

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

LETTER OF FEBRUARY 12 , 2003

Dear Reader,

When my Inner Guide came into being and began communicating with me, I found myself making many changes for the better. However, I did not soon begin exercising. In the past, I had discovered that I was rather poorly coordinated. Whenever I had tried a sport, such as tennis, I had found that I was not good at it and seemed unable to improve; and when I had attempted various exercise programs, I had found myself unable to perform their “beginning levels.” Nevertheless, I had always hoped that someday, somehow, I would exercise. Perhaps some of you have had similar experiences.

About a year after my Inner Guide first appeared, a relative introduced me to the Pilates method of body conditioning. My Inner Guide, for whom exercise had certainly been on the agenda of changes to be made, felt that this was an excellent way to exercise and influenced me to take it up. Developed by Joseph Pilates in the early 1900s, it comprises a series of exercises each of which involves the whole body musculature, and it requires intense focus on each exercise as it is being performed. Pilates initially developed this program for people who were injured, and it can be done by almost anyone, despite whatever bodily limitations they may have. (However, the exercises must be done accurately and carefully, otherwise it is possible to be injured.)

I found Pilates to be very rewarding, and I wondered what made the difference. Why was I able to progress? In part because I had excellent instructors. In part because with Pilates one can begin with very little strength and progress very gradually to higher levels. Partly because my Inner Guide influenced me to stick with it. But why else?

Because Pilates exercises as many parts of the body as possible *simultaneously*, it causes many stimulus-response pathways in the mind to be activated simultaneously.

This results in their integration, with the development of new pathways that contain all the elements of the previously separate individual pathways. As a result, when we initiate any physical movement, there is reverberation through the entire network of mental pathways relating to movement, which results in a heightened muscle tone throughout the body. This contributes to the maintenance of an optimal level of disequilibrium in the mind, which brings about a sense of well-being. Any form of vigorous activity releases endorphins that contribute to such a feeling for a period of time, but the heightened muscle tone resulting from Pilates is continuous. When I realized this, I understood why I spring out of bed in the morning, move about quickly and lightly, and look forward to my day.

Why doesn't this result occur with any kind of exercise? Pilates by necessity requires such intense focus on the exercise itself that, when it is properly done, there is no possibility of being distracted. Most forms of exercise are accompanied by additional thoughts and feelings that contaminate the new pathways that are being formed. For instance, in sports, and even in dance class, the element of competition is present. Also, during a Pilates session, one is constantly in motion, thus maximizing the time during which the new pathways are being formed and, again, minimizing the possibility for input of other stimuli.

Does everyone who does Pilates feel in a good mood all the time? No, because anything that causes distress will interfere. Your Inner Guide, by solving your problems over time and by handling all disturbances that occur, will allow you to feel energetic and cheerful most of the time.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

The Pilates Body by Brooke Siler, Broadway Books, New York, 2000

This book is the best I have seen on Pilates. It begins by describing briefly but clearly the physical and mental principles that Pilates felt to underlie his method. (Although Pilates misunderstood some aspects of human physiology, and was not aware of certain aspects of learning theory that had not yet been developed, he nevertheless intuitively

developed the optimal method for conditioning the body.) The book then thoroughly describes and illustrates each of the exercises that constitute the mat work, and leads the reader through the mat routine. Although Pilates also developed exercise sequences to be done on various pieces of equipment that he designed, routines that can be learned only with an instructor, mat work alone can be very useful. The author carefully points out what not to do, in order to avoid injury; and provides visual images to assist in properly positioning the body. This is a book for initial Speedreading, so that your Inner Guide can determine whether Pilates would be useful for you. If it is, you can then use it at normal reading speed as a guide to performing the exercises.

Reminder: Speedreading means reading by glancing at each page for a moment. The content will enter your memory bank. You won't have direct access to it, but your Inner Guide will. He or she can use the knowledge to help you.)

QUESTION:

A reader asks: "What is the whole speedreading thing about, and why is it useful for your Inner Guide to have information if you can't access it?"

If you glance at a page for a moment, its contents are registered in your memory bank. Unless the content is very striking, it won't make sufficient impact to enter your awareness. But because the Inner Guide has access to the entire memory bank, it can draw upon the content as needed to solve problems. For instance, if you were to skim the *Diet for Dancers* book (recommended in the issue of January 1, 2003), your Inner Guide would gain a better understanding of nutrition, and would guide you to modify your eating habits such that, over time, you would eat in the healthiest way possible, while still enjoying your meals just as much, if not more.

I would like to thank my excellent Pilates instructors, Juanita Lopez and Loribeth Cohen, for all their help.

I welcome your questions and comments, and will publish as many of them as possible. I look forward to hearing from you, either by post or at info@davis-foundation.org. If you would like to be anonymous, just let me know.

Cordially,

Judith M Davis

Volume 1 Number 4

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