifelong journey in our teaching careers. It's something we work on, think about, and explore just as much as the exercises we teach.

When we get that conversation flowing in the client's language that they can connect to, we can accomplish anything in the studio. We want clients to leave the studio feeling better than when they came in, like they accomplished something, and succeeded.



By The 2 Pilates Chicks, Hilary Opheim and Davita Paul
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Join us for upcoming workshops and continuing education. Applications for our 2026 Post-grad Program will be available soon! ■



Risa Sheppard

50 YEARS INSTRUCTING

PERSONAL + PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

1. You've been teaching Pilates for 50 years—what originally drew you to the method, and what made you stay?

I had just graduated from UCLA with a degree in Theatre Arts. I loved dance and theatrical movement. One day I read about a place called the Fletcher School of Body Contrology that had opened in Beverly Hills. It said he had been a Martha Graham dancer, and that a lot of movie stars and industry people were flocking to his studio. Naturally curious, I called and made an appointment. I fell instantly in love and took to the work like a duck to water. Within a short time, I had adapted to the work, and Ron asked me to work for him. There was no certification. I learned mainly by mimicking Ron. I especially loved his floor work and took as many classes as I could. I discovered I love teaching as well as performing! I also started to get a lot of work on television as a "fitness trainer" (Pilates was not heard of at the time). My dreams of performing were being fulfilled, just took a different turn. 50 years later I still love the work and teaching. It has been a rewarding career choice.

2. What was the Pilates world like when you first started, and how has it evolved over the decades?

Pilates was not known. No one had heard of it except maybe in New York. Now there is a Pilates studio on every block. That is good and bad. There are so many hybrid Pilates now I'm afraid there is a danger of losing Joe's original Method. One thing I know is that Pilates is here to stay, despite the trends that come and go. It is up to the teachers of the original Method to keep passing it on to our students.

3. Can you share one of your most memorable early experiences as a Pilates instructor?

When I was at Fletcher's, as I said there were a lot of movie people. Early on when I just began to teach, Ron turned to me and said, "go work out Ben Vereen" Ben Vereen was a very big Broadway singer dancer, so I was a bit intimidated. Of course, he couldn't have been any nicer, as all our clients were who came to the studio. I guess that was my certification!

4. Who were some of your key mentors or influences in the early years of your practice?

The main Mentor I followed was Ron. Other mentors I followed who had extreme influence in my life and career was with the study of spirituality. I followed how the mind and our thinking effected how the body operates and studied the effects of our inner mind and thinking to how it correlates to the body. It is a possible manifestation of our mental and spiritual beliefs. I studied how past trauma, either a minute ago or years ago has the capacity to be translated into how our body functions. I followed Masters such as Louise Hays and Wayne Dyer, Robert Bitzer and others in the field of metaphysics. I learned how experiences and how we perceive them can directly be manifested in our bodies. My book, Mindful Movement, is about how to change our thoughts along with the movements that will help heal and strengthen the body.

When Ron semi-retired I was asked by clients to come to their home and help them continue with the method. No one had reformers in their home, but I taught only the classic mat work along with Ron's unique choreography. My students, or clients, were my main \inspiration as I kept studying anatomy and using my knowledge of mind/body mechanics with everyone. I learned that not only do you "work the body in front of you" as Joe was known to have said, but also the person in front of you. Everyone is unique with histories and lifestyles. I teach my students to work with their clients not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. Joe instructed us that Body Contrology was mind, body, and spirit. Somehow, I feel we have lost the "spirit" in teaching, and concentrate only on the "mind body". That's well and good but we are not robots. There is a Spirit within all of us that is unique and needs attention.

5. What inspired you to create the Sheppard Method, and how does it differ from traditional Pilates styles? As my home business continued to grow, people would ask me "what is this?" I had developed a "hands on" stretch routine and again integrated the Spirit idea into each person. Since no one had heard of Pilates, and I had included this idea of inner work to help correct the body, I simply called it The Sheppard Method. Frankly it was easier than explaining Body Contrology! The Sheppard Method had become synonymous with unique individual attention to each client, although I was always incorporating the classic Joe Pilates Method.

PHILOSOPHY + TEACHING STYLE

5. How would you describe your teaching philosophy today, and how has it changed over time?

My teaching philosophy has remained largely the same. I teach mainly classical Pilates "with a personal touch" The main way it has changed is with the times we are living and adapting to new ideas and ever-changing personalities of the clients. I use a lot of

"TLC" as I feel our world needs that a lot right now and people adapt to kindness and non judgement. In the words of an old client of mine of many years ago, "everyone wants to be adopted". Not in a codependent way, but knowing they are well taken care of and need not be afraid to move forward and grow, all in mind and body and spirit.

6. You've trained so many students and teachers—what qualities do you believe make a great Pilates instructor?

A gregarious personality, attention to detail and form, caring about the client, and a great sense of humor. After all, is not rocket science, and having fun while you work with a client adds to the enjoyment of the session. Nothing is so serious that we can't laugh, enjoy the moment were living, and keep positive the atmosphere as welcoming as possible.

7. What role does intuition or mindfulness play in your approach to movement and teaching?

As I mentioned before, intuition and mindfulness are the key to a ultra-successful and healing environment. The teacher should get to a place where even if they are doing a reformer or mat class, they should intuitively pick up where the client, or clients' needs are now.

Mindfulness is essential. In our own lives as well as when we work with someone, all attention should be on the task at hand. I don't believe in loud music playing as one performs Pilates. In fact, Ron would never have us play music. He used to say, "move to the music within you:" Let your body embody the rhythm and pattern of the work. One should think of the reformer as a dance partner. You move with the reformer, or piece of equipment, don't let it move you. You are in charge, not the equipment.

A lot of people think movement of any kind should be forced, with emphasis on painful exercises and exerting as much muscle work vs. allowing the body

to move with the equipment, going and moving from deep inside us, rather than only working the superficial muscles.

LONGEVITY + WISDOM

8. What's one lesson from your 50 years of experience that you wish every new instructor could learn early on?

Don't take anything personal! I used to take it personally when a client left, or even canceled! I thought it was all about me. Thought they did not like me anymore; I'll never get another client and end up on the streets! Of course, that wasn't true, and when one door closes another open. There was always another client, but it took me a long time to accept and believe that. Being a single gal starting my own business, it was very stressful. But looking back I see now how everything has worked out perfectly. I would say let people go with an open hand. They will come back (as they often have) or another client will take their place.

9. How has Pilates contributed to your own physical and mental well-being over the years?

At 71 years of age, I am still able to perform the same exercises I learned as a 22-year-old. Pilates has kept me physically fit, and my mental well-being has been challenged but overcome. With determination, consistency and love one can learn and grow through every challenge. Being positive in mind, flexible in both body and mind, has helped me be the success I am today.

10. What has kept your passion for Pilates alive through all the shifts in the industry and wellness culture?

Pilates has kept me in excellent physical shape. I have a love of movement that I've had forever. "Movement is life, and life is movement," Ron used to say. It keeps us

functioning and living a life of purpose and enjoyment. Helping others experience the joy of moving their bodies in a safe and enjoyable way. The rewards are amazing. I never cease to enjoy every milestone a client makes. From being able to walk without pain, feeling better about themselves, or carrying their children and grandchildren. I am grateful to be able to teach young people who want to be a Pilates Instructor the way I was taught. Sending them out into the world to help and heal others. To know that giving love to others is as important as life itself.

LOOKING FORWARD

11. As you celebrate this milestone, what's next for you and Sheppard Method Pilates?

I am proud of my studio and the wonderful teachers I have. I would like to do more workshops and seminars on my book "Mindful Movement". I am determined to keep Joe's work alive, keeping the classical method and adaptable to each client.

I will never retire. I will continue with the work until my last day. I have taught clients into their 90s. I just talked with my 93-year-old friend and client from the Fletcher days. She said "Pilates is my religion. I would not be in such good physical and mental shape had it not been for Pilates." She is still going strong, has a younger man friend, and still enjoying life and giving Pilates the cause. ■



Lisa Hubbard, Bitia Babcock, Risa and Jillian Hessel



A 50 YEAR CELEBRATION





BUILDING YOUR HOME STUDIO:

Amy Schmit

WEST SALEM PILATES



1. What inspired you to open a home studio, and how has it impacted your teaching?

I was first inspired to create a home studio after managing and teaching in a Pilates studio that was located within a fitness center/ gym in Edgewater Maryland. After a few years of having an in house Pilates studio the gym owners decided they wanted more space for boot camp type programs. They approached us (myself and my friend who was co managing the studio with me) about giving up the space and dissolving the studio. It was then we both decided to set up shop in our homes and invite the clients that we had been teaching at the gym studio to come to our homes for their Pilates sessions. The gym negotiated a deal for us to purchase their Pilates equipment and remove it so we divided it up between us. Being able to purchase the equipment from the gym and set up a studio at home worked out well. I enjoyed several years of teaching some amazing clients that became very dear to me. That was my first home Pilates studio. It was named The Pilates House and enjoyed teaching there from 2007-2016.

My second and current Pilates studio West Salem Pilates was inspired by my first one. My husband and I had an opportunity to relocate from Maryland to the Pacific Northwest, specifically Salem Oregon. I sadly said goodbye to The Pilates House and set out with a plan to start West Salem Pilates in my new home. Starting from scratch in a new town was a bit of a slog at first but with persistence I was able to get some private lessons and classes going on a regular basis.

Teaching in my home has impacted my teaching in a way that gives me a freedom and opportunity to hone in on my craft at any time. I get the best ideas for helping clients solve movement problems when I have a moment alone in my studio experimenting on my equipment and working on my own movement issues. Being able to practice my ideas whenever it is convenient is hugely helpful for planning and creating.

2. How did you design your space to make it functional and inviting for clients?

My current space is an upstairs loft area that happens to have two nice sized windows. I set up a table and bench at the entrance to act as a welcome area where you can take off your shoes and put away your things before class. I put out decorative rectangular bins for clients to put small items or purses and also placed coat hooks for jackets and purses. I chose a green and turquoise color scheme to create a calming effect. I keep clutter at bay by using a few decorative shelf/bin type storage shelves for the small Pilates props and tools. I also love to buy fresh flowers every week and put them out. Flowers make everyone feel good! And Kleenex!

3. What are some of the biggest challenges of running a home studio, especially in a colder climate?

One of the most important things to consider that can be challenging is parking, especially if there is snow or ice on the ground. I decided at the beginning to limit my class size to three clients at a time because I wanted to

be a considerate neighbor and not have many guests taking up street parking. If you have a driveway is best to make it available for your clients if possible. If the driveway and walkway are covered in snow you need to clear them or cancel classes because of safety concerns. I use a combination of driveway parking and street parking which my neighborhood allows. It is best to find out if there are rules or restrictions regarding parking before starting a home studio.

If you have children, teenagers, and pets it can be a challenge to avoid disruptions and distractions during your sessions. My husband and two (now grown) kids knew the routine and did their best to keep noise down and stay somewhat out of sight during Pilates time. Even though both of my home studios were in a somewhat private area of the house my family still had to be mindful not to interrupt and cause the sessions to seem chaotic. All involved have to be willing to make it work but in the long run it is worth it.

4. Do you find that clients appreciate the privacy and personal touch of a home studio versus a traditional Pilates studio?

I do find that most clients appreciate the privacy and personal touch of a home studio. There is some trust that is built between instructor and clients that does seem extra special. There will always be a few people that prefer being in a more commercial environment rather than your home studio but for the most part people seem to appreciate the personal touch that goes into a home based studio, especially if you offer a good class or private session and act in a professional manner even though you are at home.

5. How do you keep your studio warm and comfortable during the winter months? Do you have any special heating or flooring solutions?

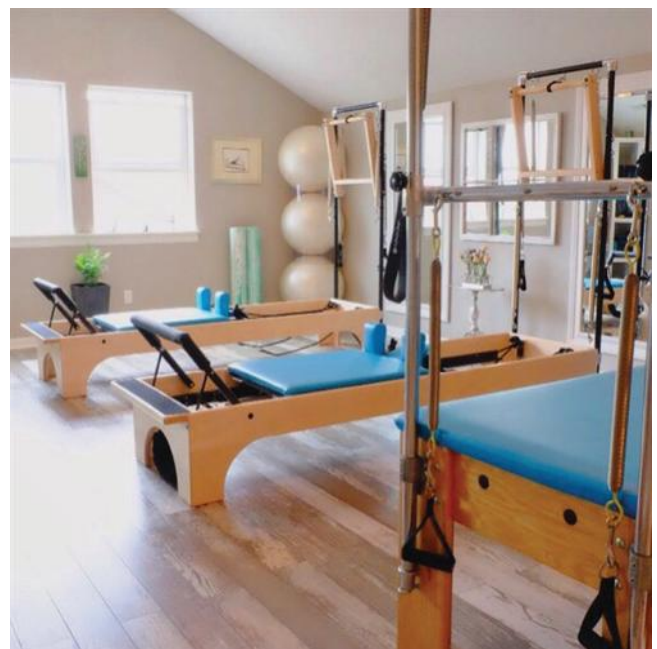
For early morning classes in chilly months I use unscented candles and dim lights to make it feel cozier. My home is well insulated so I don't have to worry about special heating or flooring solutions. It does get a bit

too warm in the summer even though I have a/c. For that I have a small fan for each Reformer/Tower that the clients can control. The little fans are always appreciated as a thoughtful touch so I have been told!

6. What equipment do you use in your home studio, and how did you decide what was essential?

I have two custom built Reformer/Tower combos, one Cadillac, and two EXO Chairs. I also have three Pilates Arcs/Spine Correctors, plus a variety of small Pilates props including large and small Pilates boxes, Magic Circles, jump boards, a ballet bar, and Smart Bells.

When deciding on essential items the Reformers with the Towers were my first priority. Having two made a lot of sense to me because they are great for teaching duets. The Cadillac has been with me for many years as it was one of the pieces I purchased from the gym where I taught Pilates before I opened a home studio. I brought it with me when I relocated to Oregon and had the upholstery changed to match my Reformers. When I teach three person Tower classes I use the Cadillac as the third Tower. I decided to add the two chairs because they take up such a small amount of space and they are also great to use in the duets. The Arcs are probably my favorite of the small props as they can be used for Reformer classes and Tower classes and they don't take up much space.



7. How do you manage scheduling and maintaining boundaries between your personal and professional space?

I manage the scheduling by choosing the blocks of time I want to teach and creating a set of time slots for each day of the week. I let each client know what days and times are available and they decide if they would like to schedule a particular time slot for a period of a month. Some time slots are dedicated to private lessons and some are designated for what I call a “small group class.” A small group class is either a two person class or a three person class depending on how many clients are available. I communicate the scheduling needs with the clients through text messaging. Most of them have a regular weekly time slot that they stick with most of the time. If they need to switch their days or times they let me know in a text and I do my best to reschedule them to another time that works. It is a bit like a grid system that I manage behind the scenes. I have tried using a scheduling app so clients can schedule on their own but I do not prefer it. The idea of it was great but getting everyone involved to schedule in a timely manner was always a challenge. I know my approach is a bit old fashioned but it really works for my situation.

I keep boundaries between my personal and professional space by only inviting the clients into the part of the house where the studio is. Ideally a separate entrance to the studio would be the best but I don't have that luxury so I just steer them past the personal living space and upstairs to the studio. It is as if the personal living space doesn't exist even though it does. I also do not have a bathroom that is specifically for the Pilates clients which would also be ideal. If the client needs to use the restroom they have to walk past bedrooms to use the restroom so I make sure all



bedroom doors are closed during Pilates hours. I also make sure there are no personal toiletries or bath towels visible in the restroom during Pilates hours so it doesn't seem like they are in someone's personal space. It takes quite a bit of getting used to but it becomes normal with time. Foldable privacy screens can also be very useful for concealing areas you want to keep private. In my first studio there was a doorway with no door so I used a compression curtain rod and hung a nice curtain to keep the studio private.

8. What marketing strategies have helped you attract and retain new customers in a home based setting?

In the beginning I used social media like Facebook and Instagram to create a presence and get people interested. I also had postcard sized business cards made with a nice photo of my studio and an offer for a free introductory class that I would distribute around my town and hand out randomly. Once I had a good base of clients I only used word of mouth to get new customers interested.



9. Do you offer virtual sessions in addition to in-person sessions? If so how has that influenced your business?

I have offered virtual sessions. Like many other Pilates instructors I began offering them during Covid. I kept a few of them going after Covid but eventually phased them out. I think virtual sessions are a great idea and I was very grateful to have the opportunity to teach them during Covid but I just don't feel as comfortable teaching virtually as I do in person. I am somewhat awkward being on camera and I do not have a knack for the lighting a set up needed for a quality presentation. I do have respect for instructors who can teach virtually and keep clients motivated! I just don't think it's my thing.

10. What advice would you give to other instructors considering opening a home studio?

Start out small if you need to. One Reformer in a nicely appointed space is great to get started doing private lessons. Once you get going you can always add more equipment and teach a few clients at a time.

Create an LLC for your business so if there are any liability issues it falls on the business and not you personally. Be sure to have a separate liability insurance policy that is specifically for Pilates/fitness studios that covers you in case of an accident or some kind of claim against your business. Also, have your clients sign a liability waiver that says you are not responsible for injury or loss due to Pilates at your studio.

Define your policies for cancellations and inclement weather and communicate them clearly in writing to each client on their first visit. Stick to your cancellation policy as best you can and don't feel bad about it. Of course there are going to be rare occasions such as a death in the family or some kind of tragedy when you can't possibly consider charging for a missed class. I do waive the cancellation fee if the client is sick or their children are sick. I would rather have them cancel than come to class and spread illness.

Do not charge less than the average Pilates prices in your area. Set your prices and offer the same rates to everyone. Don't give away too many free introductory classes. The free classes are great when you are just starting up but once you get established don't offer free classes. It will eat up too much of your time and take away from your established clients.

After trial and error I have found the best way to price your sessions is to have one price for private sessions and one price for small group classes. The private sessions and small group classes can be sold as pay as you go or by the 4 pack of sessions. The client has the option of either but they save 5 dollars per session if they choose to purchase the 4 pack instead of the pay as you go. Most of the time they will choose the 4 pack which keeps cash flow going and makes it easier for you since there are less transactions to deal with at each class. I do not have expiration dates for the 4 packs. When the client uses their last session I send a text to let them know it is time for a new 4 pack. It is very simple and easier than doing memberships or different packages and discounts.

If you have the space for a ballet bar I recommend installing a high quality one. It is very useful when teaching standing exercises to older clients that need help with balance. I also incorporate it into some chair exercises that require standing with one foot on top of the chair and one foot on the pedal. It has come in handy on so many occasions!

Be very conscientious about safety! Regularly inspect your equipment for wear and tear and replace or repair things when needed. Make sure there are no tripping hazards or wet flooring in the areas clients will be walking through. Avoid teaching any exercises that have more risk than benefit. Always consider the clients awareness of space and skill level when require standing on the Reformer or other equipment.

If you are starting to consider having a home studio and you have a family you will need to be sure they are all on board and willing to help make it work. Let them know what your expectations are and decide together how you are all going to make it work. You will be in your studio teaching while normal family life is taking place. There will be times where it doesn't go as smoothly as planned. Dogs will sometimes be barking, kids may have issues that need to be addressed, people might ring the doorbell (for some reason this one is so unexpected and annoying to me), cars might be in the way when your teenager realizes they need to get out through the garage, I could go on! Be prepared for days that just don't go as well as you had hoped. Most days are good but know that there will be some days that challenges come up unexpectedly. One example of this is was several years ago I was teaching a small group class and my teenage daughter was running late for school and missed the bus. She ducked her head into my Pilates studio and asked if she could take the family car. I agreed of course because I was in the middle of a class and couldn't take her. She was in such a rush that she opened the garage and backed out without looking behind her and crashed right into one of the client's car! When she came back in to tell us about her mishap we stopped the class and inspected the damage which was minimal. Fortunately my client was very gracious and



was not concerned at all about her car. My daughter was mortified and so was I. In the end I gave all three of the clients in the class a free session on another day because it was so disruptive. The client buffed the damage out of her bumper and all was good in the end.

This might be one of the most important pieces of advice that I wish I had applied earlier in my Pilates career. If you come across a client that you don't feel good about teaching let them go! Some people are just not going to be the right match for you and you for them. Some people are just toxic or disrespectful. Do not keep hanging on to the relationship because of the income or because you feel bad letting them go. It is best to free up the time you were using for their sessions and attract someone who you can appreciate and that will appreciate what you can provide. ■

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BIKES



ROWERS



BALANCE TOOLS

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