

Client Case Study

Justina Harrison, Artist

"I can't praise the benefits of Pilates enough. For me initially it was about managing pain. To a degree that is still so but it's also about how my body has changed for the better. I can't imagine any reason why I would ever stop practising Pilates."

Reason for taking up pilates?:

"I had been living with lower back pain for several years due to leaning over & working at a drawing board. In May 2005 I suffered a severe herniated/slipped disc. I was under my Physio for 6 weeks, my recovery was very slow & I endured weeks of nerve damage pain & numbness down to my toes on my right leg. I had a relapse in July, then again in late August. I was at this point at my wits end, feeling like a zombie due to muscle relaxants!

I was referred to a Rheumatologist by my GP & Physiotherapist. The Physio recommended Pilates & I joined a class at her practice for 6 weeks. There was a huge improvement. I was given an MRI Scan & the Rheumatologist diagnosis was, that if I were able to avoid another relapse within the next 12 months I could possibly make a full recovery. He too recommended Pilates & I was advised to find a small class specifically using the Body Control technique. Enter Stephanie Smith..."

Have you seen specific improvements/changes?:

"I joined Stephanie's class and I had every faith in the Pilates technique as I had felt a great improvement in the 6-week period with the Physio. Initially though, I was very aware of every movement I made, in fear of another relapse. I need not have worried - I slowly began to get my confidence & the feeling of mobility after a class was fantastic.

As mad as this sounds I was able to cough & sneeze without crouching down or holding on to something! My inner muscles grew strong enough to support my back & gradually I learnt to engage them taking the strain from my back.

I have bad days where I must have slept funny, but the fact that I am able to manage my back pain by simply holding myself correctly is brilliant. A few simple exercises in the morning & the stiffness eases away. A huge bonus is that my posture is so much better, I feel slimmer, taller & I now have a waist too!

Joining Stephanie's class was the best thing I could have done. The fact that the classes are small is great. Some of the exercises are so isolated that without a "hands on" approach it would be difficult to get the movements right. It's not just a question of movement; it's how you move & tuning into your body to work the correct area. A larger class would make it impossible for this to happen.

I strongly believe that the Teacher is the most important part of a successful & beneficial class. An acquaintance joined a Leisure Centre class around the same time that I did. She thought that I was getting ripped off, as my progression through the movements wasn't anything like hers. They had been practicing "the plank" (intermediate/advanced Pilates move) after 5 sessions. For me this is so wrong, there can't have been anyone in that class of 35 that had enough inner core strength to manage this movement correctly. So choose your class carefully.

I can't praise the benefits of Pilates enough. For me initially it was about managing pain. To a degree that is still so but it's also about how my body has changed for the better. I have much more confidence in how I look & feel. I look forward to challenging myself to achieve the next level of fitness. I can't imagine any reason why I would ever stop practicing Pilates. Even when I have a headache or feel under the weather I don't want to miss a class."

Client Case Study

Debbie, Legal Secretary

“Overall, it has been a life changing experience – after 15 years of daily back pain, I am now almost totally pain and pill free! Since starting Pilates, 10 months ago, I can honestly say I have only needed to take pain killers on about 3 occasions..... I didn't think for one minute that it would work as well as it has. I was a bit of a sceptic but now I am converted!”

Reason for taking up pilates?:

I had chronic degenerative disc disease which my GP said included two prolapsed discs, one torn disc and another was completely compressed. I had suffered for approximately 15 years. My doctors offered strong pain killers and anti-inflammatories. I also had steroid injections into 8 facet joints in my lower spine, which worked for about 9 months.

About 18 months later I had an epidural block into the spine which didn't work at all - in fact it seemed to make matters worse. I tried acupuncture with only marginal success. I also had various sessions of physiotherapy which didn't help much - mainly due to them giving me more than 20 exercises to do. Frankly, when you are trying to work full time and feel lousy when you get home the last thing you need is to do loads of exercises.

I suffered a variety of symptoms including: loss of feeling down legs and feet, intense pain in lower back, exhaustion and fatigue and although I would not admit it, I'm sure depression as well.

I was unable to do many tasks without being in pain for instance, cleaning my teeth, bending down, walking for any longer than 15 mins, sitting down for any longer than 15 mins, and lying on my back was not possible. Travelling was also difficult.

Have you seen specific improvements/changes?:

I started Pilates in January 2006. Initially, I had one to one sessions initially to get the basics and so that we could work on exercises which were of particular benefit for me. I then started to attend the weekly classes. At first I found them difficult, due to the fact that my movement was quite limited, and lying on my back was uncomfortable. By the third class, I had more confidence and felt that I could join in properly.

Steph is great as she is aware of my problem and tells me when she thinks I have to be more careful on certain new movements. I then make sure I engage my core muscles even more, to protect my lower back. There are only a couple of movements so far that I cannot do and perhaps, may never will be able to, however the improvement in my posture and core strength has increased amazingly. My legs feel stronger than they have done for years.

On a day to day basis I have noticed the following improvements:

- I can now get out of bed in the mornings without pain and doubling up.
- I do not have pain in my legs any more
- I have only a few occasions where I feel pain in my lower back, but on the whole the back pain is almost gone. I would normally wake up every morning and think - how bad is it going to be today?. Now it doesn't even enter my mind. I can just get on with LIFE.
- I can do normal everyday tasks now without suffering.
- I am now able to walk for 6 miles in about an hour and quarter, without suffering. I try to do this about twice a week. I have just started to run some of it. I have bought a cross trainer and can "run" on this for about 3 miles

Overall, it has been a life changing experience. 15 years of pain, of varying degrees, every single day of your life has a devastating effect. The pain killers also had side effects and I was taking these every day for years.

I am now almost totally pain free and pill free. Since starting Pilates, 10 months ago, I can honestly say, I have only needed to take pain killers on about 3 occasions.

Friends who have not seen me for a while have commented on how well I look. I didn't think for one minute that Pilates would work as well as it has. I was a bit of a sceptic - but now I am converted!