

Pilates Information sheet



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Aim

The aim of this workshop was to outline possible mechanisms to utilise breathe in a direct and indirect way to facilitate movement with the overall aim to aid mental health, relaxation and body awareness.

‘Body, mind and spirit’

(Joseph Pilates, 1934, p. 23, Return to Life through Contrology and Your Health)

Pilates Principles

1. Breathing

Breath is a great facilitator or restrictor for movement. Breathing in facilitates thoracic extension whereas breathing out facilitates thoracic flexion. Also moving through thoracic rotation and later flexion with open and close different areas of the thorax and lungs. Play around with different patterns and remember there is no right or wrong way to breathe. Variance and the ability to recruit different breathing patterns is key (i.e. lateral breathing, anterior/posterior breathing, chest breathing). For patients in a mental health setting using movement can be a great way to indirectly address breathing and hyperventilation goals, to release the thorax and a great pathway for mind and body connectivity.

2. Axial elongation and core control

Length through your axis, whereby be a vertical axis of your spine or a horizontal axis of your upper extremities, is integral for the Pilates method. Thinking of length through the centre and relaxation to the exterior provides freedom to breathe and provide a long base from with to move efficiently. This also provides the base for core control, a principle that Pilates is most known for. What is important however is that the core control is linked with movement patterns, and whilst there needs to be focus on muscular activation in some rehabilitation and beginner setting, that this is developed into more functioning control mechanisms.

3. Movement efficiency

Joseph Pilates originally coined the method Contrology rather than Pilates and spoke a lot of about not just core control but complete control through the body, mind and spirit. With this comes movement efficiency, whereby we can produce movement with a little effort as possible.

And most important is FUN!!

If a class is not fun, then it is very difficult to develop long term behaviour change patterns.

Exercise list (25min series)

Exercise*	Focus
1. Standing breathing	Lateral focus bilaterally and unilaterally
2. Standing roll down	Soften knees and thinking everything heavy as you roll forwards, then restack the spine to find length in standing
3. Arm arcs and circles	Thoracic control and softness in the chest with arm movement
4. Assisted roll up	Core control in sitting and opening into flexion through posterior lumbar and thoracic spine
5. Mermaid	Hip mobility, upper extremity elongation and control/flexibility through lateral flexion
6. Quadruped (arms only)	Core control through light weight bearing
7. Standing roll down	Same as the start
8. Final standing series	Always finish standing, weight equilibrium, breathing and length

* to save space, for the pictures please enter the exercise name with Pilates into google. Please note that prone lying is missing from this exercise list and in a regular class should be added for those patients it is safe to do so.

Pilates class components

Every Pilates class should consist of exercises from:

- each of the three planes of movement – sagittal, coronal and transverse
- each of the four ROMs of the spine – flexion, extension, lateral flexion and rotation
- each of the 5 primary body positions – supine lying, prone lying (if no contraindications), side lying, sitting and standing

Form of Pilates

The workshop was a mat Pilates focus, which is just the start of the Pilates method. Please see the pictures below for Pilates equipment including the Reformer, the Cadillac and the Wunda Chair.



Further information

1. Evidence-based practice

There are to date over 450 peer-review articles in the Pilates method and its effectiveness in a variety of populations groups. Two interesting reviews are;

- Eliks, M., et al. (2019). "Application of Pilates-based exercises in the treatment of chronic non-specific low back pain: state of the art." *Postgrad Med J* **95**(1119): 41-45.
- Miranda, S. and A. Marques (2018). "Pilates in noncommunicable diseases: A systematic review of its effects." *Complement Ther Med* **39**: 114-130.

2. Courses

There are many education providers for the Pilates method. For clinical purposes one of the international leaders in the industry is Polestar Pilates who provides both mat and Comprehensive courses in the Pilates method.

<https://polestarpilates.com/>

3. Grace Pilates Studio

You are also very welcome to come and visit our studio to find out more. For more information please see

<http://www.grace-leuven.be/>

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