

PILATES ... NOT JUST FOR ADULTS

AS THE POPULARITY OF PILATES INCREASES TEN-FOLD IN OUR FACILITIES, SO DOES THE NEED FOR A SMART AND FUN FORM OF FITNESS THAT KEEPS OUR KIDS FOCUSED.

By Kerrie Lee Brown

Despite all of the opportunities for our children to “get out there” and join a sports team, go to the school track, or simply play outside – today’s society is bombarded with technology that is often more appealing. Children are easily enticed by video games, television, and MP3 players. But unfortunately these modern activities are far from beneficial to our children’s physical development, and are being attributed to lackluster grades and overall poor performance at school.

As a result, many parents have concerns regarding their children’s physical conditioning and self-confidence – as well as the lack of programs available at fitness facilities or schools that specifically target core strength, coordination, balance and flexibility. Not to mention something that’s going to keep their interest for more than one session.

This is where Pilates comes into play, literally. Pilates is the very form of exercise that works the entire body with emphasis on function for overall health. And parents are taking note for their youngsters.

WHAT IS PILATES?

Pilates (pronounced Pi-lah-tees) was created by Joseph H. Pilates in the 1920s. It is a system of body conditioning moves that strengthens the core and brings the mind-body connection to the

forefront through numerous unique exercises. STOTT PILATES® is a contemporary, anatomically-based approach to Joseph Pilates’ original exercise method which caters to people of all ages, all body types, and all fitness abilities. Youths in particular can benefit from this form of exercise because it helps prevent injury, and develops flexibility, coordination, balance and endurance. Perfect for the younger generation during their growing years.

According to the 2007 IDEA Fitness Programs and Equipment Survey, 68 percent of facilities surveyed have Pilates as one of their program offerings. This is a 49 percent increase compared to when IDEA first started tracking Pilates back in 1999.

“The growth of Pilates has increased tremendously in fitness facilities in general, and as more and more children are exposed to Pilates through clubs, schools or other environments, the growth in Pilates programming for children will too,” comments the Executive Director of IDEA Health and Fitness Association, Kathie Davis.

THE INSPIRATION OF CHILDREN

Motor development has always been an integral part of how Pilates instructors evaluate their clients’ fitness abilities – and how they create their clients’ individual training regimens. Furthermore, helping children become aware of their bodies from the inside-out is crucial to their overall development – and learning how their body

“PILATES ALLOWS YOUTHS TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR BODIES AND HOW IT WORKS – AND GIVES THEM SOMETHING TO STRIVE FOR.”

-- MOIRA MERRITHEW





performs and functions is not only important from an educational perspective, but interesting to a child as a whole.

Pilates is designed for both the non-athletic child as well as the competitive teen. STOTT PILATES President and CEO, Lindsay G. Merrithew, says Pilates is a smart way of getting children to participate in exercise because it caters to their various ages, fitness levels, and athletic abilities.

“Pilates is great for teens getting into highly competitive sports. It is the ideal complimentary activity for high school athletes who participate in hockey, rowing, basketball and swimming among others. For younger kids, Pilates is a superb individual activity because it enables kids to feel successful at something. And once they’re successful in one area this generally carries over to other areas of their life.”

BENEFITS FOR YOUTHS

Pilates helps children gain awareness of their body and its workings. Pilates improves the way the body functions, looks and feels – and knowing one’s body inside and out can lead to greater self-esteem. Also, most people may not be aware that Pilates can assist with weight management issues in younger people because this form of exercise strengthens and lengthens core muscles without adding bulk. So children can learn to love their bodies no matter what.

Another benefit of Pilates for youngsters is that it helps prevent injury on the playground or on the court – and is the basis for improving posture, and increasing strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.

Pilates also gives children a “different” kind of physical activity to enjoy because it can be done on everything from a ball, to a mat, to various types of equipment. So kids find Pilates to be a fun form of fitness and that in itself will keep a child’s interest.



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But perhaps one of the most important benefits for children is increased focus. Being able to center the breath, hold various positions for a certain amount of time, and concentrate on mind-body fitness are cornerstones for youths to challenge their energies into one activity. Pilates does exactly this and more. This form of fitness provides the perfect physical and mental platform necessary for children to excel in athletics and in school.

“The emphasis on breathing allows us to focus our minds on what our bodies are doing. Pilates is all about using breath more effectively so we can increase awareness and focus in our every day lives,” explains Moira Merrithew, STOTT PILATES co-founder and Master Instructor Trainer. “Children can learn the importance of focus and concentration with Pilates and also gain a sense of fulfillment or success at a level they can relate to.”

THE END RESULT

It’s true that when you take care of your body by eating right and exercising, you get healthier overall. This is what Pilates can do for children and teens, no matter what their fitness level or athleticism. Regular exercise makes your body strong and flexible, helps you think more clearly and makes you feel more confident. Pilates helps children develop a general grasp on the importance of connecting the mind and body with fitness - and such benefits are clearly in the interest of building a solid foundation for an active, healthy life. Pilates isn’t just about the exercise - it’s about the experience with oneself and what one gets out of it. At any age.

The STOTT PILATES DVD entitled *Fitness Fun: Pilates for Kids* is the perfect tool for children to be introduced to Pilates. It’s a fun and original routine of gentle stretching and strengthening moves that is a great way to set kids up for a lifetime of health and well-being. Another workout that is appropriate for teens is the new *Mini Flex-Ball™* DVD. For more information on these fine titles, visit www.stottpilates.com.

Kerrie Lee Brown is the Vice President, Communications for STOTT PILATES®, a subsidiary of Merrithew Corporation.

THE BENEFITS OF PILATES FOR YOUTHS:

- Body Awareness*
- Mental Concentration*
- Injury Prevention*
- Strength & Flexibility*
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- Self-Esteem & Confidence*
- Coordination & Balance*

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