Attracting and Retaining Male Clients at Your Studio

Last week, we looked at strategies for how to instruct men through their Pilates work. It turns out, however, that teaching your male clients is only half the battle. You need to get them into your studio first! Today, we wanted to share some strategies for attracting and retaining male clients at your studios. And stay tuned at the very end for a helpful list of tips on how to lead men in your classes.

Make a Marketing Plan

Making Pilates accessible to everyone starts before students even walk through the door. Your marketing campaign, ad copy and images (whether in print or social media) should appeal to all clients, including men. If you only post pictures of females doing Pilates, men might feel intimidated or excluded. This also holds true for images inside the studio itself. Some well-placed articles of famous athletes (like LeBron James or Antonio Brown) doing Pilates, or pictures of Joe Pilates himself, can really resonate with guys and keep them inspired.

Another strategy is to use male clients as subjects for social media posts that highlight how well they're progressing. "Men need to see that Pilates is for every ability level," notes Jamie Issac, Peak Pilates MI and founder of Fluid Life Pilates in Vista, California. "And seeing other men in action is a great way to send the message that Pilates can be for regular guys too."

Appealing to Everyone

Of course, you should make your studio environment appealing to absolutely everyone. The question is “how?” Even something as simple as color choice for the studio can make a difference. It can be worth considering the type of men in your community, who you want to attract, and work out a color scheme and décor that really resonates with them.

Speak Their Language

When a man enters the studio, you should approach him as you would any other client. Find out what his goals are and show him how Pilates will help him meet those goals. You may found out that his goals may differ from your regular clientele.

Jamie affirms that, “Directly relating your cues and exercise choices to male goals, lives and activities we enjoy, will not only help men to find a connection with Pilates, but also with you. Telling men how a certain movement will improve a golf swing, or introducing a gross motor pattern in terms of a skill we are familiar with, such as a lat pull down in the gym, or starting an outboard motor goes a long way toward teaching how Pilates pertains to real life.”

When giving a tour of your studio, point out and explain in simple terms how the springs and apparatus are used to challenge the body, and give them a quick demo that gets them into their powerhouse and feeling the heat! Don’t try to make them perfect; instead try to get them feeling their center and moving their whole body.

Share, Share, Share

Word of mouth is a proven and inexpensive marketing technique, so offer fun programs like men’s power hours that will appeal

to guys. Create male-themed classes; for example, at the Inner Space in Avon, Connecticut, we offered a Saturday morning men's class and encouraged everyone to wear their favorite collegiate football team jerseys in the fall. I always sported my OSU Buckeye colors. Before class, Jock Jams blared throughout the room and the banter was all about the days big match-ups.

Even scheduling men during the same time periods will add a sense of camaraderie and assure them that they are not alone. Jamie suggests attracting male clients in by giving the sessions a unique title. "The name 'Core Stability for Surfers' always worked well to get men through the door at my California studio. Once guys realize that it's actually Pilates that they're doing, it's too late, they're hooked!"

Tips for Teaching Men

- Have a handout with helpful tips on what to wear (bike shorts are a great option), what to expect, and some benefits of Pilates to get male clients excited.
- Keep the work in the workout, don't make new male clients do extracurricular work at the start of their journey.
- Push men to find their limits; they want to sweat!
- Don't 'coddle' or 'baby' your guys; treat them the same as any client.
- Be clear in communicating expectations
- Don't use childish expressions like 'tush' and 'tummy.' Use more accurate and masculine terms like 'glutes' and 'abs.'
- Pilates is dynamic and will improve flexibility, but very tight bodies might need to have a bit of extra stretching slipped in.
- Avoid using ballet terms like 'releve' and 'plie.' Talk in terms of activities that men can relate to.

This article was written by Zoey Trap, MS.

Special thanks to Peak Pilates® Master Instructors Jamie Isaac (Fluid Life Pilates in Vista, California) and Mikko Utecht (My Training Studio, Helsinki, Finland) for their invaluable contributions to this article.