

Pilates Express

**GET MAXIMUM
RESULTS IN
MINIMUM TIME**



LYNNE ROBINSON

‘Lynne is the undisputed First Lady of Pilates’

OBSERVER

Lynne Robinson is one of the world’s most respected Pilates teachers. She is the founder of Body Control Pilates, which is seen as an international benchmark for safe and effective teaching. There are 200,000 copies of Lynne’s books in print, including 81,000 of *The Pilates Bible* which has been sold to China, Finland, Italy, Spain and the US. She has also produced highly popular DVDs. In demand internationally, she frequently lectures at conferences throughout the world and has taught Pilates in countries as varied as the US, Japan, South Africa, Thailand and Australia.

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“

Physical activity is the first requisite of happiness. Our interpretation of physical fitness is the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of naturally, easily, and satisfactorily performing our many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure.’

JOSEPH PILATES,
— RETURN TO LIFE

Introduction

In this book, we will show you that achieving good health and staying fit does not require hours at the gym. You can achieve the same by moving more and, importantly, moving well, throughout your day.

The Pilates Express programme has more 40 mini workouts to choose from, each designed for a specific part of your day – Morning, Midday and Evening. The exercises, many brand new to Pilates, will make a huge difference to both how you look and how you feel. But perhaps most important of all, they will help you to be healthy. We aim to restore balance in your body, making it resilient, flexible and strong enough, physically, mentally, and emotionally, to tackle whatever life has in store.

Most of us know that regular exercise is vital for our health, and yet still many of us struggle to achieve our weekly quota. Probably the single biggest obstacle to exercising regularly is lack of time. Setting aside an hour for a class may seem impossible, but 10 minutes? That surely is doable. We will also show you simple ways to include more physical activity in your daily life, without having to schedule ‘exercise sessions’. Perfect for those of you who are intention rich, time poor!

Our goal will be to use the mini workouts to reset and rebalance your body. And, because balance in our bodies requires balance in our lives, we will also look at small lifestyle changes that deliver big results.

MAXIMUM RESULTS IN MINIMUM TIME

The exercises within the Pilates Express programme will improve your strength and flexibility, toning every inch and streamlining your body. We will work on your posture, core stability, and improve the efficiency of your breathing.

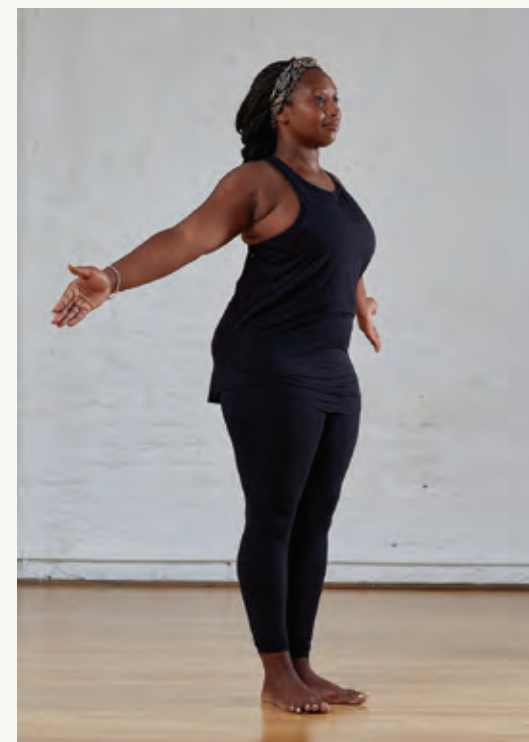
These are the things that Pilates is already famous for, but this time, we are going further, deeper. We are also going to look at simple ways to ensure that your body can cope with stress better, to explore ways to reduce chronic inflammation (a major cause of many modern diseases), we will find ways to help your immune system function better. In this way, you will be better equipped to fight off disease and any viruses you may encounter.

If lack of time is not your obstacle to exercising, maybe lack of motivation is? Maybe you are time rich but intention poor? Perhaps, at the end of the day the couch and a box set beckons more than your exercise mat? If you ever needed a reason to get up off the couch and start moving more, the recent pandemic was it. We were given a stark

reminder of the importance of being fit and healthy. COVID-19 proved to be a mild illness for most of us, but for far too many, tragically, it was fatal. We have learned, the hard way, the importance of being both fit and a healthy weight. This did not guarantee survival, but it helped the odds.

The coronavirus pandemic taught us that we cannot take our health for granted. Many of us stopped to recalibrate, re-evaluate what was important in life, what our priorities should be. And I am certain that many of us realised that we are not invincible, that we need to invest time now in our health. Tomorrow, sadly, it may be too late. We need to ensure that we are fit enough to face any future challenges, any illnesses, to ensure our immune system is working efficiently so that we can stay safe and well.

Some elements of our lives are out of our control, others we can control. We can take steps to improve our health and wellbeing. How and when we exercise is within our control, so let’s make sure we are doing it right.



SIMPLY MOVE MORE – THE BENEFITS OF A LITTLE AND OFTEN

Unfortunately, only about 20% of us are getting even a moderate level of regular exercise. And yet the message from our scientific advisors is crystal clear. Regular exercise, even regular walks, can reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke by a whopping 31%. One study analysed 655,000 people and discovered that being active for a mere 11 minutes a day after the age of 40, added 1.8 years to your life expectancy. If you exercise for an hour or more daily, that goes up to an additional 4.2 years.¹

Our sedentary lifestyles are having a massively negative impact on our health. As humans we are engineered to move not sit. Both the World Health Organisation and the UK Chief Medical Officers in their latest health reports identified that being sedentary has a profoundly negative effect on our health. Sitting has become the new smoking. In this book, we hope to show you how small bursts of exercise can be life changing, even life extending. We want to show you how to integrate Pilates into your daily life.

Strengthen your *immune* health with pilates

As we have seen, our immune system will attack any 'invader' it sees as 'not belonging to us', viewing it as potentially dangerous, and needing to be eliminated. We have noted that it is a highly complicated, finely tuned and balanced system, which we take for granted, until it goes wrong. When it does fail, either under-reacting to the danger or over-reacting, we may succumb to a wide range of illnesses ranging from the common cold to cancer, autoimmune illnesses, allergies and even mental health problems.

Joseph Pilates always believed his method helped fight off disease. Pilates was living in London at the outbreak of the First World War. As he was German by birth, he was interned in a prisoner of war camp. It was whilst in the camp that he had the opportunity to develop his method. When out of his cell, he took it on himself to teach a daily exercise class. Pilates always claimed that his exercises prevented any of the prisoners dying from the Spanish flu (a type of bird flu) epidemic which claimed the lives of millions across Europe.

Current clients feel equally passionate about the benefits of Pilates. In a recent survey, the main reason why people took up Pilates was to manage a specific medical condition but, interestingly, the main reason given for continuing to attend classes was 'improved 'health and wellbeing.'

Elsewhere in the book, we will explore how the importance of a balanced diet to our wellbeing. But let us look now at how movement helps our immune system.



MOVEMENT – LET THE LYMPH FLOW

According to Dr Jenna Macciochi, author of *The Science of Staying Well*, 'If you don't own your lymph, you don't own your health.' She also cites 'under moving' as a contributory factor in poor immune health. One of the benefits of regular Pilates is the impact it has on our lymphatic system. Why is this important?

Our lymphatic system plays a vital surveillance role in the body. If it detects a problem, it will then transport those vital white blood cells to the relevant site to tackle it. This often overlooked system consists of a huge network of nodes and vessels distributed throughout the body. With the exception of our nails, hair, and cartilage, we are literally swimming in lymph fluid. This fluid, called chyle, transports many of our immune cells, proteins, and hormones. It also acts as the body's waste disposal system.

During normal metabolic processes, cells produce waste products which need to be removed so that the cells can stay healthy and nutrients can reach them. The lymph 'collects' these toxins which are then are filtered out by lymph nodes situated all around the body. This lymph is then carried by vessels back to the thoracic ducts (just by the collarbones) where the cleaned lymph is returned to the bloodstream. Vital work, but even though it has millions of vessels just like the blood system, the lymphatic system has no strong pump, like

the heart, to keep lymph moving. Instead, lymph is moved by breathing, walking, intestinal activity and muscle action. Lack of physical activity, sitting still for long periods, especially sitting slumped and breathing poorly, may result in the lymph flow becoming sluggish.

We want the lymph to flow freely. Controlled breathing practices will help. A lot of lymph tissue is situated in the centre of the body, and every breath in and out creates a vacuum effect which helps lymph flow. In this way, when we practise deep breathing exercises, when we focus on controlling our breathing during exercise, we are not only making our breathing more efficient, we are also working on improving our lymphatic system. The other way we can work on our lymphatic system is to get our joints moving. The rhythmic movements of a Pilates session are great at stimulating blood flow and lymph flow. As your muscles contract and release, lymph vessels are squeezed, and lymph is pushed along and filtered through lymph nodes on its way back to the veins and the heart.

On pages 118–53, you will find exercises that have been specifically chosen for their ability to get lymph flowing. Many of these exercises are new to Pilates, others have been tweaked to make them more effective at encouraging lymph flow.

Breathe *better*

Whilst respiration is an involuntary function, we can also consciously control it. This gives us the chance to work on improving the efficiency of our breathing. Be kind to yourself here: it will take time to change.

We are going to try to breathe in and out through the nose. This is the most efficient way of breathing and is what nature intended and Joseph Pilates advocated. The tiny hairs inside your nose filter pollutants, germs and bacteria from the air as you breathe in. The air is also warmed and humidified in a way that means it is better received by your lungs. Nasal breathing results in 10 to 20 per cent more oxygen intake. If you suffer from blocked sinuses, and as someone who has broken their nose several times, I include myself in this category, see page XX for ways to unblock your nasal passages.

- Try to breathe in and out through your nose.
- As you take a breath in, allow your breath to travel down low into your abdomen. The hand resting on your chest should stay as still as possible; the hand on your abdomen should rise.
- As you breathe out, you reverse the action, emptying from bottom to top.
- Aim for about 8–12 breaths per minute.

We want to focus on a deeper more rhythmic way of breathing where the diaphragm is encouraged to move up and down more which, in turn, allows the thoracic cavity to expand fully. A full inhalation followed by a deep exhalation to help increase your capacity to inhale new fresh air. When doing breathing exercises always stop if you feel faint or dizzy and take time to come out of the position.



Relaxation Position — Box or Tactical Breathing

Adapted from the old Navy Seals breathing exercise, this simple exercise can be done at any time of day, in any position. The 4 count creates a 'neutral' state of mind, which means it neither over calms nor excites. This makes it very practical to do at the bus stop or at your desk.

It could be used before a Pilates session.

Sit, stand or lie tall! Shoulders relaxed, chest open, spine long, feet grounded.

Think of a box, each side is a count of 4..

- Breathe in for a count of 4
- Hold your breath for a count of 4
- Breathe out for a count of 4
- Hold for a count of 4

Repeat this for up to 3 minutes.

Rest Position Back Breathing

This exercise or position is used a lot in Pilates after back extension exercises like the Dart (page 113). It is useful as a breathing position because it encourages you to breathe into your back, an area we often find hard to expand.

You may need pillows under your thighs and under your head to be comfortable.

Imagine the back of your ribs are like giant fish gills. Direct your in breath into your back as fully and as deeply as you can.



Breathing Angel Wings

Here we use the movement of the arms to help encourage our breathing. You may combine it with a gentle upper back extension if you wish.

First, let's try it in Standing.

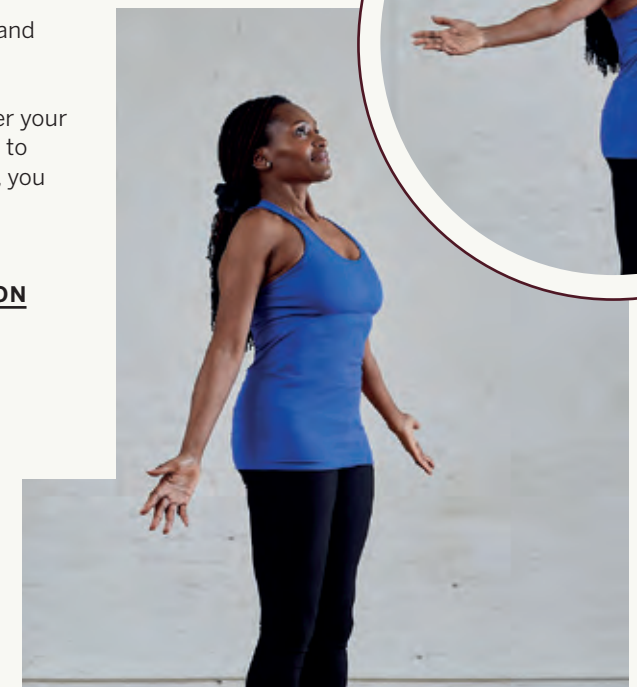
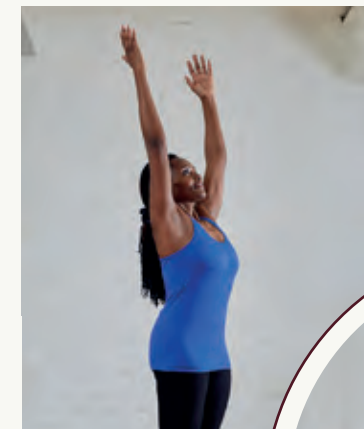
Stand tall.

As you breathe in wide and deep, float both arms up in a wide arc as if you have Angel Wings, lift to a count of 4 or 5. If you wish, you can simultaneously lift your breastbone to extend in your upper back. Your eyes, head and neck lift upwards and backwards.

Breathe out fully and completely as you lower your arms, following the same arc with your arms to a count of 5. If you have extended your back, you would simultaneously return to upright.

ANGEL WINGS IN RELAXATION POSITION

It's great to do Angel Wings breathing in the Relaxation Position too.



360-Degree Breathing

Here we use your hand position to encourage you to expand the ribcage. We are using a 5 second count here. We will be using this count again in The Hundred.

Choose your position. Place your hands on either side of your ribcage with the thumbs pointing around the back of the ribs. Now direct your breath into the whole of the lower part of your ribs to a count of 5, all around 360 degrees. As you breathe out to a count of 5, you can use your hands to help close the ribcage.

Practise this for approximately 3 minutes.



Scarf/Band Breathing

This is the traditional way that we teach Pilates-style lateral breathing. This type of breathing is ideal for use while doing your Pilates exercises.

The scarf (or band) gives you sensory feedback to help you feel your ribcage expanding and closing with your breath. Eventually you can practise Scarf Breathing in any of the Starting Positions, except Prone, but first we will try it sitting or standing.

Sit or stand tall and wrap a scarf or stretch band around the lower part of your ribs, crossing it over at the front. Hold the opposite ends of the scarf and gently pull it tight.

THE INHALATION

As you breathe in, focus on the back and the sides of the ribcage where your lungs are located. Like balloons swelling gradually with air, your lungs will expand and widen the walls of your ribcage. Do not be tempted to force this inhalation as you will create tension. You should feel the scarf tightening as your ribs expand.

It is not only the filling up of the lungs that expands your ribcage but also the descent of the diaphragm, lowering into your abdominal area. Therefore, your abdominal area will extend outwards.

Try to breathe in through your nose and keep your shoulders relaxed.

THE EXHALATION

As you breathe out, feel the air gently being pushed out fully as if from the very bottom of your lungs and eventually exit your body via your nose.

Your diaphragm will begin to rise and you should feel your ribcage reactively beginning to close as your lungs empty.



EXERCISE

Rolling chalk circles

Just looking at the photos of this exercise should make you feel better – the sheer joy of rolling around on the floor.

STARTING POSITION

The Relaxation Position but with a substantial cushion under your head (a bed pillow is perfect). Feet together. Use appropriate core connection to control your alignment and movements.

ACTION

- 01/ Breathe in and roll your knees across to the right. Simultaneously start to move your left hand across your hips to start the circle.
- 02/ Breathe out as you roll onto your right side, knees still together. Your left arm will continue its circle upwards.
- 03/ Breathe in as you reach up and overhead.
- 04/ Breathe out when you have to start rolling your body and knees back to the centre position, your arm continues its circle down and around to the Starting position.
- 05/ Breathe in as your knees roll left, your right arm starting to circle over your hip.
- 06/ Breathe out as you roll onto your left side, knees still together, your right arm will continue its circle.
- 07/ Breathe in as you reach up and overhead.
- 08/ Breathe out when you have to start rolling back to the centre position, your arm continues its circle down and around to the starting position.
- 09/ Repeat as many times as you like!

CHALLENGES & BENEFITS

- Challenges you to roll with control
- Stimulates lymph flow in neck, chest and armpits
- If you find the breathing pattern difficult, just breathe normally.

WATCHPOINTS

- Enjoy the movements but stay in control and take care not to overreach your arm or over-arch your back

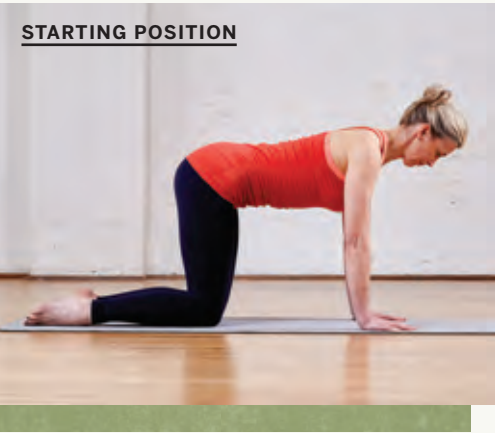


EXERCISE

Table top variations

Here we have taken the humble Table Top and elevated it to new heights by adding three new challenges.

Table Top — the Basic Version



STARTING POSITION

Four-point Kneeling

Use appropriate core connection to control your alignment and movements.

ACTION

- 01/ Breathe in, preparing your body to move.
- 02/ Breathe out as you slide one leg behind you, directly in line with your hip. Your softly pointed foot will remain in contact with the mat. Do not disturb the pelvis or spine.
- 03/ Breathe in as you lengthen and lift your leg to hip height, without moving anything else.
- 04/ Breathe out and return the foot to the floor and slide it back in.

Repeat with the other leg.

Now for some fun new versions ...



02



03

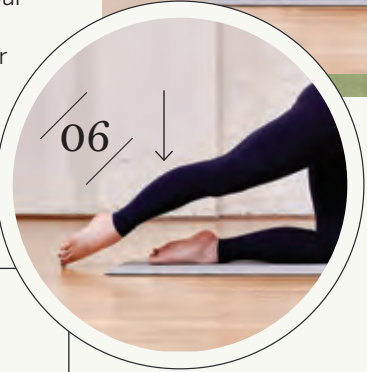
Table Top Taps

Follow directions 1–3 above, then ...

- 05/ Breathe out as you lower your foot back down to the floor but this time do not rest there. Immediately lift the leg again to hip height. Then, with control, lift and lower your leg five times using your natural breathing pattern. Do not disturb the position of your pelvis and spine.
- 06/ Return the foot to the floor and slide it back in and repeat with the other leg.



05



06

Table Top Leg Circles

In this variation, you will circle the leg. The size of the circle will depend on your flexibility and control. Start small, with a circle the circumference of an apple, working up to watermelon size, providing you can still keep your pelvis and spine stable. The centre of your circle should be at hip level.

Use The Hundred (page 172) breathing pattern.

Follow directions 1–3 again.

- 07/ Now circle your leg around. Do five circles one way on an out breath, five circles the other way on an in breath.
- 08/ Then lower the leg and slide it back in with control, before repeating on the other side.



07

CHALLENGES & BENEFITS

- Challenges and improves your core stability
- Challenges your ability to maintain neutral pelvis and spine whilst moving the legs
- Challenges your balance
- Mobilises the hips
- Works the gluteals
- Works your arms and shoulders

WATCHPOINTS

- Keep lengthening the spine from both ends.
- You'll need to keep your core connected to help prevent unwanted twisting.
- Keep the active leg in line with your hip.
- Check you are still wide and open across your shoulders.



The *Pilates* *Express* Workouts

CHAPTER TWO

‘Lynne is the high priestess of Pilates. I trust her implicitly.’

SOPHIE DAHL

Pilates Express is the ultimate handbook for both women and men who want a regular quick-fix workout to fit into their daily schedule. Suitable for all, regardless of fitness level, the mini 10-minute daily workouts have 40 fundamental exercises at their core. As well as increasing your strength and flexibility, Lynne’s programme features dedicated exercises to boost your immune system and improve the efficiency of your breathing. Whether you want to strengthen your upper body and arms, or target your waist, hips, glutes and thighs, this essential guide will help you build your toning power and achieve your goals.

