

The Mindfulness of Movement: 6 Daily Takeaways

Mindfulness is so essential in our Pilates practice. But how can we apply it to our daily lives? Zoey Trap takes us through six mindfulness takeaways, based on the Pilates Principles.

“In walking, just walk. When sitting, just sit. But above all don’t wobble!” – Lin Chi

Mindfulness requires us to focus our full attention on something—to fix our mind on one point and to keep it there. Harnessing the mind pays off through improved efficiency, better listening and communication skills, and enhanced inner peace. Often, when one thinks of mindful activity, their first thought is of yoga or meditation. And while those are great practices, so is Pilates.

Pilates is a movement system that was devised by Joseph H. Pilates, and it is supported by working the body in a myriad of shapes against gravity with assistance and resistance provided by an apparatus (like a low chair or tower). In Pilates, it is the quality with which one moves that is prized rather than the number of repetitions one performs. Pilates builds on six Principles: Concentration, Centering, Control, Precision, Breath, and Flowing Movement. When a student practices using these Principles, they are indeed practicing meditation in motion. Let’s examine these Principles one at a

time and see how they relate to mindfulness.

Concentration: “The mind, when housed within a healthful body, possesses a glorious sense of power...” Joseph Pilates taught that the mind controls the body. When we practice with deep concentration, we are focusing inward. We are “just doing Pilates”, not thinking of anything else like letting our minds wander and our bodies wobble.

Daily Takeaway: Improved ability to focus on a task at hand.

Centering: “A unique trinity of a balanced body, mind and spirit,” is how Joe described his system. We center our mind by coming into the present moment and center our body from the center out. This action helps create a harmonious mind/body connection which, in turn, uplifts the spirit.

Daily Takeaway: A sense of ability to ground in what is, rather than wishing for what might be.

Control: “Mastery of the mind over the complete control of the body.” Our thinking defines our behavior. When we come into our practice and learn to bond the mind and body, time seemingly stands still, and we let go of our daily distractions. We learn to befriend our body, to find joy in movement, to develop awareness of our body and its relationship to all around us. Control is not a rigid grasping, but rather a connection of concentrating our mind, centering in our body, and creating ease and efficiency.

Daily Takeaway: What is the alternative to being in control? Being out of control and being caught up in the drama of life is not a healthy lifestyle choice!

Precision: “Good posture can be successfully acquired only when the entire mechanism of the body is under control.” The Principle of Precision helps to break and correct faulty movement patterns and to restore the body to its natural ability. Pilates exercises have a precise and prescribed starting point, movement pattern and rhythm. Working toward improved precision requires the three previous Principles to

integrate with every movement.

Daily Takeaway: Details matter, and they can only be attended to when we give our full attention to the task at hand.

Breathing: “Above all learn how to breathe correctly...” Joe illuminated this important connection between our breath and a healthy life. Many meditation techniques focus on the breath, and breathing practices are a common denominator of all mind/body/spirit modalities. When we connect with breath, we begin to understand its ability to support us and to help center us—indeed, we begin to watch it come and watch it go.

Daily Takeaway: Use breathing as a tool to eliminate distractions and calm disruptive emotions, thereby allowing the mind to have space and the body to abide in a place of ease.

Flowing Movement: “Contrology (Pilates) is designed to give you suppleness, natural grace, and skill that will be unmistakably reflected in the way you walk, in the way you play, and in the way you work.” Flowing movement is the result of being in the practice fully present; by embodying natural movement, trusting your instinct, letting outside demands go, and rejoicing in your spirit.

Daily Takeaway: The ability to go with the flow, to be present and one with the environment around you.

There can be no doubt that when Pilates is practiced with these important tenants in place, it is elevated beyond mere exercise. Indeed, it is a mindful movement practice that can enhance daily life.

How do you remain mindfulness in your Pilates practice and your everyday life? Share your thoughts

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