

TIME OUT HONG KONG



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Body language *Pilates*

Emily Tobin talks to Pilates instructor Mirko Turia about the benefits of stretching

Pilates was first formulated during the 1920s. Why do you think there has been such a revived interest in the practice in recent years?
I think the media and the celebrities have had a lot of influence on the general public, especially in the last 15 years or so. It's like when Madonna started practicing yoga, then soon after the world was doing yoga, even though it is a very old practice. The same happened with Pilates.

In Hong Kong life can be fast paced and super stressful. What can Pilates offer the chronically stressed?
Pilates has many benefits in terms of the physiological effect on the body. It helps you to focus on breathing, which is an essential part of our being and more importantly, wellbeing. It also helps you to connect your mind to your body by realigning the body to allow the energy to flow freely, therefore reducing stress.

For the uninitiated, yoga and Pilates can seem very similar. What are the differences?
Rudolf Joseph Pilates studied yoga when he designed his method of body conditioning, so there are

similar movements in both practices. I think Pilates focuses more on the strength and alignment of the body and dynamic flexibility, while yoga focuses more on static flexibility and meditation.

How much of your class time is spent trying to rid people of their bad habits?
I would say that for many people we need to modify the way they move in order to bring about the efficient use of their body and we do spend quite a bit of time doing this. I also find that people in the basic urban environment tend to have subtle inefficient movement and postural patterns, such as hyperactivity around the shoulder, neck area and weak abdominals... which are parts that the Pilates method addresses very thoroughly.

Are there any simple exercises we can do whilst sitting at our desks that will improve our fitness and posture?
Yes, you can bend your spine from side to side to stretch the ribcage, turn the neck from side to side to ease tension around the neck and shoulders and try getting up from the chair and walk around for a few minutes every hour.

In PR: 887, California Tower, 33-37 D'Almeida St, Lan Kwai Fong, Central, 2889 8633; www.pr.com.hk. \$2,350 for 100 group workout classes. \$2,000 for seven classes with a private instructor.



How balanced are you? Strengthen your core in group classes or private sessions

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