

Find Time this Fall for YOU with Pilates!

As we get deeper and deeper into the Fall season, we wanted to share three great strategies to carve out some you-time with Pilates!

As the smell of pumpkin fills the air and leaves begin to change colors (in some places at least), our schedules become full again following the lazy hazy days of summer. All manner of things related to school and extracurricular activities take precedence over health and exercise. We feel as if we have to do all these “things” in order to be amazing. We let busyness rule our lives without stopping to think about how all the things that we think are good for our family are, in fact, dragging us down.

As moms and dads, we are constantly moving and utilizing our spines, making all the different movements of the spine daily. But if we aren't making those movements correctly, we put ourselves at risk for future pain or injury. When we are driving and checking our blind spot, we are using spinal rotation. When we pick up our kids or their toys off the floor, we are flexing our spines. The act of reaching for your favorite book (or hidden candy stash) causes spinal extension. We make all sorts of movements in daily life, but when we don't use the proper muscles in our powerhouse to create length in our spines it leads to compression of the spine. This compression can lead to back pain and spinal issues that can affect our ability to live our lives.

In Pilates, we make every movement of the spine while working to maintain spinal length through the proper activation of the powerhouse. If we would follow Joseph Pilates' principles and work toward healthy, balanced lives, then we will protect our bodies and continue to enjoy our families. But how can we care for our families if we are in pain?

Joseph Pilates was years ahead of his time, and his hope was that people would understand the need for complete balance in all aspects of life. He stated in his book *Return to Life Through Contrology* in 1945, "Contrology develops the body uniformly, corrects wrong postures, restores physical vitality, invigorates the mind and elevates the spirit." Imagine how different things would be in your life if you felt physically and mentally rejuvenated every day. He further specified, "Moreover, such a body freed from nervous tension and over-fatigue is the ideal shelter provided by nature for housing a well-balanced mind that is always fully capable of successfully meeting all of the complex problems of modern living." As parents, we deal with all sorts of complex issues on a daily basis that only add to the vexation from our hurried existence.

So what can we do to make changes to find balance our lives and make time for Pilates?

1. **Don't be afraid to say no or ask for help.** Balance is utmost importance, or we will miss out on those precious moments with our families that will soon be lost with the passage of time. If we continue to try and be everything for everyone, we will eventually run out of steam, which leads to stress and discontentment. This will permeate not only our lives, but the lives of those we love. So be sure to ask for help if you find your schedule or daily tasks becoming too stressful. It can greatly impact your time, your relationships, and your life!
2. **Don't be afraid to acknowledge your limits.** It's a tough

fact to face, but you aren't a superhero. We are many things to many people, and society pushes this idea on us. Instead, find freedom in the fact that it's okay to be just who YOU are meant to be. You don't need to be like anyone else. Embrace your strengths and your weaknesses and shine. Your family loves you for who YOU are!

3. **Don't let your health fall by the wayside.** Make time for daily exercise. Even a few minutes can revitalize you. Find time to do a quick daily Pilates mat routine at the beginning or the end of each day, during nap time, or while the kids are playing during a "rest time." Set this time aside for YOU! Joseph Pilates spoke about the importance of doing Pilates every day, even if it is only 10 minutes. Once you have established a routine and a habit, you won't want to miss your Pilates time. As Joe instructed in *Return to Life Through Contrology*, "Practice your exercises diligently with the fixed and unalterable determination that you will permit nothing else to sway you from keeping faith with yourself. At times, you may feel tempted to 'take a night off'. Don't succumb to this momentary weakness of indecision or rather, wrong decision. Decide to remain true to yourself."

Perhaps most importantly, remember to keep it simple. Do some of his opening mat exercises daily; Hundred, Roll Up, One Leg Circle and the Abdominal Series (Single Leg Stretch, Double Leg Stretch, Scissors, Lower Lift, Criss Cross). These exercises are perfect for centering your mind and body with breath and connecting you to your powerhouse. As you strengthen your powerhouse and develop better posture, you will discover that you are using that abdominal connection in daily life when you are doing things like the dishes or driving. If we want to continue to care for our families without pain and exhaustion, we need to find the time to care for our own bodies and minds!

***This article was contributed by Suzanne Meledeo,
Pilates Instructor, San Antonio, TX. You can visit her
Facebook page [here](#).***