

# Why Not Pilates?

by Brenda Hutchins

“Why are you doing an article about *Pilates*?” a friend asked me. “Pilates has nothing to do with *SuperSlow*®.”

True, I thought to myself, but Pilates has been successful at drawing a large segment of the affluent and better-educated women. Perhaps with the right information, combined with science and common sense, these women will recognize the problems inherent in Pilates. Then, they just might be able to grasp the importance of exercise performed the correct way.

“What is Pilates?” you might ask. Pilates is actually the name of a German immigrant, Joseph Pilates. He was born in 1880, and during World War I, he designed some exercise apparatus for rehabilitating patients in their hospital beds. He brought his ideas on body conditioning to New York City in 1926, and he eventually gained favor with Martha Graham and George Balanchine, who used his expertise to rehabilitate their professional dancers. Currently, *The Pilates Method* is growing in popularity throughout the United States and elsewhere. For the most part, it utilizes very slow movements done either freehand (mat work) or on various apparatus. These movements appear, to the onlooker, controlled and safe.

Although my experience with Pilates instructors is limited, my impression has been (until recently) that they are the most rigorously and consistently structured cadre of instructors outside of the SuperSlow Philosophy. Their full-fledged certification program is long, demanding, and expensive. Their program far exceeds the discipline required by the *Cooper Clinic*, the *American Council on Exercise*, or the *American College of Sports Medicine*.

However, this has changed somewhat since October, 2000, when the U.S. District Court ruled that the Pilates trademarks were invalid. Until then, thousands of Pilates instructors had been prevented from saying that they taught Pilates.

In the last two years Pilates has emerged as the hottest exercise trend since the *Aerobics* craze. Now you see the name on every group exercise schedule in every commercial gym. And in the opinion of many of the *purist* instructors and/or followers, the discipline has been *bastardized* by the readily available weekend certifications being offered all over the country.

One thing has not changed ... The tenets of Pilates philosophy are *not* grounded in biological science. The countless magazine articles and books on Pilates now flooding the market make numerous uneducated statements regarding exercise. To list and explain each would require a long and tedious article alone. It seems that whether the quotes come from exercise physiologists, medical doctors, or gym owners, notions regarding exercise are excused from proper science references. This being so, why should we be surprised by the confusion over Pilates?

It is important for SuperSlow Exercise technicians to know some of the Pilates tenets, philosophies, and practices, and that they understand that Pilates and SuperSlow are incompatible concepts. Although I will explain each of these with more detail in the following subheadings, here is a brief listing of criticisms against Pilates:

Pilates	Science
Pilates is based on dance movements.	Exercise is correctly based on the muscle and joint functions of the body, not a sport or performance skill.
Pilates is not progressive.	Progression is a major exercise tenet.
Flexibility is the priority of Pilates.	Musculature strengthening is the correct priority of exercise. The resulting improved

	flexibility is a by-product.
Pilates philosophy dwells on the abdominals as the center of the body's motion and stability.	This is a moot point; it needs no mention.
Pilates encourages lengthening of the muscles.	There is no such thing.
Pilates applies incorrect breathing philosophy.	
Pilates applies incorrect neck protection.	
Pilates applies unilateral loading.	Educated exercise instructors avoid this.
Pilates utilizes poor stabilization and bodily alignment.	
Pilates emphasizes the easy and fun social setting over the exercise requirement for control and hard work	Exercise should be based on the subject's appreciation for the science behind a program. One should not be drawn to Pilates because of an unfulfilled childhood ambition to be a dancer or to associate with dancers or their practices.

### Functional Basis

There exists an assumption that we must assign specific exercise programs for specific activities or groups of people. Our minds tend to create one program for football players, another program for dancers, another for pregnant women, another for osteoporotic women, another for swimmers, another for tennis players, and so forth. This is an incorrect assumption.

Since all of the above groups are human beings and of the same species, *homo sapiens*, they all have the same general body plan; i.e., the same physiology and muscular/joint functions. And if you find the ideal exercise program for one of these groups of *homo sapiens*, it follows that it is ideal for all the other groups of *homo sapiens*. Of course, there may be some minor differences in the program that are required for specific limitations of some of these groups. For instance, it may be necessary to curb some exercises for late-term pregnant women and to avoid any pressure on certain body parts with neuropathic diabetics, but the general exercise philosophy is the same for everybody.

The foregoing incorrect assumption leads to another incorrect assumption. Since we naturally fall prey to the notion of a specific program for a specific activity group, it follows that we associate certain appearances or other attributes with a specific group. Some of this is incorrect.

Many associate a slim profile to a swimmer and a boxy build to a football linebacker. Dancers usually have a lithe body type. The association of body appearance with activity is often correct, but this is commonly based on the reversal of cause and effect. Great dancers are lithe and slender, not because they are dancers. Instead, they are dancers because they are lithe and slender (as well as possessing other desirable attributes.)

Please note how silly is the proposition that dancing makes for a slender body. Are we also asserting that basketball players are made tall by dribbling a basketball, that gymnastics makes people shorter than average, or that boxing makes one's arms longer? No, the exact opposite is true. Great athletes or artistic performers are not normal individuals off the street. In effect, they are genetic freaks. They are endowed with abnormal physical characteristics that give them an advantage in a particular activity. They are then selected out for that activity by trial and error. Since most children find that they prefer activities in which they excel, they drift toward interests based on the advantage of a natural-born gift, not the other way around.

Just because a great dancer is a beautiful woman is no indication that dancing will help another woman become like the first. And both women will derive the best results from SuperSlow Exercise, while dancing may actually hurt their progress.

Master SuperSlow Instructor, Colleen Allem of Denver, Colorado, teaches ballet. She started this pursuit as a young girl to the degree that she managed a ballet studio in South Africa. I have listened to her bemoan the fact that she spent much of her youth doing nonsense such as Pilates for her career when she could have been making much better progress and protecting her body from injuries if she had only known of SuperSlow Exercise. Now in her middle 30s with a slender proportioned body, she states that, as a result of doing SuperSlow for the past 5 years, she is far stronger and more capable to perform than when she was younger. Again, neither SuperSlow nor her ballet training gave her the requisite body to perform or teach ballet! That part was inherited.

Ignored by many who aspire *to be as the dancer* is the fact that dancing, particularly professional dancing, is as dangerous as it is glamorous. Many big-name dancers like Martha Graham, Mikhail Baryshnikov, etc., became so arthritic from dancing that they could hardly instruct others. Balanchine was said to be horribly brutal to his dancers. Just go backstage at the famed *Riverdance* performance or *Radio City Music Hall* or the *Cirque du Soleil* and listen to the complaints of the dancers who can barely walk due to their nightly abuse. And due to this, their professional careers are shortened. Although there are many different dance forms, the more vigorous dance styles are far from healthy when their immobilizing consequences emerge.

It is a glaring inconsistency that Baryshnikov, at 15, started late in a ballet career and was able to defy the trend to start at an earlier age because of his extremely muscular and strong legs. You would think that women would either avoid this activity for the fear of becoming muscular or note that the ballerinas appear feminine though pursuing the same activity. Although many women participate in dance classes today to enhance feminine appearance, they often simultaneously avoid weight training for the fear of losing their feminine quality. Based on this their behavior is incorrectly based as well as inconsistent.

Also note that Baryshnikov now devotes two hours daily to physical therapy.

By this we are not telling you to avoid dancing. It, like anything else, needs to be done in moderation and with the understanding of its recreational value, its potential harm when performed to excess, and its lack of value as serious exercise.

Pilates became popular in the 1920s and 1930s because it was somewhat effective at keeping dancers dancing, even when injured. This is not ideal medicine for the average person. It is similar to the football coach who uses an injured player, because the game will be lost without that player, even though the player's career will be shortened for the sake of one important play.

At *Nautilus*<sup>®</sup>, Ken Hutchins watched Ellington Darden, PhD, rehabilitate Chicago White Sox baseball third baseman, Eric Soderholm. Near the completion of his rehab program, Darden took Eric to a nearby cow pasture and set up cones for Eric to run figure eights around. Darden admitted that this was not conducive to Eric's knee rehabilitation, but it was necessary for Eric to develop confidence in cutting turns and making stops with his new knee. He was going to be required to use it in a game in several weeks. His confidence had to be rehabilitated as well. And this was required in the presence of some lingering pain. Ideal? No. Recommended for the general public? No. But this is what is done in the performance arena. So is true with Pilates.

### **Exercise Must be Progressive**

In order for the body to improve from the exercise stimulus on a continuous basis, the exercise must be progressive. To be progressive, it is essential to have some means to measure and record the load placed on the body. Progression is missing with calisthenics or running. It is accomplished poorly with treadmills and other steady-state devices. And Pilates offers a meager

method of performance recording and progression. Although imperfect, some form of weight training offers the only way to keep tabs on the loading and time imposed on the skeletal muscles so that it can be increased systematically as the body adapts.

Realize that almost anyone will show some kind of real or imagined improvement on almost any regimen during the first few weeks. The largest magnitude, greatest scope, and longest-sustained biological improvements, however, are achieved with strength training—the ultimate being SuperSlow. These improvements include bone density, vascular efficiency, cosmetics, joint stability, strength and general endurance, and metabolic rate. Other notions of exercise, regardless of the amount practiced, cannot produce these results for men or women. What's more, doing other activity may blunt optimal desired effects of a strength-training program.

If you want to perform Pilates for fun, go ahead. It is your choice. But you must make the choice with the foreknowledge that your physical attributes improved by SuperSlow will be lessened, if not cancelled altogether.

Of course, it is important to be educated in order to appreciate the signs of improvement. Often, we are inundated with a morass of false hopes and faulty measurement methods and evaluations replete throughout the fitness industry. This ultimately results in those unsuspecting souls desperately looking for improvements, which exercise is incapable of accomplishing, while being blind to the real and meaningful improvements.

### **Flexibility vs Strength**

A Pilates article in *Elle* magazine a couple years ago included a quote that stated: “Heavy weights can make muscles inflexible...” This is typical fitness hogwash that was proven false years ago. Hogwash or not, comments like this linger on and frighten millions of people who should be deriving the benefits of proper strength training. I admit also that there is monumental confusion among the would-be experts in the strength training arena. Few have any background in fundamental biology, and many get most of their information from the jocks who fashion themselves now as so-called *exercise scientists*.

People, especially women, need greater physical strength, not greater flexibility. Women, by and large, are already too flexible in some regards. They are already hypermobile around many of their major joints as a by-product of female hormones and their natural ability to give birth. Increasing their flexibility merely makes their joints less stable and more prone to injury. What women need to protect their joints is greater muscular strength. And increasing muscular strength will also make, by far, the greatest possible difference in the firmness of their bodies, over and above any other change they can make other than by reducing body fat (in most cases).

Indeed, there are exceptional circumstances where special flexibility activities seem to aid in rehabilitation. Also, it may be practical for practitioners of bizarre activities to perform aggressive flexibility programs for their particular activity. Included here are dancers, gymnasts, yogi, and those in the martial arts. These flexibility programs are not wise for the average man or woman and are usually unhealthy for joint stability. Many dancers and yogi have permanently-stretched ligaments in their knees and shoulders, along with painful instability, because of hypermobility syndromes stemming from these flexibility programs. Most retired gymnasts are crippled from the heyday in their sport.

Normal, healthy flexibility is a by-product of a sensible SuperSlow Exercise Program, the best form of strength training. This is naturally achieved without any emphasis on flexibility. Stronger muscles are more flexible.

If you compare the typical range of motion encountered in a SuperSlow Exercise machine to the range of motion experienced by most people in their daily activities you will realize that the

machine, though not excessively stretching the joints, far exceeds what the average man or woman needs for normal, healthy functionality.

The notion of *muscle bound* comes from the old-time strong men who were also very fat. The accurate descriptive term should have been *fat bound*. But the wrong image stuck.

[In an earlier paragraph, I mentioned “bizarre activities.” It is important to realize that many performers in sports and music are not in the range of normal behavior. To excel at their craft they are often of extreme personality type, practice, and behavior. They are often tempted to all kinds of hoaxes and questionable practices to give their performance an edge. Many practice irrational diets and rituals that may have a powerful placebo effect on their performance although of no factual basis.]

In a later section we will explain how being stronger may actually associate with greater flexibility.

### **The Moot Point**

The few Pilates instructors I have encountered have stressed the importance of the abdominals (or *the core*) during the workout. It is their belief that it is important to remind their subjects to concentrate on this area as it is the center of the body’s stability.

I agree that the abdominal area is a major focus of the body’s stability and support. This is why you do not need to mention it. This is why doing situps and other supposed abdominal-emphasis exercises is a waste of time. The abdominals are involved in almost every conceivable human movement—even exercise for the neck. If one of my subjects had just incurred minor abdominal surgery and her doctor permitted her to work out, but only on the condition that she avoid abdominal work, I would have to send her home. Avoiding the abdominals is nigh impossible.

During a pulldown exercise, I can get the subject to feel her abdominals more and think less about her weak arms by telling her to pull from her abdominals. Sometimes this prevents her from limiting her performance due to the feeling of weakness in her arms. But saying this does not cause the abdominals to be more greatly affected by the exercise. It just makes her more aware of her abdominals. This may be a good technique in some instances—a mind game—but I am afraid it is perhaps being used by the Pilates people to sell the ol’ *spot reduction* idea. This bogus concept is highly successful for attracting a believership that clings to the notion that “If I feel this in my abdominals or buttocks, it is working to reduce that area.”

[In the 1945 book by Joseph Pilates that I own, he mentions special emphasis programs for overfat areas. This implies that he did not understand the futility of spot reduction. Even today, the spot reduction myth remains as tenaciously as does the fat that is oblivious to localized exercise!]

We base many things on feeling. Feeling is important to note, but must not be used to make conclusions. Feeling in the buttocks from doing lunges, for example, explains why many women perform them to firm and reduce their hips. In reality, this feeling is merely the result of the tissues being pinched between the hip and thigh bones and has no impact on a woman’s figure.

### **Muscles Cannot Be Elongated**

Almost every article or comment I encounter regarding Pilates mentions its effectiveness to elongate muscles. This is biologically impossible.

One source of confusion here is the terminology. Muscle produces force that is required for us to move. For movement, the muscle supplies force over a linear range. As a muscle contracts, growing shorter, the ends of the muscle and its attachments, are drawn closer to each other. And as

the muscle relaxes, it *uncontracts* permitting the attachments to increase their distance from each other. This *uncontraction* is often stated as *muscle lengthening*.

The pseudoscience of body culture often refers to the notion of *elongation*. This is similar to lengthening, but is descriptive of a more permanent quality rather than the muscle's lengthening function. The belief is that muscles can be trained in such a way as to cause them to appear longer and sleeker, and thus transform the physique of an individual to a more slender form. This is a fable and has several inconsistencies associated with it.

Every individual is endowed with relatively short, medium, or long muscle bellies. Limited ultimately by the distance between the associated bony attachments (insertion and origin), a muscle's entire length is made up of only the two parts: the tendon length and muscle-belly length.

If the muscle-belly length—that part actually comprising the contractile fibers—occupies a majority of the muscle length, then the tendon length must be a minority. And if the tendon length is the majority length, then the belly length is the minority.

Also, note that the longer the relative belly length, the greater potential mass of the muscle. Extremely long muscle bellies make possible, and are a prerequisite for, the huge muscles found only on the largest body builders. This would not be the appearance most Pilates subjects envision from developing so-called “long muscles,” even if they could.

The Pilates people have really put their proverbial foot in their mouths on this one. Their handouts advertise that their program does not build *bulk*, although they claim elsewhere to lengthen (elongate) the muscles. If by this they mean to lengthen the muscle bellies—an impossibility—then this would potentiate the large muscles they advertise against. If by this they mean to lengthen the entire muscle (musculo-tendinous unit)—also an impossibility—then the muscle would be too long for its associated body part and tend to gather slack, hang off the body and be dysfunctional.

As a matter of fact, it is impossible to alter the length of your muscles in a practical way. It is possible, through surgery or injury, to wind up with a shorter muscle, having less than what you were endowed with, but not more.

In summary, a muscle's overall *relative length* is genetically dictated as a relationship between the length of the muscle and the distance between its attachments on either end. This is not practically altered. It is certainly not changed through any activity or even proper exercise. The *relative muscle-belly length* is the relative length of the contractile segment and the tendon segment. It is also genetically dictated and not alterable through exercise.

### **More Regarding Muscle Lengthening and Stretching**

Histology (the anatomical study of the microscopic structure of animal and plant tissues) professors and the orthopedic physicians that Ken Hutchins has worked with have emphasized that tendons have very little elastic property. They are very static and not subject to being stretched.

In comparison, the contractile part in the belly region of a muscle is extremely elastic. Reflecting on this, it only makes sense that the more you can contract something the more you can stretch it. In essence, you should be able to increase its length—stretch—by the same amount you can shorten it through contraction.

Knowing the properties of these tissues begs the question of just what is being stretched when you stretch a body part. Well, we know we do not stretch tendons and hopefully not ligaments. We can only meaningfully stretch muscle bellies.

Also, from the previous section, we noted that the length of a muscle belly potentiates the ultimate size of the muscle. Not only is muscular size at stake here but also flexibility. The longer the muscle belly, the greater the potential for stretch; i.e., flexibility.

Reflecting back on this are stories of hugely muscular men: John Grimek and Casey Viator. These two men—and a few others like them—are freaks of nature. They were so massive at their Mr. America events that they dwarfed other very muscular men. Of several impacts on the viewer's mind was that they were bulky and inflexible. But this later proved to be an optical deception. Grimek is known to have ended his 1940 Mr. America posing routine by landing in a full split and then standing to bow to the audience by placing his elbows on the floor with his knees straight.

In 1971, Casey Viator became the youngest man to ever win Mr. America, also winning more of the Best Awards than anyone before. I have a picture of Casey jumping off the ground—the picture caught him in midair, touching his toes with straightened knees.

I believe that Arthur Jones would have stated that Viator and Grimek “were not extremely flexible in spite of their great muscularity but because of it.

So back to our poignant question: What is being stretched? Obviously, both Casey and Grimek possessed a tremendous potential for stretch due to their long muscle bellies. This inherited—not acquired—attribute not only potentiates massive muscular size but also a tremendous elastic component.

Flexibility is limited by several factors: bony delimitations, any present arthritic conditions, muscle belly length (elastic potential), fatness, as well as the ligamentous and/or capsular integrity. Whichever of these is encountered first during stretch is that entity that sets the momentary limit of flexibility. If that entity is muscular, and more elastic potential exists, then flexibility can be legitimately increased. If not, or the other nonelastic components are the limiting entity, then flexibility will be gained only by damaging the joint's structural integrity. The only exception might be that of fatness. If fatness can be appreciably reduced, then more flexibility might be legitimately gained.

### **Improper Breathing**

Throughout Pilates' 1945 book, *Return to Life through Contrology*, he emphasizes extremely slow and complete breathing. This is incorrect.

During exercise, breathing must be free and not controlled at all. To put any kind of scheme to breathing possibly results in a partial Val Salva maneuver. Val Salva is a threat of stroke and is most successfully avoided by breathing freely. Pilates instructors constantly insist upon the synchronization of breathing in a specific way to the movement. Whether or not this results in Val Salva, this is incorrect breathing.

Since SuperSlow Exercise is a real event and Lamaze training is a pretense at delivery, Doug McGuff, MD, makes the case that SuperSlow is the best training there is for preparing a pregnant woman for childbirth. Though promoted for pregnant women, Pilates is *not* the best way to go.

### **Neck Problems**

Several exercise descriptions in Pilates' book exhibit poor protection of the neck. In some exercises, the head is used as the third part of a tripod for supporting the body upside down—another threat of stroke. In others, he recommends pulling the chin tightly against the chest. I have also recently witnessed Pilates instructors who turn their head to socialize while exercising. This makes me believe that they do not understand the important rules of neck protection.

### **Avoid Unilateral Loading**

Many Pilates exercises involve a split function of the body. This unilateral loading is necessary in exceptional rehab cases, but it is contraindicated in most applications.

Also, some of Joseph Pilates' recommendations were a violation of sufficiency principles.

### **Contrology is Out of Control**

Since many Pilates exercises are freehand or mat exercises, body stabilization is poor. Even the Pilates apparati provide poor stabilization. In this regard the Pilates term, *contrology*, is semantically incorrect.

### **Women Need Hard Exercise—Pilates is a Bad Influence**

Anyone who takes the time to think about exercise acknowledges the obvious truth that something easy has no exercise essence. Many women and men are naturally drawn away from the intense effort required to make those all-important improvements in their bones and muscles to the easier, more social atmosphere of Pilates. Women—and men too—need to admit that anything with value involves hard work. To state or imply or offer otherwise is misleading.

### **Disjointed History**

It would be interesting to know if present-day Pilates is actually true to what Joseph Pilates intended. Its recent increase in popularity in the commercial gyms is almost a sure indication that it is being watered down, misinterpreted, and/or contaminated by unqualified instructors claiming to be “certified” in the discipline.

It is also unfortunate that dancers and many artists often live in a reclusive vacuum to the enlightening discoveries about the world we all live in. Artists are often blind and clairvoyant at the same time.

Pilates was a German who was probably indoctrinated to some extent by Ling and other influences of the German and Swedish exercise methods. These ideas flourished in the mid-to-late 1800s and culminated in the Zander method where mechanized control of the musculoskeletal system was brought to its celebrated pinnacle.

Did Pilates know of Zander? And if so, was he rebelling from Zander's philosophies? Did Pilates consider—as I was once guilty of with my study of human performance—that his *contrology* was outside the realm of Zander's more classically-bent science, because Zander had perhaps failed to account for the specificity of the dancer's art? Realize that Zander and his technicians and studios had been mostly extinguished by the end of World War I.

### **How Do Dance Professionals Regard Pilates?**

I believe that it would be dangerous to ask most dance professionals their opinion of Pilates or of any exercise notion. As stated earlier, they are often susceptible to all kinds of beliefs and superstitions as are most athletes and performing artists. I can only reference those dancers who are also true experts in exercise. For me, I would respect the opinion of a SuperSlow Master Instructor who was also a classically trained dancer. Sure, someone of the Pilates persuasion might consider this biased for the SuperSlow camp, but realize that most SuperSlow Masters cannot truly relate to the dancing profession, because they have no experience there. Here are some credible comments that I respect:

SuperSlow Master Colleen Allem, as stated earlier, managed a Ballet Studio in South Africa before moving to Denver and learning of SuperSlow. She still teaches ballet and encounters women who do Pilates. She continually

sees women, who are not professional dancers, injuring themselves and retarding their progress because of Pilates.

Level II Certified SuperSlow Instructor, Victoria Medvedva, is a classically trained actress, ballerina, and gymnast from Moscow who now lives in Washington, D.C. She is also a degreed physical therapist. Victoria's father is a clown in the *Cirque du Soleil* touring company who suffers from many professional injuries. She realizes that some of the Circus troupe utilize Pilates for rehabilitation. She believes that it is backwards and that the dancers would be much better served by SuperSlow exercise.

Amy Love is a Level I SuperSlow Instructor living in Shreveport, Louisiana. Amy aspires to be a SuperSlow Master and is a classically trained ballerina. Recently, a dance company performed in Shreveport and Amy hosted a reception in her home. SuperSlow Master Doug Holland attended the reception and made the statement that if you intended to emulate the ballerinas there you would smoke cigarettes like chimneys and be anorexic, not by doing Pilates. Amy believes SuperSlow Exercise to be the best way for all dancers to enhance the required control in their expression as well as to protect themselves from the dangers of their art.

SuperSlow Master, Lou Gardner, in Lakeland, Florida, operated as many as three Aerobics studios over a span of 22 years. She also taught the Aerobics course at the local college and wrote the course manual. Although she owned a Pilates apparatus when she first encountered SuperSlow Philosophy, she has been instrumental in the push to publish this article—such has been her sentiment toward the misinformation disseminated by the Aerobics and Pilates camps to women.

### **Rhetoric from Ken Hutchins**

Some reading this article might wish to know the opinion of Ken Hutchins on the Pilates issue. I believe that it should be obvious that this article conforms to his attitudes, although a short capsulization from him might be appropriate. From Ken we have: "Like what Ellington Darden incorporated into Eric Soderholm's program to enhance his confidence, I believe that Pilates *might* have a place with the professional dancer, but it is no substitute for SuperSlow Exercise. And Pilates certainly has no application for subjects outside the dance community."

### **A Little Girl's Dream**

Childhood dreams are often dear to us. Sometimes they are a pleasant reminder of a time when we could take comfort in our imagination and pretense. Sometimes daydreaming can be a healthy escape into a refuge devoid of daily stress. But if taken too seriously, daydreaming can lead to greater stress and unhealthy consequences. Just ask *Walter Mitty*.

Young boys fantasize about being heroes to girls and being praised by other men. This is often carried into adulthood as some of the many expressions of the male ego. He may still clutch proudly to his vision of machismo and male superiority. He may also possess other, healthier expressions for this. Let's also admit that many of the early fantasies are often implanted by society's prejudice for what it requires men to be.

Young girls are often expected to play with dolls in preparation—play acting—for motherhood. Also common are glorified visions of being a dancer. The ballerina is perhaps the ultimate escape fantasy of many young girls.

Pilates caters to the ultimate fantasy—acknowledged or denied—of many women. Whether young or old, doing the thing that dancers do makes them a dancer again. Their youthful flirtations, play acting, and escapism is restored. They, once again, can get psychologically lost in a dream world. I contend that this is the major draw of Pilates, not that it is a *bona fide* exercise method. And this draw is overwhelmingly more powerful to many than the lure and beauty found in the study of purist SuperSlow Exercise Philosophy. The dangers of this deceitful delusion should now be clear: Pilates exploits the childhood fantasy of many women.

Some may be offended that I bring this to their attention. Most of this reaction is denial and embarrassment. But would these women rather me stay quiet about this? And if I keep this to myself, who is going to brave their potential negative reactions so that some can avoid the exploitation and gain the real benefits of exercise? I must speak out.

Now do not get me wrong. I am not accusing anyone of intentional deceit. I do not believe that the deceivers are knowledgeable enough to realize what they are doing. They have deceived themselves as much as anyone else. They are as ignorant of this as they are of the principles of muscle length, progression principles, spot reduction, and flexibility issues.

Still not convinced? Consider the obvious: In Florida, many new attractions at *Disney* theme parks as well as at *Universal Studios*, and others, succeed spectacularly at fantasies. This is effectively sold to adults and children alike. Different rides and events enable the guests to make believe they are Indiana Jones or Captain Nemo or Peter Pan. Remember *Fantasyland*? Remember the movie, *Fantasia*? Escapism sells. It sells at the movies. It sells in books. It sells at the theme parks. It sells on camping trips and at football games. It also sells in exercise notions such as Pilates. When does the serious truth about exercise get a chance?

### **A Definition**

It feels good to stretch. A Pilates session can be a rejuvenating experience, both physically and mentally. So can Tai Chi. So can Yoga. So can lying in a whirlpool or sauna. But Pilates does not qualify as exercise according to its strict definition:

*...a process whereby the body performs work of a demanding nature, in accordance with muscle and joint function, in a clinically-controlled environment, within the constraints of safety, meaningfully loading the muscular structures to inroad their strength levels to stimulate a growth mechanism within minimum time.*

People, particularly women, need SuperSlow<sup>®</sup> Exercise, not Pilates. It is the most serious and safe exercise philosophy promoting the all-important strength component that women need to keep their bones, their appearance, their vascular systems, and their stability in an ideal state.

Quit kidding yourself. Get down to serious, hard work, and protect your body with SuperSlow<sup>®</sup> Exercise.

[Many of the foregoing technical topics deserve the more complete discussion found only in *The SuperSlow Technical Manual*. For more information phone 407-862-2552 or consult our web site at [www.superslow.com](http://www.superslow.com).]