

THE PILATES JOURNAL



The finer details

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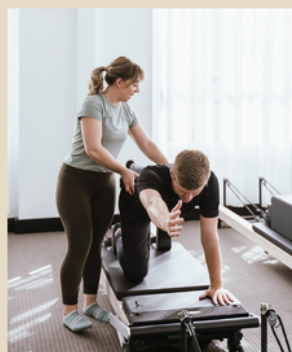
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Contents

2

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to another edition of the Pilates Journal.

8

TO SEE, TAKES TIME

Developing your eye requires practice, skill and breaking the rules a bit.

11

INCORPORATING THE VERSATILE YOGA BLOCK

Get creative ideas on how to use the yoga block for better alignment and support for your clients.

14

TURNING DREAMS INTO REALITY

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams and if that's owning a studio – go do that!

16

MAKING PILATES SKILLS SECOND NATURE IN THE SADDLE

Pilates helps your clients become more effective riders.

18

BOOST YOUR CLIENT ENGAGEMENT IN 2024

Breathe new life into your business with 12 creative ways you can keep members engaged next year.

20

THE FUTURE OF PILATES IS BEING BLURRED...

By default or by design the lines are being blurred and we have one of two choices to make.



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The Pilates Journal would like to acknowledge and pay respects to the Gadigal people of the EORA nation as the traditional custodians of the place we call home - Sydney - where this journal is produced.

The Pilates Journal pays respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contents

22 MASTERING THE QUADRATUS LUMBORUM

Learn ways to release, stretch and strengthen this essential muscle.

25 INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHT: SHAUNTEL DOUGLAS

We speak with Pilates Instructor ShaunteL Douglas about her Pilates career to date and her teaching focus.

27 CASE STUDY: FROZEN SHOULDER

Let's take a closer look at ways you could rehab a Frozen Shoulder in this detailed case study.



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Note from the Editor



Welcome to the latest issue of The Pilates Journal.

This month we focus on the finer details. What does it really mean to see your clients? How do you spend time going outside of the box, exploring new ways of getting them to move? We discuss this concept with Senior Pilates practitioner Blossom Crawford.

We talk about how Pilates is evolving and what it means for us as practitioners. We also pay tribute to the birthday month of Joseph Pilates remembering his legacy and everything he brought to the Pilates industry we know today.

For Studio Owners we also provide ideas on how you can engage your clients each month to keep them motivated year-round.

Wishing you all a happy holiday and a great start to the New Year.

CJZarb

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“To see, takes time”

EDITORIAL

DEVELOPING YOUR EYE REQUIRES PRACTICE, SKILL AND
BREAKING THE RULES A BIT

by Blossom Crawford

Headline quote Georgia O'Keeffe



It's the end of 2023, the last few years of ups and downs are finally behind us and I am looking around and asking where are we now? I went to an art exhibit in NYC at the MOMA on Georgia O'Keeffe. The exhibit is named after one of my favourite quotes from her. "To see takes time."

It reminds me a lot about what I think is important in Pilates and what I am tired of talking about. I am done with the classical vs contemporary conversation. BORING. The way I was raised in this Pilates world, I never had to pick a side. I worked for Kathy Grant and Carola Trier and I took the best from these women and made the rest my own. Let's talk about what we are doing and why.

Have you ever finished a session with a client and thought to yourself.... What am I doing? What purpose am I serving for this person? What is the end goal here?

Are you focused on creating choreography that your clients haven't experienced before or are you thinking of developing your sessions with their function in mind? We're so much more than just a series of moves put together.

Teacher training and certifications come with rules that help us learn and understand the Pilates method in the style directed by each program. As you develop yourself as a teacher, you will find a client or person that doesn't quite fit the mould laid out for you in training. So my first tip is to be curious and ask questions!

Find another professional that you get along with and do some movement brainstorms with them. Ask them questions...I have been seeing this, what do you think? Do you see this in your massage, Personal Trainer (PT), Gyro practice? Two things happen when you approach your teaching this way, you create a referral network and you can look at your clients from a different perspective.

Don't be afraid of asking a question in a workshop! Or ask yourself why does that work?

Break out of your comfort zone! For me, I like to look at other movement methods like Melt, Indian Club Swinging and Fletcher Pilates and see where the crossovers are. I ask myself, 'How is this technique also addressing the same things I am working on in the studio?'

I also need to caveat that you'll only get true benefits from looking at other methods once you've built solid foundations in the Pilates method and years of experience. Once you do you'll start to be able to appreciate that you can see so much more than before. You'll be able to draw parallels between Pilates and other forms of movement and that's where the magic lies.

I was first introduced to MELT by Hallee Altman. She and I went through the same Pilates certification at about the same time. It uses a foam roller that is more squishy than a traditional foam roller.

“Do a deep dive into something that excites or interests you movement wise. See how it connects to how you or your clients move in Pilates and in everyday life.”

Hallee developed MELT for Pilates. The MELT method is all about rehydrating connective tissue, rebalancing the nervous system, decompressing the spine, mobilising joints, and so much more. So when Hallee suggested I try it and I trusted her judgment. I think she experienced some of my warm up stuff that I like people to do and thought I would like it, and I do!

I've learned so much about MELT from my friend Hallee and another friend Angeline Shaka. It feels so great and is often about dropping down into the roller. I am an active person mentally and physically and MELT often asks me to drop into myself in both mind and body and I love that for my own practice and for others.

I sometimes like to start a session with my clients with a little MELT moment. I also love it for its three dimensional quality of movements and for its reflective nature. When you do MELT you take a moment to feel if there have been any changes or shifts in your body. Think about that.

I also grew a love for the Indian Club swinging. Haven't heard about it before? It's all about swinging weighted clubs in circular and sometimes elaborate movements that ultimately end up strengthening and increasing your upper body and shoulder mobility. Indian Club swinging was introduced to me by Pam Warshay of Sage Fitness. I like the simple functional nature of swinging a club. The body is often standing while weight bearing and doing three dimensional movements. I often like to end a client's session with a little club swinging. It gets my clients off their backs, the heart rate increases and it can be a mental challenge too.

I also quite enjoy the Fletcher Method originally developed by Pilates elder Ron Fletcher. I only know about the official Fletcher Program through Kelli Workman, a Fletcher Program teacher and mentor that works at my studio Bridge Pilates. For example, in a “Fletcher Style” Open Leg Rocker you can have five steps of development until you do a full version of the Fletcher Open Leg Rocker. So there isn't one thing you need to remember to do, it might be 10, and then there is the breathing pattern that goes with it! I have enjoyed learning bits here and there from Kelli, but it's clear this is just a small part of a much larger repertoire. I believe that my clients have enjoyed the variety that the Fletcher work has brought to my teaching.

Ron Fletcher definitely had his own unique and complete way of thinking about the work. I love experiencing part of it and playing with some new variations within movements like the Saw that I have done thousands of times!

After Kathy Grant, I also worked with Dr. Marshall Hagins, a world-class physical therapist in New York City who influenced the way I teach Pilates the most. Through our work together he helped me look at the body with a new lens. He was briefly a student of Kathy Grant's, was a dancer on Broadway and taught first-year students at Long Island University for 20 years. He is specific, patient, smart and took the time to let me struggle to learn alongside him.

Because of his background and the work we did together. I saw the Pilates method in a new way. I saw the places where the movements and choreography were dictated by personal preferences and not actually teaching the body in front of me. With Marshall, I saw where I as a Pilates teacher I was falling short and where I could improve. Best of all it had nothing to do with being Classical or not. It was about what the goal was for the person I was teaching.

Then when it comes to the foundational exercises with my clients, I'm always looking for ways to break the rules to see if we can do things differently, to see if we can get a better outcome.

For example let's take Swan on any apparatus., I will change things to help my clients work their spine in a way that I think works best for them. For instance on the Spine Corrector, I often like to face a different way than I was taught. I will add in a different focus in the Teaser. I might get a client to look at one hand as they lower and lift into Teaser. Last, just changing the rhythm of an exercise is a fun way to mix it up!



I will often have clients work in a parallel position with their legs if I think it works better. I will change the choreography of the arms to get more flexion or extension in their spine. Most of all, once the client thinks they have mastered one version of the Swan, I will add to it in some way.

Being curious also means that I've paid close attention to the way one of my teachers Deborah Lesson instructs her clients. Deborah's approach is unique in that she doesn't just get through the exercises with her clients, she uses the exercises to see people and what she thinks they need for their body in that session. I find it incredibly useful to go through her exercise routine as it helps me see and experience the overall arc of what she is teaching and what she's trying to highlight in her work with a client. She is very much her own teacher yet I see glimpses of things I learned from Kathy Grant that may have come from her time with Carola Trier. When I work with Deborah I feel expertly guided with a lens that's focused on my unique needs and it helps me to re-think how I work with clients.

So for you teachers out there who want to break the mould, my advice is simple:

- Be curious
- Ask questions
- Challenge what has been done
- Think outside the box
- Make friends with movement professionals outside of your space
- Make up stuff! Try something new purpose in mind.
- Do a deep dive into something that excites or interests you movement wise. See how it connects to how you or your clients move in Pilates and in everyday life. Inspiration can be everywhere. It is your job to keep things interesting for yourself and your clients
- Play with speed. Do things twice as fast, twice as slow. How does that make things better or worse?



Blossom Leilani Crawford is the owner of Bridge Pilates in Brooklyn, New York and her own streaming site blossompilates.com. She is known for her playful and powerful teaching methods and for her ability to seamlessly switch between different Pilates techniques. She teaches continuing education to Pilates instructors virtually and in person all over the world.

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Photographer: Lukas Pawlaczek

Yoga Blocks: A Versatile Prop for a Wide Range of Clients

HOW A YOGA BLOCK CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR CLIENTS ALIGNMENT, INCREASE THEIR RANGE OF MOTION AND OFFER PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THEIR ENTIRE BODY

by Brad Inness

The versatility of Yoga Blocks can provide tremendous support and assistance in various positions, offering deeper and more effective ways for clients to execute their exercises for both modifications and progressions. In this article, I explore eight different exercises in order to improve a client's alignment or range of motion, offer support and or help target specific areas of the body utilising yoga blocks and discuss their benefits for different types of clients.

1. Supine - Modified Roll Up:

(Blocks Under Hands or between the Knees).

Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and yoga block in hand. Press the block between your palms as you curl your upper body off the mat, reaching towards your feet. The yoga block provides additional support and engagement for the lower abdominal muscles, while collaboratively asking clients to find the upper body connection at the same time, making this exercise more accessible for clients with limited flexibility, abdominal strength and scoliosis.

Pelvic Curls: By placing the blocks underneath the feet clients can find stronger activation through their hamstrings and glutes while offering a stability awareness. A great variation of this is placing one block under one foot, and the other under the opposite hand is great way to let clients feel hip disassociation, and opposition.

2. Prone - Swan Dive Prep

Lie on your belly with your legs extended and hands placed next to your shoulders. Instead of fully straightening your arms, place a yoga block next to your chest, and position your hands on top of it. As you lift your upper body off the mat, try to disassociate other muscles in the lower extremities, so you're only using your arms to lift into extension, without gripping into the lumbar spine. This variation helps develop back and arm strength and awareness, and flexibility. By letting the head be heavy as you return to the mat, it provides a really great stretch for the deep cervical extensors. This is a great for clients who want to advance their thoracic extension while feeling no tightness through their lumbar spine.

Swan: A challenging variation! It's great to challenge clients' control through their lower abdominals, while finding deep external rotation of the shoulders and activation of the glutes and hamstrings. Asking clients to feel the "pinkie finger" side of the hand into the Yoga Blocks asks for a strong underarm connection. It's a great variation for surfers, dancers, cyclists, and swimmers as it promotes hip extension while using the glutes and hamstrings while in thoracic extension.

Thoracic rotation: Placing one yoga block under one hand stretched out in front, and the other behind the back of the head, rotate towards one side, ensuring the Pelvis stays in neutral. This variation allows extra range of motion in the thoracic, while maintaining lumbar-pelvic stability.

Lat Pull Back: Placing one Block under both hands behind you, with your fingers facing forward, lengthen the legs out in front, and Roll the Pelvis up from the Mat and stretch your arms! A great stretch! This exercise is strong for the hamstrings, and you want to ensure there is no hyperextension in both the knees and elbows.

3. Side - Mermaid Stretch

Sit on one hip with your bottom leg extended and your top leg bent for support. Place a yoga block underneath your bottom hand and reach your other arm overhead, creating a side bend. The block assists in maintaining proper alignment and prevents excessive strain on the supporting muscles. Placing a yoga block underneath the outside hip helps for clients who are tight through their hip flexors and lumbar extensors or pre-natal women. It helps to improve flexibility, posture, and provides a great lateral stretch through the diaphragm, quadratus lumborum and psoas.

4. Standing - Balance Challenge:

Stand tall with one foot on a yoga block and the other foot on the floor. Find your balance and engage your core with standing exercises such as lunges, heel raises and roll downs. The yoga block provides an unstable surface, challenging your clients stability and proprioception. Athletes and seniors can benefit from this exercise as it enhances balance, co-ordination, and strengthens the muscles in the ankles and feet.

5. Monkey

Stand with both feet on the yoga blocks and bend your knees so your hands are on the floor. Keeping your hands connected to the floor, start to stretch your legs, while leading with the tailbone and feeling extended through the thoracic. A great exercise for more advanced clients who are waiting more lumbar extension. By keeping the hands fully connected to the Mat and using your legs and your upper body to fold offers a strong working stretch creating extra space through the lumbar pelvic region.

6. Four Point Kneel - Thread The Needle

Begin in a tabletop position, with your hands and knees on the mat. Place a yoga block under your left hand and reach your right arm up towards the ceiling. Thread your right arm through the space between your left hand and knee, rotating your upper body. The block provides support and stability as you deepen the twist, allowing for a more controlled and accessible movement. Surfers and dancers can benefit from this exercise as it aids in spinal mobility, and hip rotation, and can help prevent lower back pain.



7. Plank

Begin in a four point kneel position with your hands on the blocks and find your way to your plank. Have your heels together and your toes slightly apart to ensure your connection to your upper inner thighs, glutes and hamstrings. With your hands pressing on the blocks, feel like you're pulling your chest through your shoulders while reaching back with your heels at the same time. This provides a great working two-way stretch, and a feeling of strong extension through the thoracic. For clients who are limited in core strength and control, lowering the knees is a great option. It's great to spend some time accurately setting up the hand/arm position with your clients who feel they are weaker in the wrists, the blocks can really help them to engage their hands, forearms and upper arms more.

8. Lunge

In a four point kneel, place one block under both hands and step back to find your plank. Keeping your hands connected to the blocks, step one-foot in-between both hands to find your Lunge. This is great for clients with less flexibility in both their lower and upper extremities and enables clients to maintain a connection through their upper body and their spine. You can stretch back to deepen the stretch, ensure the pelvis stays in alignment. Reverse to have one Block under one foot with the hands on the floor for clients who are longer in their hamstrings but shortened through the spine/upper body.

Bradley Inness owns **Ateom** an intimate boutique studio nestled in the **Byron Bay Hinterland, NSW, Australia.**



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Turning dreams into reality

GO CONFIDENTLY IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR DREAMS AND IF THAT'S OWNING A STUDIO – GO DO THAT!

by Cie'Jai Zarb

UK born and bred, Lottie's Pilates journey first started when she moved to Australia eight years ago. "Right from the start I instantly fell in love with Pilates, so within a year of moving to Australia I had signed up to Studio Pilates to train as an instructor. I wanted to become an instructor so I could understand more about the benefits of Pilates, I really love learning new things plus it gave me an opportunity to meet new people in a new country," said Lottie.

"The minute I taught my first practice class I knew this is what I wanted to do! Due to visa regulations, I wasn't allowed to have two jobs, so I taught for free for nearly a year alongside my full time job but it was the best experience," said Lottie.

With a background as an accountant and her studies in Pilates, Lottie knew she could develop a business she loved and that's when her first studio, Studio Combined, was born.

"I was so lucky with Studio Combined, I met my business partner through my husband and my business partner happened to have an empty room in the back of his chiropractor clinic which got turned into my studio. It was a great stepping stone to see if owning a studio was for me," she said.

As fate would have it, Lottie would open Studio Combined only a few months before the first lockdown hit in Australia. "When I was told we had to close, I went straight into the studio and filmed back-to-back classes so we could create an online platform in a few days! During the peak, I was teaching four classes a week, but I loved it as the classes were at times my family and friends in the UK could also attend, so it also became a way I could catch up with the UK! To this day I still teach a lot of them on zoom now!" she said.

"The biggest learning I took from this time was how quickly you had to react and pivot in business. It didn't matter if I didn't have all the fancy equipment or gear, all I needed to launch an online pilates platform was a phone and tripod!"

After six and a half years of living and teaching in Bondi, Lottie and her partner decided it was time to move back to the UK and open up her own studio there. "I named my second studio Bondi Rise because I wanted to take a piece of Bondi back with me. The word rise comes from remembering the most magical sunrises on Bondi Beach when the world hasn't quite woken up, but the beach is so busy and full of life! I also used my learnings from my first



studio so that when I opened Bondi Rise in May this year I could replicate the process!” she said.

“If there’s one thing that I naturally took into both studios it’s my immense love for teaching and working with clients. I absolutely adore meeting new people and hearing how Pilates is helping or has helped them. It is such a rewarding job, a class never feels like

like I’m catching up with friends every time I teach a class.

“I also love the community I’ve built online. It’s wild how much it’s grown in the last year I think people loved seeing my journey from Australia to the UK and then opening the studio here in the UK, so my following grew with the journey. For me, community is the most important thing, so I think that spending a fair bit of time growing my studios following. I’m blown away that so many have cared about my journey.” she said.

So what is Lottie’s favourite way to move?

“I do four to five Pilates workouts a week, but only 20 to 30 minutes at a time. I’m all about little and often! I find that way I can really concentrate on my goal for that session, so working core for example or lower body, or just a lovely stretch! And then I walk lots, either taking my dog out or walking to the studio, and it’s surprising how many steps you clock up when teaching class! I occasionally do weight training, but I wouldn’t count that as part of my weekly routine, she said.

In between moving from one country to another and building a new business, Lottie also found the time to get married.

“It was the most magical day of my life! When I think back to the day, I still can’t believe that was my wedding, it feels like a dream. Our wedding was so special as our friends from Australia and our friends and family from the UK were all in the same place at once rather than being on opposite sides of the world! I wish we could do it all again!,” she mentioned.

If Lottie had any words of advice for those looking to start their own studio, this would be it. “Believe in your vision and dream. There will be hurdles and challenges like there are with any new business, but as long as you truly believe in yourself you can do anything you put your mind to. And remember you could have the fanciest studio in the world, but at the end of the day, the most important thing is how you’ve made your client feel when they leave your class,” said Lottie.

Lottie Maynard owns Bondi Rise studio in London, UK.



Making Pilates skills second nature in the saddle

PILATES HELPS YOUR CLIENTS BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE RIDERS

by *Julie Driver*

We're about to delve into the essential aspects that make horse riding stand apart from other sports. From building trust and non-verbal communication to dealing with unpredictability, empathy, and managing a unique power dynamic, equestrian sports offer a captivating journey into the world of human-animal collaboration and partnership.

Many sports require athletes to master the use of various apparatus to execute precise movements or actions. Think of sports like tennis, surfing, golf, and numerous others, where the interaction between the athlete and equipment is central to their performance. However, in equestrian sports, the dynamics are fundamentally different. Beyond physical skill, equestrians engage in a unique partnership with a living, breathing counterpart – the horse.

This distinctive connection necessitates not only a deep level of trust, communication, and understanding but also technical expertise.

If you have the pleasure of working with clients who ride you'll understand just how much passion they have for their horses and their sport, whether they are a new to riding or an elite equestrian athlete.

As a rider and Pilates teacher I feel that it is my duty to be the best rider I can be. I need to be fit, have good balance and be responsive to my horse's needs, this makes it easier for my horse to feel what I am asking them to do.

Over the last few years The idea of "riding to get fit" has begun to change into the concept of "being fit to ride" and riders are beginning to realise that their own fitness levels, health and wellness have a direct impact on their equine partner. As more and more research is being done in this field, the evidence clearly points to the benefits of riders being more body-aware and balanced within themselves.

This is a complete change in the way of thinking across the industry and as a result, equestrian fitness is booming and Pilates teachers are in the perfect position to help riders because it develops better body awareness, balance, alignment and stamina. It also gives them the clarity to self-correct their alignment and work with their horse to achieve their goals.

However, this thought begs the question... 'Which comes first- the asymmetrical horse or the asymmetrical rider?'



"...the asymmetric rider position has an effect on thoracolumbar range of motion and limb kinematics. Riders should consider the effect that their position/asymmetries have on the locomotor system" - Russell McKechnie Guire.

Studies where rider asymmetry was created by shortening one stirrup five centimetres showed that the horses' spine movements were altered and they displayed an increased range of motion.

In addition, the horses' limbs on the opposite side to the shortened stirrup showed increased extension in both hind and fore fetlock (the lower part of their leg) increasing the loading in those limbs. In another study, thirty experienced riders who were all right-handed were asked to sit on pressure mat and say when they believed they had even weight on the sitting bones. This was repeated three times, each time for a duration of five seconds.

Even though the riders had described themselves as sitting evenly the results from the pressure mat showed an increased weight distribution on one sitting bone (predominantly the left.)

So how can we help?

We need to acknowledge that we are all asymmetrical and so are our horses. Overtime we will have developed compensatory patterns that affect the way we move and ride; how we react to our horse and how our horse responds to us.

More importantly, our asymmetries can have a physical impact on our horse.

Photography: Pilates Anytime



If our horse is constantly adjusting their body, balance and alignment to compensate for our imbalances, overtime they will develop compensatory patterns and their own imbalances.

This is when it can become a “chicken or the egg” situation. For example, imagine carrying a backpack filled unevenly with heavy books or giving a piggyback ride to a tired child.

We can all instantly understand how we would have to compensate for the uneven load. We may shift our hips more to one side, elevate one shoulder higher, lean our head away from the load, whatever makes carrying it more acceptable and “comfortable” for our body.

The more unbalanced a rider, the greater the challenge for the horse to maintain their own sense of alignment, centre and balance

Our goal is to make our client’s Pilates skills second nature when they are in the saddle, we want their riding to be intuitive, considerate and consistent.

So to help your clients do you need to know how to ride?

We do not need to become experts in a particular sport or subject to help our clients.

However any additional knowledge, especially learning some equestrian sports-specific language can help you communicate how horse and rider work together as a team and build a deeper relationship with your client and get a clearer picture of your client's goals.



It can be useful for your client to take videos of their riding for you to watch together so they can explain to you what they need to do, what their goal is and how you can work on it together to help them achieve it.

I’ve worked with many different riders over the years and the challenges vary from rider to rider, discipline to discipline within the varying levels of riding ability and depend on age and previous injuries.

My aim for my riders is the same as I have for me - to become accountable for their own fitness and to be a partner for my horse not a liability and a negative impact on their well-being!

Whatever discipline riders chose to follow, whether it’s Pilates, Yoga, weights, Feldenkrais or hopefully a mixture of all the above.

My hope for the future is that all riders can help their horses well well-being by taking the time to look after themselves too.

As Pilates teachers, we can help them do this.

Based in North London, Julie has been teaching for over 23 years both in the UK and Internationally.

Julie coaches equestrians of all levels from the weekend rider to the elite athlete and is currently the Pilates teacher for the Wesko Foundation three-day-eventing team. Julie considers Pilates to be the perfect way for riders to improve their technique and create a stronger and deeper relationship with their horse. In 2014 Julie was awarded the title of “Pilates Anytime” International Instructor of the Year.

Boost your client engagement in 2024

BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO YOUR BUSINESS WITH 12 CREATIVE WAYS YOU CAN KEEP YOUR MEMBERS ENGAGED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

by Cie'Jai Zarb

In the fast-paced world we live in, maintaining a consistent clientele in your Pilates studio can be challenging. To keep your clients motivated and engaged, it's essential to offer them incentives that go beyond the typical workout routine. By introducing monthly client incentives, you can keep the enthusiasm alive, foster a sense of community, and ensure a steady flow of happy customers. Here are twelve creative ideas for monthly incentives to keep your Pilates studio thriving throughout the year.

January: New Year's Resolutions Kick-off

Start the year strong by offering a "Resolution Package." Provide a special discount for clients who commit to a monthly package for the entire year. Encourage them to set their fitness goals and offer guidance on how Pilates can help achieve them.

February: Love Yourself Challenge

Celebrate self-love during February. Create a challenge where clients can win prizes for completing a set number of classes with a partner or by themselves. It's an excellent way to promote Pilates as a form of self-care.

March: Spring into Shape

As the weather warms up in the northern hemisphere, motivate your clients with a "Spring into Shape" challenge. Offer rewards for attending a certain number of classes during the month and throw in a complimentary outdoor class for a refreshing change of scenery.

April: Pilates Passport

Take your clients on a virtual journey around the world with a "Pilates Passport." Create themed classes inspired by different countries, and clients can earn stamps for attending. The more stamps they collect, the bigger the reward at the end of the month.



May: Buddy Month

Encourage clients to bring a friend to class. Offer a discount or even a free class for every new referral. This not only expands your client base but also strengthens the sense of community in your studio.

June: Summer Solstice Challenge

Celebrate the longest day of the year with a summer solstice challenge. Host an early morning sunrise class followed by a healthy breakfast. Offer a special "Sun Salutation" discount for clients who attend.

July: Challenge of Champions

Host a Pilates competition where clients can showcase their progress and skills. Offer prizes for different categories like flexibility, strength, and balance. It's a fun way to boost motivation and camaraderie.

August: Spring into Summer Challenge

For those in the southern hemisphere, August is a great time to get people motivated coming back into Spring. Create challenges like 'complete 20 classes in 30 days' and offer prizes for those who complete the challenge.

September: Pilates in the Park

Get your clients outdoors by hosting Pilates classes in a local park. Clients can earn points for participating in outdoor classes. Reward the top scorers with a picnic and Pilates-themed goodies.

October: Spooktacular Pilates

Get into the Halloween spirit with themed classes. Clients can earn rewards for attending in costume or bringing in a "spooky" snack to share after class. It's a lighthearted way to keep the studio buzzing.

November: Gratitude Challenge


In the spirit of Thanksgiving, encourage clients to share what they're thankful for on a gratitude board in your studio. Offer a discount for those who participate and express their gratitude for Pilates.

December: Holiday Countdown

Countdown to the holidays with a special calendar of daily Pilates challenges. Clients who complete the entire calendar can win a special year-end prize or offer them the chance to try classes they wouldn't normally take.


Incorporating monthly client incentives into your Pilates studio's strategy can breathe new life into your business. These creative ideas not only boost engagement but also foster a sense of belonging among your clients. By keeping your offerings fresh and exciting, you'll ensure that your Pilates studio remains a place where clients come to not only work on their physical wellness but also to be part of a thriving community.








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EDITORIAL

The future of Pilates is being blurred... from the inside

PILATES IS CHANGING. BY DEFAULT OR BY DESIGN THE LINES ARE BEING BLURRED AND WE HAVE ONE OF TWO CHOICES TO MAKE

by Renee Siljeg

Just a few years ago, Pilates and Yoga were easily confused by the general public. Granted, there are recognisable shapes within some exercises, but we know Pilates draws inspiration from many sources and so it doesn't replicate any one influence. The inventor of the method Joseph Pilates himself explained that Contrology "is the complete coordination of mind, body and spirit" and that it is "not a system of haphazard exercises designed to produce only bulging muscles"*. It begs the question many of us have posed before...Just how well has this legacy been maintained? Are we witnessing the shift of Pilates as we've known it, towards yet another class marketed around altering appearances? Is Pilates and traditional training morphing into one?

The Pilates system was one of the first to integrate mind and body toward the goal of creating and maintaining optimal wellbeing and it stands separately to other modalities in intention, method and result. Until now, any misconception about Pilates had always come from the outside looking in. Sure, there has been internal debate between 'classical' and 'contemporary' teachers regarding exercise order, creative modifications and the like, but the big-picture aims were rarely far apart. The importance of control, the

role of breath, the aim to concentrate on precision and the ability to work from your centre were always of utmost importance whilst mastering its unique and specific repertoire. Nothing in the method is by chance and despite a court ruling that Pilates is a generic form of exercise, to this day Pilates has held its shape over time.

Now, the distinctive characteristics of Pilates are blurring from the inside. Teachers, studio owners and entrepreneurs have realised the untapped potential of moving Pilates out of its niche and into the multibillion dollar global mainstream fitness industry. The events of the past few years have made this an effortless achievement. Social 'lockdowns' elevated the perceived importance of exercise for overall health and wellbeing from which grew displaced fitness communities. The demand for online workouts soared and industry professionals from all backgrounds began to market and sell bodyweight movement of all kinds as Pilates. Weights, plyometric exercises and circuits soon followed and a brand new approach to the method had been born, sometimes without an actual Pilates exercise in sight.

“One immediate path forward involves using this new spotlight to educate clients about what Pilates is, how it differs from other training styles, and why it can enhance rather than replace them.”



Is it necessary to question these changes? After all, if clients are satisfied with Pilates as it is presented to them nowadays and professionals are profiting from its popularity, it's a win-win. Another positive outcome of this shift has been the expansion of the audience watching the Pilates space, which has broadened its appeal and subsequent demographic, ultimately benefiting teachers. The void that Pilates originally filled in giving people an opportunity to practice specific skills which address the whole being in pursuit of longevity may not be as universally appealing. The original sequences of movement can be frustratingly difficult in their technicalities, the effects and results are accumulated over time and the development of smaller muscles prioritises feeling over looking good despite the eventual physical benefits. It's a hard sell, next to the marketable notion of sculpting one's body with less intricate primal moves which, when performed in high repetitions 'burn'. Instantly feeling the effects of a simple sweaty workout has overshadowed the building of more complex skills, ability and knowledge in lessons over time.

Of late, headlines like ABC's "Pilates Injuries Are On The Rise" have gained significant attention, fueling growing concerns about the safety of Pilates. The longstanding association between Pilates and physical therapy has led clients to place a level of trust in their instructors comparable to that in healthcare providers. While it's beyond our professional scope to independently diagnose or treat pain or medical conditions, it's reasonable for clients to expect comprehensive and ongoing training as a fundamental aspect of professional service. For many of us, this commitment to continuous learning forms the bedrock of our careers. Hence, the question arises: is the reported increase in Pilates-related injuries proportionate with the surge in Pilates' popularity, or has the rapid expansion of the industry paved the way for underqualified instructors and Pilates-adjacent businesses leveraging the reputable Pilates name? Many voices advocate for the introduction of regulations to establish clear boundaries within our evolving industry which will hopefully safeguard the dedicated work of Pilates teachers who've come before us.

One immediate path forward involves using this new spotlight to educate clients about what Pilates is, how it differs from other training styles, and why it can enhance rather than replace them. The problem is, the most influential leaders in the industry today are not necessarily the most experienced, meaning those with the biggest reach can sometimes drown out the voices of those with the most valuable knowledge. Consequently, the industry's integrity remains vulnerable on multiple fronts. Reigning this in is about resisting the urge to succumb to trends, both as professionals and as customers. Classical and modern progressive Pilates, with its creative exploration of ways to make original exercises attainable, needn't be bullied out of the market. There is an option to educate the public about the distinct feeling and benefits of maintaining the nuances of Pilates and persist in pursuing professional development to standardise quality in the industry. In doing so, we have the opportunity to preserve what has been a standalone pillar in the fitness space.

Pilates is absolutely strength-building, but that's just one aspect of its intention. The mind-body connection associated with the often subtle muscular connections teaches us self-awareness that spills out away from the Pilates studio. Can it be argued that any movement carried out with control, concentration and precision is 'Pilates'? Or is eliminating the often extreme ranges and planes of movement specific to original repertoire, to opt for more 'doable' movement across the board missing the point? If we stick with chest lifts and pulse lunges without challenging people to regain the natural functionality of their bodies in a systematic method, then it's halfway to being just another gym workout. Add dumbbells, kettlebells and cardio circuits, and Pilates is truly lost.

Renee Siljeg's passion for Pilates began in 2009 and her teaching career soon followed, working within a busy studio in Perth before opening her own space in 2017. Drawn towards the the development of new instructors, Renee is now working on online courses and teacher mentoring.

Mastering the Quadratus Lumborum

LEARN WAYS WE CAN RELIEVE EXCESSIVE TENSION IN THE QL AND FIND PRACTICAL WAYS TO RELEASE, STRETCH AND STRENGTHEN THIS ESSENTIAL MUSCLE.

by Tracey Nicholson and Dr Ruth Young



As Pilates Instructors we all know about the importance of the core, both in Pilates exercises and in the way we move outside the Pilates studio. Having a strong, flexible, and functional core is crucial to healthy movement patterns and maintaining our physical function as we move through our lives. When we look to the core, we often focus our attention on the Rectus Abdominis, Transversus Abdominis, Obliques, or the Pelvic Floor (and rightly so, these are important muscles!), but one often-forgotten muscle of the core is the Quadratus Lumborum (QL). Here we endeavour to correct this unfortunate tendency. We will explore the significance of the QL in the context of Pilates, its anatomy, function, the causes of QL pain and practical ways to release, stretch and strengthen this essential muscle to enhance our clients' Pilates experience.

Anatomy and Function

There are two QL muscles, each located on either side of the lumbar spine. The QL attaches the pelvis to the lumbar spine and lowest rib and performs a range of functions. Its three main actions include:

- Lateral flexion of the lumbar spine (side bending)
- Extension of the lumbar spine (arching the back)
- Elevation of the pelvis (hip hiking)

In addition to these joint actions, the QL also plays a role in breathing (due to its insertion into the 12th rib) and stabilising the lumbar spine. The QL muscles are also responsible for keeping the ribs, spine, and pelvis stable when the arms and legs are moving (e.g., in exercises such as Pointer or Dead Bugs) and work eccentrically during spinal flexion and rotation.

Almost every movement of the spine, ribs, pelvis, arms or legs, requires the QL to function effectively. During Pilates exercises, the QL works synergistically with the other core muscles to provide stability and control, ensuring smooth, efficient, and injury-free movement. All of these sound great, but what happens when the QL muscles don't function quite as they should?

Pain

Dysfunction of the QL muscle can be responsible for lower back pain, usually as a result of tightness or weakness in one (or both) of the QL muscles. Lower back pain can be tricky to treat. People can be very sensitive about their back pain. If you have a client with lower back pain, take the time to do a full postural and movement assessment and assess whether it is QL-related or whether something else might be the cause.



Perhaps the QL pain is a result of an imbalance somewhere else? Whatever conclusions you come to and the course of action you pursue, take it slowly and gently.

To address muscle tightness, we typically look at two main methods, myofascial release (or trigger point release) and stretching. In conjunction with addressing tightness, it is important to strengthen the QL muscles to see improvement in QL pain long term. However, keep in mind that muscles and ligaments that are inflamed can respond poorly to being stretched or overworked. The QL also sits quite deep and the more superficial latissimus dorsi and iliocostalis lumborum can make it harder to isolate. Keeping these things in mind, let's take a look at the ways we can relieve excessive tension in the QL.

Release

If we are looking at releasing the QL, a pair of small balls is the way to go. About the size of a tennis ball would be perfect. There are many brands of massage balls available. Ideally, we are looking for something firm, but not hard, and you might like to have a range of firmness options on hand in your studio to suit different clients. We like to use the black Yamuna Balls.

Take your chosen balls and lie down on the mat, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Place each ball on either side of your lower spine, midway between the top of your pelvis and your lowest rib. Make sure the pressure of the balls isn't sitting directly on the lowest rib or your spine. From here, tuck the pelvis into a posterior tilt (so that your tailbone lifts off the mat and the lower back is pressing down into the balls), then tip the pelvis away into an anterior tilt (tailbone drops back down towards the mat). Gently rock the pelvis back and forth.

Next, we are going to hike the hip to each side. Bring the pelvis into a neutral position by hovering the tailbone off the mat. While keeping the pelvis parallel to the floor. Hike the right hip up towards the lower ribs on the right side, at the same time reaching the left hip down towards the feet. Gently switch side to side, elongating one side while contracting the other.

Stretch

Some of the best QL stretches are fairly straightforward. A standing (or sitting) side stretch or mermaid stretch are great options. To try to isolate the muscle it can be helpful to get clients up against the wall. In the case of side bends, keeping both shoulders on the wall helps ensure pure lateral spinal flexion. You may even like to use props such as the Oove (pictured), the Wunda Chair, or Spine Corrector. If you want to, you can then add a rotation, bringing the top arm and shoulder away from the wall, and reaching through the fingertips. Placing the lumbar spine into flexion can also be a great way to stretch the QL, such as in a standard yoga Child's Pose or Cat/Cow.

Strengthen

Once the tightness in the QL has been addressed it can be helpful for long-term relief of lower back pain to work on effective engagement and strengthening of the QL. Pilates exercises that involve lateral spinal flexion will engage the QL and there are many exercises to choose from. Depending on the client, you may choose to start with something simple, for example using the basic standing side stretch mentioned earlier, but this time encouraging the client to actively contract the concave side (rather than focusing on stretching the convex side). More challenging exercises to strengthen the QL include side lying Double Leg Lifts and Side Bend on the mat, Reformer or Wunda Chair. Sideways over the box on the Reformer is another great exercise, an exercise so often focused on the stretching aspect rather than the synergy between strengthening and stretching.

Where to from here?

A deeper understanding of the QL can bring a newfound appreciation for the important role it plays in healthy movement. As we encourage our clients to cultivate strength and flexibility, we must remember that addressing QL-related issues requires a balanced approach of patience and mindfulness. By integrating myofascial release and somatic techniques, purposeful stretching, and targeted strengthening exercises into our Pilates programming we empower our clients to not only alleviate pain, but improve functionality and quality of movement, allowing them to go out into the world and move freely. So, let us embrace the power of the Quadratus Lumborum and lead our clients to discover the depth and beauty of Pilates from the inside out!

Tracey Nicholson is the Director of [Tensegrity Training](#) an RTO that offers several different levels of training to help you at any stage of your career in Pilates.

Dr Ruth Young is a Pilates instructor, student mentor, and assessor for Tensegrity Training. In her spare time, Ruth manages her own business providing Pilates classes as part of employee wellness programs.

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Instructor Spotlight: Shauntel Douglas

WE SPEAK WITH PILATES INSTRUCTOR SHAUNTEL DOUGLAS ABOUT HER PILATES CAREER AND HER TEACHING FOCUS

Q. Tell us a little about yourself and your Pilates background?

A. My name is Shauntel Douglas and I both reside and am also from Buffalo New York. I am currently a Pilates teacher at Heart Fire Yoga (Hot Pilates), Center Pilates, The Pilates Lab and Everybody Plus. I have been teaching at all these studios between three months to three or more years. My friends would describe me as hilarious, very knowledgeable, sensitive and just flat out of the box. Out of a row of brown boxes, I would be the only rainbow box that would spray glitter.

Q. How did you discover Pilates?

A. It's a funny story. I had just missed a registration for a 500-hour yoga teacher training program and wanted to enter an "in-house" education program to become a teacher under the assumption that both Pilates and Yoga was the same and one of my now Pilates mentors Nancy Hughes (owner of Center Pilates) linked me to Beth Elkins-Wales (owner of The Pilates Lab) who is currently one of the teachers, educators associated with Core Dynamics (Kevin Bowen) and the rest was history! Boy was I in for an immense body awakening! In other words, I learned that Pilates and Yoga are very different.

Q. How do you keep learning? What inspires you in your work?

A. I keep learning because I ALWAYS will deem myself as a student. By doing this, I continue to shadow my mentors and take different Instructors' classes. What inspires me in my work is knowing that I personally serve such a purpose in the Pilates community. I am not only a black woman but represent the curvy community as well. This honestly keeps me going, there's a stigmatic mould of what a Pilates body should look like and I hate Google for this. Pilates is highly misrepresented and not poured into black and BIPOC communities enough due to it exemplifying a higher status which Joseph Pilates never planned it to be. I have so many inspiring people to be grateful for such as my Black Girl Pilates Sister Sonja Herbert who created space for black and brown women like me, my mother who gave me the nod to pursue becoming a teacher, Jessamyn Stanley who initially inspired me to get into the fitness industry as there was NO ONE that looked like her in the fitness world and Kathy Stanford Grant being the mould for black Pilates practitioners having a space in this industry.



Q. The best advice you were ever given as a teacher...

A. Never tell a student that they can't fulfill a Pilates movement because you aren't familiar with that kind of body. Do the work as a teacher, learn the body and find a way to fulfil the movement for the student. Find a way for that student. Don't just preach that Pilates is for everybody and not connect the dots. Connect the dots and get the body moving because Pilates is for everyone. Never leave a student out.

Q. Is there something you try and instill in each of your clients?

A. I always instill into my students that there is absolutely nothing you can't do. I always want them to be empowered in my classes.

Q. The best Pilates course you ever did was...

A. I've only been involved with the Core Dynamic Pilates Program but have done workshops with Black Girl Pilates a few years back pre-pandemic. Black Girls Pilates kept me going in Pilates School. It was the safe space, the diversity and sisterhood for me that meant so much.

Q. What's your favourite piece of equipment to use with clients in studio and why?

A. I'd say the Wunda chair. The chair is literally a "Jack in the box" – at first you are curious about what it can offer (with a tad bit of fear). You have absolutely no idea what is coming out of the box just like the Wunda chair. It's definitely deceiving to the eye!

Q. How do you stay motivated?

A. I honestly stay motivated by working on my personal practice and creating my own open space to feel new things about my body, read and watch Pilates videos. It's amazing to see everyone's own style and philosophy of Pilates.

Q. What makes you laugh the most?

A. Seeing a man's reaction after taking a Pilates class for the first time.

Q. What's your favourite way to spend a day off?

A. On a day off, I enjoy cooking, dabbling in herbs and listening to music. I am not much of a television person.

Q. How many pairs of grip socks do you own?

A. I currently own two pairs of grip socks and have to wear open-toe grip socks because of my size 12 feet. I love a stretch band and use mine daily. As a bicyclist, my body sometimes needs that extra oomph of motion in stretch form.

Q. Does your family 'really know' what's involved in your job

A. This question is so funny to me and I say this with pure love as I answer. My family has used Google Images to their advantage as their own bug like repellent to take a class except for a selected few who will randomly take a class or two and when they do, I embrace them with a "hundred" combo.



Shauntele teaches at Heart Fire Yoga, The Pilates Lab, Center Pilates and Everybody Plus in New York.

 A promotional advertisement for AUActive membership. The background features a close-up of a woman's face on the left side. The text is centered and right-aligned.

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Case Study: Frozen Shoulder

WE'VE DISCUSSED THE CONDITION OF A FROZEN SHOULDER, NOW LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WAYS YOU COULD REHAB THE AREA

by Donna Oliver

Martha had been a long-term client of the Pilates studio attending semi-private/ individually programmed classes for approximately six to seven years. She was a recently retired pastry chef in her early 60s. Progressively over a period of weeks and months, we observed a gradual deterioration in her shoulder. She had begun to notice a deep ache in the shoulder when lying on her side sleeping and eventually came to interfere with her activities of daily living (ADL's).

Observation and discussions during her sessions suggested that three key components of a Frozen Shoulder were evident i.e. pain, stiffness, and a loss of range of movement. It is not in the scope of the Pilates Teacher to diagnose pathology and therefore she was referred to her primary medical practitioner who referred her for an MRI. The imaging results indicated a thickening of the coracohumeral ligament and shoulder capsule along with inflammation. She was further referred to her physical therapist who diagnosed Frozen Shoulder, also known as Adhesive Capsulitis.

Martha was a bit reluctant to receive ongoing treatment by the physio and was keen to self-manage using modified Pilates

protocols and home exercises. Her physical therapist was open to this treatment plan and continued a dialogue with the Pilates teacher for advice with ongoing management and problem-solving as required.

The programming consisted of the following:

Client Education:

- Help the client understand the self-limiting nature of the condition, meaning they need to accept the natural healing process and that the body will resolve the issues in its own timeline.
- Average timelines for healing to ensure realistic expectations by the client
- Goals of programming including self-management strategies for home.

Agreed Client Goals

- Maintain general health/wellbeing and optimal movement with a whole-body approach
- Use self-massage (myofascial techniques) to enhance range of motion and pain control
- Minimise atrophy and weakness in the shoulder and supporting structures
- Optimise movement strategies and identify any unhelpful compensatory patterns of movement.

In the Pilates studio

- The client attended two private sessions to provide education, discuss reasonable expectations and agree to an approach in the Pilates studio and home exercises
- They returned to a semi-private class format once per week (her usual pattern of attendance)
- Each class began with a "check-in" on her experience of the past week, how ADLs continued to be affected, and any compliance

“It is not in the scope of the Pilates Teacher to diagnose pathology and therefore she was referred to her primary medical practitioner who referred her for an MRI.”

issues with homework

·Progressively over time, we reduced the amount of discussion about pathology. In my opinion if we allow the client to continue to focus on the pathology it will have a negative affect psychologically and can increase healing time.

Program

·Heat pack was applied to the front and back of shoulder for five minutes at the beginning and end of her class
 ·Using a small ball, self-massage was applied at the front of the shoulder/chest and around scapula/thoracic spine against a wall
 ·Her pre-diagnosis program was maintained as much as possible. It was important that she didn't feel 'broken'
 ·A few minutes each class with a focus on breath work was helpful for thoracic mobility and as a relaxation technique
 ·Her teachers were observant of any para-language i.e. body language or unspoken cues that she may not be comfortable with and made modifications where necessary.

Modifications in this case included:

·Any Mat work was delivered on the Cadillac to minimise getting her up and down on the floor
 ·Supine – padding under the affected shoulder. This supported her shoulder joint in a slightly anterior position but allowed Martha to continue supine exercises with less pain and discomfort. Over the duration, the amount of padding and the frequency of use was decreased. At times when the shoulder was particularly problematic, she self-supported with her non-affected arm across her torso
 ·Closed chain exercises such as four point kneeling/quadruped exercises were moved to a standing position against the wall but this was not always necessary
 ·Sidelying Mat work exercises were taught on the Cadillac using the box at the short end to support the head and allow the



affected arm to be supported and positioned off the end
 ·Reformer – supine abdominal work was possible by removing the straps from the hands and using a dowel in both hands. On good days she was able to apply a slight isometric abduction /adduction/ rotational force to activate some musculature around the shoulder
 ·The number of repetitions and rest periods needed to be modified depending on the day.

Home Exercises

·Self-massage, scapula mobilisation (shrugs/shoulder circles, etc.), isometric shoulder exercises and a variety of stretches were suggested several times during the week
 ·She was advised to 'listen to the body' but move as normally as possible, whenever possible.
 For Martha, her journey back to almost full function was approximately 10-12 months. Although there remains a small deficit in the range of motion when compared to the non-affected side, she has returned to all ADL's with minimal and infrequent periods of discomfort.

A list of all possible exercises that can be prescribed for clients with Frozen Shoulder would be almost without limit. Most importantly, it is helpful to have a supportive network of mentors or other physical therapy practitioners to provide sound advice on restorative movement programming according to current best practice.

Donna has been a Pilates teacher for almost 30 years. She is an Exercise Physiologist and has consulted with industry bodies (APMA/PAA) and presented both in Australia and internationally.

Upcoming courses

BASI AUSTRALIA

The Mat Program, Mat and Reformer Program and Comprehensive Global Program are now offered in
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Springing this Joint and Hashimoto's Disease - Canberra - 29 October

A full event calendar can be found [here](#).

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Reformer Certification - WA - 3 Jan (waitlisted), QLD - 3 Jan and NSW - 25 Jan.
Mat Certification - WA - 21 Feb, NSW - 21 Feb and QLD - 19 Jun.
Adelaide dates to come.

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Meet Spinefitter - Online via zoom - 3 Feb
Neuroplasticity - Melbourne 4 Feb, Sydney 11 Feb

Pilates for Chronic Lower Back Pain Online Course - available anytime
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For a complete list of courses see the Polestar website polestarpilates.edu.au/pilates-continuing-education/

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- NSW - Hunters Hill, 9 Mar
- VIC - Greensborough, 5 Apr and more dates on the website.

National Pilates Training has courses starting each month, in person, in a location near you and all courses are available online wherever you are. Find out more www.nationalpilates.com.au/



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For a full list of dates in all states visit tensegritytraining.com.au/accredited-training/

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