

Fitness and the Free Spirit

By Aakanksha Devi Published: 02nd March 2014 06:00 AM



It is such an amazing form of movement that even after doing a single exercise for the longest time ever, suddenly one day while doing that same movement, it can bring forth a different meaning in terms of connections, fluidity or strength,” begins Anjali, adding what makes pilates so successful is that it can even be incorporated into other methods of movement and training be it running, strength training or even tai chi.

The effect of practising and teaching pilates for over 20 years reflects on Anjali Sareen’s appearance and attitude. Youthful, positive and motivating, she is India’s only pilates trainer’s trainer. Despite teaching Stott Pilates for two decades, she says that it is something that will always be “a work in progress”. A training form that builds on energy, focus and strength, pilates builds on power from within as it is based on the concept of training the body from the inside out.

“With pilates there is no concept of having “perfected” a move. On a daily basis the body responds differently to a specific move and that, for me, is what keeps the challenge and interest constantly alive in pilates,” says the lady who originally got in to this form of training to simply add to her repertoire of fitness training methods but then got deeper into the principles and applications.

Contemporary cause

After finding how the relevance of pilates affected needs, goals and concerns for most individuals on a daily basis, Anjali and her husband Sharat started The Zone Mind and Body

Studio in Bangalore. “Pilates strengthens the body from within in a very subtle manner. So much so that the body starts to adapt better movement patterns to daily life activities; making all movements as effortless as possible. But the increase in demand for pilates has also led to classes being offered by persons who lack quality certification,” she admits, elaborating that it is the reason why she chose to start a centre to train instructors as well. “Even instructors who get certified need to gain the understanding and experience to be able to successfully apply this method,” says Anjali.

Changing times

PACE UP TO PILATES

Pilates is a body conditioning routine that helps build flexibility, muscle strength and endurance in the legs, abdominals, arms, hips and back. It puts emphasis on spinal and pelvic alignment, breathing and developing a strong core or centre and improving coordination and balance.



Speaking about the transformation of pilates from a very niche to a mainstream workout regimen, Anjali pinpoints the systematic approach and complete concentration that the training demands for its growth in popularity. “Pilates is often referred to as intelligent movement and does attract people who enjoy the mental focus required in this method,” she says, elaborating that eight to 80-year-olds all find themselves getting addicted to pilates despite living in a country, where, perhaps, yoga still takes centre stage.

“Often, pilates is mistaken to be a form of yoga. However, the two are not the same and really the goals of both are different. Pilates is a method that focuses on teaching the body correct movement patterns with the least amount of stress placed on the body’s joints and muscles; by building core strength from within,” Anjali explains and goes on to tell that it can even be used as a foundation to better other forms of physical activity including yoga.

Her work over the years with various needs and goals of myriad people is something she credits as helping her train and understand pilates better. “It allowed me to understand how to apply and use this method effectively. And then my transition into becoming a teacher’s teacher for Stott Pilates seemed a natural next step,” Anjali shares. “I have been teaching fitness (including pilates) for a very long time and still love it and have the same enthusiasm for working with people as when I first started. What I find most fascinating is the challenge that every different person presents because, as I said earlier, training people is not a case of one size fits all,” says the instructor adding that when the results of her teaching start showing, “it is wonderful to see the satisfaction, sense of joy and accomplishment on the person’s face.”