

# THE PILATES JOURNAL

## World Pilates Day

### STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Be open to different pathways for  
your future development

### STRATEGY OR STRUCTURE?

Understand if your clients have  
strategic or structural limitations

### LEVERAGING THE REFORMER

How Group Reformer classes  
are great for your business





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The Pilates Journal would like to acknowledge and pay respects to the Gadigal people of the EORA nation as the traditional custodians of the place we call home - Sydney - where this journal is produced.

The Pilates Journal pays respects to their elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# Note from the Editor



## *Welcome to another edition of The Pilates Journal of Australia.*

While World Pilates Day falls on one day, this month we celebrate all that it brings, in all its forms. This month we focus on growth. Growth in your knowledge, growth in your mindset, self-awareness and in your teaching development.

Leading thinkers such as Founder and CEO of Polestar Pilates Education and Polestar Pilates Center Brent Anderson talk about how you can determine if your clients' issues are structural or strategic. We also show you how you can continue to grow as a seasoned teacher with National Pilates Training Director Katrina Edwards. Teacher of the 'Pilates-ish' movement, inventor and entrepreneur Mariska Breland also shares her story as part of World MS Day on May 30 and how she developed the Fuse Ladder.

Ever thought of running your own Pilates retreat? We get insights from a Senior Pilates Instructor and Myofascial teacher Paola Rafinetti who knows all the right things to look out for.

Enjoy.

**CJZarb**

FOUNDER AND EDITOR

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# Strategy or Structure?

LEARN HOW TO UNDERSTAND IF YOUR CLIENTS  
LIMITATIONS ARE STRATEGIC OR STRUCTURAL

*by Brent Anderson PhD, PT, OCS, NCPT*

I am often asked by Pilates teachers if I think their client's movement limitation is structural or strategic. My answer is somewhere around 40% + have structural restrictions, whereas nearly 100% have strategic restrictions. So, what does that mean?



A structural restriction can be any form of limited mobility due to restricted tissues in the musculoskeletal system i.e., fascia, muscle, tendon, ligament, cartilage, bone and even skin. A strategic restriction can be due to novelty of the movement (people don't know how to do it because they've never done it), limited body awareness, fear of injury or re-injury, lack of confidence, poor control, or weakness. I am sure you can think of examples of these limitations experienced by our clients. So how do we know where the movement restriction or limitation is coming from?

I have spent the last three decades refining a model to help Pilates teachers differentiate between strategic and structural limitations. If the movement limitation requires a professional medical intervention by a physiotherapist, chiropractor or osteopath, it falls outside the practice scope of the Pilates teacher. If we knew which clients it was safe to work with and when best to refer to a physio or osteopath, we could be more confident in what we are doing. And a formula could be a powerful tool. In Polestar we teach the Principles of Movement. These five principles can drive the assessment by the Pilates teacher to differentiate the cause of the movement dysfunction. I warn you here that movement limitations can have more than one principle affecting movement at the same time. So how do we use the Polestar Principles of Movement to differentiate?

The Polestar Principles of Movement consist of Breath, Mobility, Dynamic Alignment, Control and Integration. Each of these principles should exist in every movement we perform, but do they? We could start off by observing our client's movement and try to decipher which of the principles is more limited than another. But this can be overwhelming, especially for the novice. We can also observe the client performing a functional task like a squat and apply the following formula.

The most powerful tool we have as Pilates teachers are our eyes observing the client's movement. First, we'll look at dynamic alignment while doing a squat. In our instructions we can tell them and even demonstrate the alignment we are looking for in this type of squat, which is to keep the torso vertical. If the client is able to demonstrate the movement with proper dynamic alignment, then that test is done. They are able to perform the squat well and we can observe the next movement. If they can't perform the squat with the desired upright alignment, we can use one of the principles to unravel why they are struggling to perform this task. We'll start first with the principle of Movement Integration which we also think of as Coordination.

Coordination: Now is the time to try to influence the proper alignment of the squat through verbal, tactile, and imagery cueing. If their demonstration of the squat drastically improves with your cueing, then you know it is strategy that was the issue and this might have been due to limited body awareness, novelty of the movement or a behavioral limitation like beliefs or fears. If the cueing does not make a significant change to their dynamic alignment, in this case of the squat, then we move onto the second Principle we'll use which is Control. I remind the reader that the skill of the practitioner can play a major role in successful movement facilitation. A more seasoned teacher might be able to influence proper alignment more effectively than a novice teacher. That said, trust yourself, stay curious and engaged and you will be

able to help your clients change their understanding and performance of the movements.

**Control:** Now is the time to test if the client is able to perform the task with proper dynamic alignment if the teacher reduces the load by holding on to something like a chair, the Trapeze springs or changing the relationship to gravity by doing Footwork on the Pilates Reformer. If decreasing the load allows the client to successfully execute the squat with proper dynamic alignment, then we can assume that the movement limitation is control and the exercise plan would continue to focus on a graded load intervention, gradually increasing load and decreasing assistance until the full task is performed efficiently. If, however, providing load assistance does not improve the dynamic alignment of the task, in this case the squat, then we need to move onto the final Principle of Mobility.

**Mobility:** If the dynamic alignment has not improved with seeing a demonstration, cueing or assistance, then we need to test mobility. In the case of the squatting task, mobility limitations might manifest in the ankle, the knee, the hip and even the back. We can assess mobility by modifying the range of movement, for example lifting the heels onto a half roll or block of wood to assess ankle mobility. By lifting the heels 4-5 cm, the result, if ankle mobility was indeed limited, is successful squatting with proper alignment. In this scenario, the Pilates teacher can start working on an ankle mobility program and refer out for a manual therapist to evaluate and possibly mobilise or manipulate the ankle.

Only this last scenario requires a referral, and the Pilates teacher can continue with the strategic intervention while the client is receiving treatment. In fact, continuing work on the strategic component is crucial as manual therapy cannot change the person's long-term ability, they need to continue to practice the movements to embody all of the changes.



With over 30 years of experience in rehabilitation and movement science, Brent Anderson, PT, PhD, OCS, NCPT is Founder and CEO of Polestar Pilates Education and Polestar Pilates Center. He is also an Assistant Professor at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences in the DPT department in Miami, FL. He teaches as an adjunct professor in the Physical Therapy departments at the University of Miami, University of Southern California, and New York University.

Brent is also the creator and host of the [Pilates Hour podcast](#).

To dive deeper into assessment and differentiation through Polestar's advanced course work 'Critical Reasoning', visit [polestarpilates.com](https://polestarpilates.com) to find out more.

Senior Educator and Curriculum Director for Polestar International Shelly Power will also be running a Critical Reasoning Course in Perth on 8-9 July and Sydney, Australia on 15-16 July. Get 15 PDP's with the PAA. You can find out how to book [here](#).



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# Leveraging the Reformer Revolution

STUDIO OWNER AND DIRECTOR OF ARMATURE, STEPHANIE SIBEL, SAW THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW HER PILATES BUSINESS BY INCORPORATING A GROUP REFORMER STUDIO AND MAINTAINING AN OPEN MIND

*by Stephanie Sibel*

The Pilates Journal talks to Stephanie Sibel.

Running a clinical Pilates studio is no small feat. Owning and running that plus a self-contained reformer studio increases the intensity. Add to that a strength gym with a full timetable and you have your hands full. But Stephanie Sibel from Armature in Brunswick East, Victoria wouldn't have it any other way.

With 17 years spent running Armature, Stephanie understands that remaining adaptable is critical in ensuring that her business continues to evolve, no matter what the current climate of the Pilates industry may be.

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I've always thought that I would continue to change and adapt our business model in order to meet client demand and changes in the industry. We started with a clinical Pilates studio in 2006. We then continued to expand to more venues within the block. We've tried lots of things over the years but the biggest and best decision we ever made was establishing Armature Reformer, a standalone group reformer studio.

When I was doing further education with STOTT Pilates in 2010, I started to hear whispers about group reformer studios coming to Melbourne. I remember telling my partner Michael that we had to get ourselves a group reformer studio because if we didn't, someone else in the area would do it. So it might as well be us!

In 2013, we opened Armature Reformer in a small premise two blocks up from our main studio. We started with 10 reformers and for the first year or so, I taught most of the classes on the timetable. Armature Instructors also quickly started branching into group reformer teaching.

In the first twelve months, Armature Reformer grew steadily and quickly. It wasn't long before we outgrew the space but, fortunately, we were able to move directly across from our headquarters into a very prime corner location in 2018, around Armature Reformer's fifth birthday.

This was a game-changer. Having the shop fronts facing each other and with similar branding brought a new unity and a larger street presence to the whole business.



Before we knew it we expanded to 12 and then 15 machines. And today we run 58 classes per week with most of the classes booked out with waitlists.

What's so great about the reformer business is that it allows us to teach at a higher volume and generate more income per hour than our other more bespoke services. It essentially subsidises the clinical studio and the strength training venue and allows us to continue all our specialised and smaller programs without stressing about profitability.

I know that for many in the Pilates industry, there is great concern about group reformer classes diluting the integrity and principles of the Pilates method and threatening our small Pilates businesses.

Group Reformer – the amazing, the good, the bad and the mediocre – is not going away. While some reformer-only businesses may come and go over time, the group reformer format is proving more than a fad. I see firsthand what amazing benefits our classes provide clients and how much the clients just love coming, week after week, day after day.

Armature and many other studios are living proof that group Reformer classes can be taught WELL and with INTEGRITY. While we do have some more fitness-style group reformer classes, first and foremost, we teach the Pilates Principles – breath, control, concentration, etc, within focused and considered programming.



***"...the group reformer format is proving more than a fad. I see firsthand what amazing benefits our classes provide clients and how much the clients just love coming, week after week, day after day."***

Armature classes use the reformers as they were originally intended – to create external feedback for clients to understand where they are in space, how to control an exercise, and how to move from the centre of their body.

We do hands-on assistance when appropriate. We work at a pace where principles and good-quality movement can be maintained, while still delivering dynamic and fun classes.

In the hands of skilled instructors, group reformer classes are amazing! Part of my job as Armature's owner/director, is maintaining quality control of these classes and assisting our instructors to teach to their best abilities. This includes mentoring new instructors, reviewing classes and collating/implementing feedback from 'secret shoppers.' At Armature we don't teach to a set program or template and instructors have their own styles. Clients love the variety and gravitate to the classes that work best for them.

In Armature's case, the popularity of group reformer classes has also allowed all aspects of Armature's many services to grow. It provides us with the financial resources to mentor and nurture instructors across all the venues, which in turn benefits not only us, but the wider Pilates industry as many of these instructors also work at other studios.

It also means we can pay instructors market value and employ them properly. The work is secure and reliable, and instructors are paid the same session rate no matter what studio they teach in, whether they teach a 1:1 clinical session or a 15-person reformer class.

All teaching skills, across the Armature venues are highly valued equally. This wage structure makes staffing more fluid and vacation and emergency covers much easier to manage. Instructors are happy to step out and teach in any venue, if needed, without worrying that their pay is going down that day because they taught in the clinical studio rather than delivered a group class. This helps with staff retention and satisfaction.

In addition to the group reformer classes, Armature also continues to maintain a successful clinical/small group model studio.

I'm proud of Armature's clinical studio and we do amazing work with individual clients. It's a great resource for clients seeking out the detailed, intrinsic work that studio Pilates offers. It's also great for group class clients who may need more focused teaching or rehabilitation for a period of time.

Many new clients do a few one on one's or a pack of small clinical sessions to build their confidence and knowledge before entering Armature's larger group classes.

Armature offers very reasonable memberships to do a combination of a weekly clinical session plus group classes across reformer, mat and strength. We encourage clients to try all the different Armature venues (when appropriate.)

For Armature, the clinical studio is our origin story and part of our brand. And even though the level of staffing and skill needed to run it is challenging to maintain, and even though profit margins are low and difficult to scale up, it will remain a part of the





business for as long as we can retain the resources to have it.

At the heart of it all, I would call myself a centrist as I deeply understand and respect the small studio Pilates business model but also see the life-changing benefits, egalitarian nature and financial rewards of the larger group style of Pilates.

I've been lucky to have many amazing things happen within Armature over the past 17 years. I have had to make many business decisions, some good, some not-so-good, but I'm proud of how we have always adapted and continue to evolve.

Covid was extremely difficult for businesses like Armature, but post-COVID is a completely different story. Armature is now the biggest it has ever been, and I could not be more grateful. With eyes wide open, I am hopeful for and open to what the future holds for Armature and the Pilates industry, as a whole.

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**With 20 year experience in teaching Pilates, Stephanie Sibel owns and directs Armature. She has been an instructor trainer for STOTT Pilates, Breathe Education and the APMA. Stephanie now also runs Armature Education, providing workshops for the Pilates community, designed to create networking opportunities and fun, interactive continuing education.**

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# Chutes and ladders

PILATES ENTREPRENEUR AND CO-OWNER OF THE NEURO STUDIO, MARISKA BRELAND SHARES HER JOURNEY WITH MS AND HOW SHE DEVELOPED THE FUSE LADDER

*by Mariska Breland*



The Pilates Journal speaks with entrepreneur and Pilates leader Mariska Breland about her success in developing the Fuse Ladder and her work as co-owner at the Neuro studio.

On the 30th of this month, we raise awareness for World MS Day, designed to bring the global MS community together to share stories, raise awareness and campaign for the support and care of all those affected by multiple sclerosis (MS).

So what does it mean to have a client with MS and how do you manage it? We speak with expert teacher Mariska Breland who shares her personal experience with MS and what we need to pay attention to most for those with this lifelong condition.

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‘Disabled’ - I just hate the word. Sure there are some things I can’t do like run, but I can do most things I want to do. A lot of people have back problems or weaknesses that limit what they might want to do and they wouldn’t call themselves disabled. I prefer to just say ‘my left leg is disagreeable’ or ‘that is a thing I can’t do’ or that I need a modification to be able to do it.

In 2002 I was diagnosed with MS and realised that my running days were over. So I decided to get into yoga and Pilates because I had always been such an active person.

The toughest thing I discovered across my journey with MS is that it’s unpredictable. Some days I have a lot of energy - some days, I could lay on the couch doing nothing and still not feel rested. When it comes to movement, my left leg has spasticity, which means that the muscles get really tight (and no - stretching doesn’t work, as I explain in my workshops). I also have a joint contracture of my left ankle, so I can’t dorsiflex my left foot enough to not catch the ball of my foot/toes when I’m walking. It’s a side effect of a common neurological symptom called foot drop.

If it’s hot or humid, I feel really weak and dizzy. If it’s cold, I feel extra stiff. Basically, I prefer my weather to be perfect, which only happens for a short period of time each year.

I work on strength, balance and mobility regularly. These are three things that are commonly problematic for those with MS. But my left ankle being “stuck” has been my main MS complaint for about 14 years.



***“Teachers often pay too much attention to the parts of the body that are considered the problem’. They need to look at the body as a whole.”***

As a teacher who helps others with MS, every case of MS is different - like many conditions. This means any program should be individualised. Depending on the person, it might look like a

Pilates workout I would give someone who doesn't have MS, but I would likely spend more time focusing on the sensory system, foot-to-hip connection, and standing exercises than I might for someone who doesn't have it. Meghann, my partner at the Neuro Studio, has developed a great system called the four-quadrant stability model, which addresses the body based on finding stability in the shoulders and hip cuffs, which can translate to better and easier movement for anyone.

In any session with a person with MS, regardless of their level, I would include dynamic range-of-motion exercises. Lots of leg exercises when possible - standing when possible, and this might come as a surprise, but that's possible for most people with MS, regardless of whether they use mobility devices – the variable is how much support they need. Since people with MS don't get as much sensory feedback from the environment, I include integration of sensory information (like adding proprioceptive or visual cues to exercises), ideally tailored to the person. This could look like gaze stabilisation and things like moving around a point that you see or using mats that stimulate proprioceptors.

A lot of teachers want to stretch tight muscles. In MS, muscles are tight because the brain and the joint can't communicate. It's a protective reflex, so if you overstretch, you become weaker, and your brain thinks the joint is even more at risk. The brain is always trying to protect the body, and it does the best it can.

I think there's an overemphasis on trying to fix someone's compensations, which are developed subconsciously. The brain



can't integrate a movement pattern that you might teach it - if the brain doesn't feel the movement is safe. So overcorrecting is another problem.

Teachers often pay too much attention to the parts of the body that are considered 'the problem'. They need to look at the body as a whole.

It's one of many reasons why Meghann and I developed The Neuro Studio to teach teachers how to effectively work with people with MS and other neurological illnesses and injuries. Through that company, I run my Pilates for Neurological Conditions course. To date, 1500 Pilates teachers and physical therapists around the world have completed the course. There are also introductory workshops and an advanced course run by my business partner Meghann Duffy. Together, she and I run a mentorship for teachers.

On the patient side, The Neuro Studio has an affordable subscription workout site, as well as the project I did during Covid – The MS Master Plan, which is basically a video encyclopedia for people with MS. That includes interviews and videos from over 50 people, more than half of whom are patients. The rest are doctors, PTs, lawyers, etc. Its goal is to answer any question a person with MS might have. It's 27 hours of total content, but it's divided into hundreds of chapters that each cover a specific area of interest, like 'how to understand your MRI results' and 'rare symptoms.' It covers diagnosis, symptoms, treatments (alternative and medicinal), insurance considerations, employment, family and more.

One of the main reasons I developed the Fuse Ladder was to make up for the fact that there aren't enough standing exercises in



traditional Pilates and in rehab exercises - and yet in my experience the neuro population and everyone else really needs to do standing exercises. But its initial introduction was at a studio I was opening with my studio partner in Washington D.C., Roxanna Hakimi, because we wanted to offer a class and exercise that no one else had. Turning that into an equipment company was almost accidental.

If a Pilates tower, Pilates springboard, stall bars, ballet barre, pull-up bars, suspension trainer, and weight machine had a love child, the Fuse Ladder would be it. Some people use it for group classes. Some people use it exclusively for rehabilitation. We have Pilates teacher owners, studios, physical therapy clinics, and home users.

The Fuse Ladder is infinitely adjustable. You can use the rungs alone, or you can add springs for support or for greater challenge. You can climb, hang, push and pull. You can do a classical Pilates tower workout on it or you can do callisthenics. You can do strength training, suspension work, balance training and flexibility. There's an overhang like a Cadillac, so you can put springs high for support or use it like a Ped-o-pull. There isn't a lot you can't do with it.

I think once Pilates teachers experience it - they get it. They get an idea of how much you can do with it, as well as start experimenting with different uses.

I think people expect a Pilates tower, but I rarely do traditional tower exercises. You can - I just use the rungs in combination with the springs often. There's a backboard that can be used hanging on the Fuse Ladder or angled, which offers a lot of variability. We added a push-through bar option (which is the widest one on the market). We also have soft accessories, like a sling you would normally use on a yoga wall as well as circus straps (think fuzzies that are adjustable and not as big).

We had someone who wanted to franchise Fuse Pilates (our studio which we sold in 2020 to focus on Fuse Ladder). Because of that, we needed to figure out how to mass-produce Fuse Ladders and in doing so, we made some changes and added some features, like the sliding eyelets and the double pull-up bars. Over the years, we've made other changes, like making it height adjustable because it didn't fit in some studios because of lower ceilings.

But ultimately, Fuse Ladder is available because our franchisee backed out and moved to Spain after we had already begun the process of production. Was it nerve-racking? Yes but has it been for the better absolutely.

Getting a new product to market in the Pilates industry naturally came with its challenges.

I had originally approached Balanced Body and they weren't interested. So, I reached out to an equipment manufacturer in England, whom I knew through a mutual business acquaintance who had been bringing me over to Europe for years to teach my 'Pilates for Neurological Conditions' courses. One night in Brighton in England, he introduced me to Align Pilates' owner who helped us tweak our design and start manufacturing.

At first, I promoted the product through my personal Instagram page and people started to visit Fuse Pilates. Our first owner was Tara Gordon of 212 Pilates in New York City. She had come to D.C. on a trip and took a Fuse Ladder class. When she opened her studio, she put Fuse Ladders in there. We were later at a couple of PMA Conferences (pre-Covid) and that's when we started to see some traction. Most of our owners are people who have tried Fuse Ladder at a studio somewhere.

There are still times when I feel like we're still getting into the swing of things - but we believe in the product and know it helps our clients greatly. The benefits need to be seen to be truly appreciated.

**Mariska is BASI trained and completed a two-year mentorship with Julian Littleford before his death. She studied neuroscience and has taken hundreds of hours of continuing education.**

**She lives in Washington DC with my husband and two Alaskan Klee Kai - Remy and Sophie. You can find out more about Mariska's work at [theneurostudio.com](https://theneurostudio.com) or [fuseladder.com](https://fuseladder.com)**

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# Stepping out of your comfort zone

TO LEARN AND GROW AS A TEACHER THE ANSWER SHOULD ALWAYS BE “YES”

*by Katrina Edwards*

We've all had times when in our teaching we have felt that we aren't being as creative as we know we can be. Katrina Edwards knows this all too well after being a lead educator and instructor for over 30 years. When you've been in the Pilates industry as long as Katrina, you also understand the importance of challenging the way you do things to keep yourself motivated as a teacher.

Often we get into the patterns of just doing, just teaching - just getting it done. But when have you stopped, listened to yourself and been open to your own development? Acknowledging that your needs might sit beyond just teaching in the same environment, day in and day out. What else might you need to feel passionate about your craft and stay true to yourself?

Katrina shares her experience and how she reignited her passion by understanding her needs better and what she required in order to thrive as a Pilates teacher.

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When I look back at the times in my career when I struggled for inspiration – and there were a few - I can identify four defining moments that helped me keep my passion as an Instructor.

For me, it was my introduction to the Pilates world that would shape me into the kind of teacher I am today. I had just injured myself as a young dancer and I started to work with a physio by the name of Craig Phillips. After a short amount of time supporting me with my recovery, he turned around and offered me a job in his Prahan studio in Victoria, Australia. I had felt such a connection with his work that I couldn't say no. Within what felt like days, I was coaching people on a rigorous schedule - every 20 minutes from the time I started, until the time I finished work. It was about the same time that I was handed a video of Pilates Elder and first-generation teacher, Carola Trier and told to learn the Pilates method. That's all I got but if it wasn't for that video, I might not be doing what I'm doing today.

So I leaned in and said 'yes' to learning the Pilates method because I knew from this, that I would develop and grow my knowledge to become better at helping people with their bodies and their movement.



Fast forward a few years and building my first studio was another defining moment when I had to trust in the skills I had. While I felt out of depth I knew I had to just go with it in order to grow.

That growth took another leap forward when I began working with Senior Pilates professional Sally Anderson and at her request became a host site for BASI Instructor training in Melbourne. From here it was a natural progression to start my own accredited training courses (RTO) and that's when National Pilates Training was born.

My next moment of growth came at such an important time - I had reached breaking-point in my teaching career. I was running my own training program, running my studio and doing teacher training on the weekends when I realised I needed something more. After 16 years of seeing 60-70 clients per week and running my business, I had hit saturation point. I was fatigued and found it hard to switch off. I knew it wasn't sustainable but I didn't know what to do next. I was looking down the barrel of what the next 20 years might bring and knew I needed a change.

It was another teacher who had been coming to regular classes with me who suddenly suggested that I catch up with the Australian Ballet School (ABS) because they were looking for someone to work with in the Pilates world.

I remember my partner saying that you already have too much on your plate, but I knew deep down that for me personally I was feeling like I was closed in. And by taking on the role of Head of Strength and Conditioning at the ABS, I saw the opportunity for some much desired personal growth.



***"...when you're feeling like your  
lacking lustre in your teaching,  
losing your groove ...  
ask yourself what is lacking for  
you and where do you seek  
motivation?"***

Shortly before I also began working with the players of the Melbourne City Football Club. Both of these really stretched my skills and reminded me of the love I have for Pilates. It was only when I started working in these two completely different worlds that I realised that I had been craving a different challenge and had almost reached the breaking point in my teaching career.

It was daunting at first, there's no question. My first year at the ABS I felt like a bit of an imposter. In fact, I'd felt that way my entire career. But I knew I had to give it a red hot go. I felt exposed. I acknowledged that about myself and knew that by putting myself in those situations that is when I truly was able to grow. It's important to be exposed and to not to have all the answers because you also get to be around such expertise and to learn from those more knowledgeable than you. It's important that you get inspiration from those who are more senior than you in order to grow.

Once I started working with the students at the ballet school I was

finally in the driver's seat. I had dancers coming to me with issues and I had to problem-solve on the spot. I had to think outside the box. I had to think about how I was going to produce a program that worked for this group. How I would set a curriculum, drive it and shape a vision of what was needed here. Suddenly I had my energy and my passion back. I saw the world differently again and I felt really free, much like I had been at the very start of my career.

It made me realise that for years I was operating on autopilot. It was my experiences at both the ballet school and the football club that made me realise just how much of an intuitive teacher I am. When I learned the Pilates method there was no manual, no workbook, it was all based on feel and personal experience. And in these settings, I finally had a licence to do that again. I could explore and I realise my appetite to have a growth mindset. I now understand that I sit best in the spontaneous space. I really enjoy stripping down to the core elements and then building them back up and using critical thinking to get to the outcome needed for each particular problem or circumstance.

It also helped that I sold half of my teaching business, which was a really positive shift for me. It allowed me to find more time in my week to work with these athletes whom I loved working with. Their psyche and the way I got to mentor them because of their desire to progress and fine-tune their skills really worked well with my personality and my skill set. They were focused and would zone into what I was trying to get them to do. It meant that I could truly help them shift a recruitment pattern or their performance and get results.

It wasn't all easy though. And it was the support of two great physios that made me realise I had all it would take to hold my



own in this space. I was fortunate to have a support structure around me and people cheering me on, encouraging me to believe in myself and what I could bring to the table. In particular, it was Darren Stanborough (Physio) and Andrew Mackenzie Head of Performance who supported that part of my journey at the football club. They constantly kept reinforcing, supporting and encouraging me which allowed me to grow into my role there.

Working with these two guys definitely helped me to develop and hone my skills even further. I have always believed that you need to surround yourself with people smarter than yourself in order to grow. So when you're feeling like your lacking lustre in your teaching, losing your groove or not feeling like you are not being true to yourself – ask yourself what is lacking for you and where do you seek motivation?

Ask yourself, when was the last time you went and observed someone else's class? Sure you did it when you learnt to be a teacher but once we finish the course we often have no new input. How could you change that? Do you attend workshops from multiple settings, outside of your original training? Could you go to a physio and hear about how to work with a hamstring injury or listen to a podcast on injuries? There are many ways to evolve and grow as a teacher.



When it comes to new repertoire, consider the skills that are required by working backwards, breaking down the components to create a sequential pathway of progression. This method guarantees success. It's a strategy that promotes autonomy and builds confidence. And a recipe for success.

I want to thrive. And to thrive I need to feel like I am contributing big or small. If I don't feel I like I am making a significant contribution then it is time to make a move to create a sustainable future together.

**Katrina Edwards oversees three boutique fully equipped Pilates studios known as Aligned For Life Pilates in Melbourne, Australia and is the Founder and Director of National Pilates Training.**



# Nurturing a whole body and mind experience

HEAR FROM CO-OWNERS OF INNA ESSENCE ON HOW THE EXPERIENCE THEY CREATE IN STUDIO ALLOWS THEIR CLIENTS TO BRING THEIR WHOLE SELF TO CLASS

*by Andrea Creighton and Anna Grant*

You know it when you hear it; when you feel it in your body. When you lay on a carriage and you're invited to find your centre, to allow your shoulders to fall away, to float out and peel open each spring, to fully integrate your breath with every muscle in a beautiful harmony of movement. This is a person's experience when they are guided through Pilates repertoire with a STOTT PILATES® instructor, and Anna and I wanted nothing less for ourselves and our clients.

In 2017, Anna was a studio manager and Pilates instructor with a national fitness franchise, and I met her as a student in her classes. Within weeks, we knew we were soul mates. Our shared passion soon ignited our need to study Pilates with the best education provider in the world, and to create a studio space that was both warm and nurturing, yet undeniable in its focus on exceptional instruction, education and class experience.

The training and certification process through STOTT PILATES® is rigorous, and for very good reason. Pilates isn't just about cueing an exercise; it starts with creating mind-body awareness which is critical when learning a new movement pattern. Connecting breath

to muscle activation, stabilisation of the pelvic and shoulder girdles throughout static and dynamic positions, as well as integrating biomechanical principles to move with support and without unnecessary tension.

Our teaching philosophy is based on compassion and relationship. Our instructors all possess a beautiful combination of outstanding technical ability and empathy. Our core focus is on building and nurturing the relationship between ourselves and our clients. We are authentic:- with every cue, modification and invitation coming from a place of guidance and support.

Anna and I are confident that our STOTT PILATES® training has equipped us with the highest level of anatomical knowledge and Pilates repertoire; and by blending this with biopsychosocial methodologies, we move and nurture both the body and the mind.

Our programming is fluid and influenced by lifestyle, cultural and social factors experienced by our clients. We are constantly learning, constantly seeking to improve our understanding, and in turn, we are considerate, patient and gentle when explaining and educating those participating in our classes.

At Inna Essence, we are setting our clients up to experience optimal movement and awaken awareness within their body. We





***"We teach in a way where there is no separation between us and the physical and emotional class experience."***

We teach in a way where there is no separation between us and the physical and emotional class experience. Pilates is our vehicle to promote optimal alignment and movement quality, and we continually reference and integrate the STOTT PILATES® principles in exercise initiation and execution:

- Breathing
- Pelvic Placement
- Rib cage Placement
- Scapular Movement & Stabilisation
- Head & Cervical Placement
- Hip, Knee, Ankle & Foot Alignment

Anna and I are incredibly invested in the benefits of understanding the interdependence of each of these principles and sharing that with our clients. Introductory Reformer classes provide a group environment for individuals new to Pilates, and particularly Reformer, to be honoured with the time and knowledge of our instructors to learn, understand, and integrate these principles from their very first experience with our studio.

Inna Essence is a beautiful, safe and inclusive sanctuary, a destination where our visitors and members can breathe, know they will receive a warm smile, a gentle touch, and a personal welcome that assures them that they have arrived home. We are a Pilates and Yoga studio of belonging and peace, and we attract predominantly women who are in a season of their lives where their physical health and emotional wellbeing needs to be nurtured.

Our studio space was carefully designed, with a central reception area featuring gorgeous dried floral arrangements, comfortable chairs, warm tones and a signature oil blend we diffuse which our members instantly recognise.

Our clients love the blend of efficient and graceful movement, the combination of freedom and flow of some classes, to the control and stability of other sessions.

The class experience at Inna Essence is one of shared responsibility; as instructors we see the importance of understanding our clients' life-experience. Our observational skills, active listening, deep connection and maintaining complete presence are non-negotiables.

It is our deepest desire that our clients feel that our classes, instructors and studio create significant change and positivity within their life. That every class is meaningful, thoughtful, challenging and lovingly delivered. What's not to love about that sort of supportive and nurturing environment?

**Anna and Andrea are co-owners of Inna Essence in Underwood, Queensland, Australia. Winners of the Australian Enterprise Awards Most Hospitable Wellness Studio Queensland 2023 and Australian Small Business Champion Awards Finalists for 2022 and 2023.**

**They are also a Merrithew® Host Training Centre for STOTT PILATES® courses. Join them for Intensive Matwork or Intensive Reformer courses in July/August 2023.**



# So you want to run a Pilates Retreat

EXPERIENCED PILATES INSTRUCTOR PAOLA RAFFINETTI SHARES HER EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO BUILD YOUR FIRST PILATES RETREAT

by Paola Raffinetti

Have you been considering running a Pilates retreat but you feel unsure of how to organise one? If you've been pondering running a Pilates retreat, now is the right time as the need is there from my experience.

I love a retreat. What's not to love? There is movement to nourish your body, delicious food to scintillate the taste buds, a beautiful setting to escape from daily life and time to rest or read that book you've been meaning to. Having been on many yoga retreats, every time I attended one I'd visualise where and how I would run a Pilates retreat. I noted what worked and what didn't from the venue, organisation, schedule and food served. I had been to retreats with teachers who took the time to get to know their guests and those who didn't interact and distanced themselves. I stayed in places that were immersed in nature and others where the accommodation was substandard. It was at this time that a plan began to formulate in my mind, especially with the lack of Pilates retreats around the Sydney metropolitan area.

Running Pilates retreats didn't just happen overnight. First, I needed a database. Not owning a studio with a database, I had a different approach. I'd been offering workshops and masterclasses at studios around Sydney and began to create a database gradually. I've been very fortunate to have very supportive work environments that allowed me to advertise at

their studios. Never underestimate word of mouth as this has been the most effective. Eventually, I felt the time was ready to run my first Pilates Retreat and I haven't looked back.

After six years of running retreats, the most important lesson I've learned is to be organised. People liked to feel looked after. All the attendees need to do is turn up on time to class and mealtimes. They don't need to do anything else. Think of your clientele and match their needs. If you can be organised and customer service oriented then 90 percent of the job is done for you as the teaching is the part you know best. Just know, that however organised you are there will ALWAYS be a hiccup even with all the planning. Take a breath, own up to it if needed, sort it out and move forward.

If you're interested in running a retreat, here's a list of things to consider when planning it:

1. If you've never been on a retreat, I suggest booking one to experience being the client first.
2. Run a poll to see if there is enough interest in attending a Pilates Retreat
3. Choose a venue that suits the price point of your clientele.
4. Does the venue charge per person or do you rent the whole venue?





***"The most important lesson I've learned is to be organised. People liked to feel looked after...Think of your clientele and match their needs. "***

5. Does the venue have a caterer or do you need to hire a caterer? Food is of utmost importance to the success of your retreat. Do your research with caterers and ensure you taste their food first if possible.

6. What type of food will you serve? I opt for vegetarian and gluten free with options for those with allergies or special diets.

7. Ensure you make a profit. It is a lot of work running a retreat. Factor in the cost of venue + catering + price per class + admin/advertising + the cost for you as well into the price.

8. Will the venue promote the retreat on its website or social media?

9. Does the venue have all the equipment or will you need to bring your own?

10. What is the layout of the rooms? Personally, I now choose venues that have ensuite bathrooms.

11. Is there a big enough space for Pilates classes especially now as we are more conscious about social distancing?

12. Is there a room for a massage therapist or is there spa? This is a great add-on to maximise relaxation for your clients.

13. Have terms and conditions to ensure you are covered for costs due to last-minute cancellations.





I personally design the weekend around a central theme. Themes I've used from past retreats include 'From the ground up' and 'Reconnecting to your core for inner postural ease and body-wide dynamic stability'. Planning and designing the classes are incredibly useful especially if there are clients you don't know attending. Aim to be as inclusive as possible regarding people's different abilities.

It's also important to consider other elements outside of Pilates to create a well-rounded weekend such as a bushwalk, workshop, meditation, surfing and the list goes on.

Most of the clients will know you and are there because they love your teaching and other skills that you have.

At the end of the retreat, I always get people to fill out a feedback form on the day to hand back to me. This is **INVALUABLE!** The key to a successful retreat is being able to take the feedback given, especially the feedback on what needs improving and adapt your future retreats. It shows what works and what doesn't.



Good luck planning your Pilates retreat. Make the retreat your own. After all the attendees are there because of your skilled teachings and who you are as a person.

Paola is an experienced Pilates and Slings Myofascial Training teacher as well as an educator for art of motion in Sydney who has been running Pilates retreats for many years.

Paola's next retreat is in the Blue Mountains from 15-17 September 2023 at [Brightlands Retreat](#). Find more details at her [website](#).



# Instructor Spotlight: Sascha Orlievsky

WE SPEAK WITH PILATES INSTRUCTOR SASCHA ORLIEVSKY ABOUT HER PILATES CAREER TO DATE AND HER TEACHING FOCUS

**Q. Tell us a little about yourself and your Pilates background?**

**A.** My name is Sascha and I'm a qualified Reformer and Mat Pilates instructor from Sydney with over seven years of teaching experience. I started teaching Ballet and conditioning in 2015 and then transitioned into teaching Pilates in 2020. This transition was propelled by the first COVID lockdown. I had just deferred my Neuroscience degree to travel overseas when we were forced into hibernation. With overseas travel no longer an option, I had plenty of time to think! To think about what I value, what lifestyle I want to live, and what I enjoy doing.

Fast forward three years later and I now own a Mat Pilates business called House of Sculpt, and teach Reformer Pilates at the well-renowned M.I.A Studios in Paddington, Sydney. It is definitely not the career path I had envisioned, yet I couldn't be happier. Making a positive impact in people's lives is invaluable and I love that I'm on my feet all day long keeping active. I think my friends would describe me as high energy, loyal and a good listener.

**Q. How did you discover Pilates?**

**A.** I discovered Pilates during my ballet training where we would always practice Pilates principles for body conditioning and injury prevention. However, my obsession for Pilates grew when I finished school and was practicing religiously. It just felt SO good to move in such a graceful and challenging way. The endorphins you get after a Pilates class are second to none!

**Q. How do you keep learning? What inspires you in your work?**

**A.** Maintaining my self-practice is incredibly important, and I'm continually learning from different instructors whether that's in class, on social media or through my close-knit community like my business partner Nicole Clarke Mitchell and M.I.A. Studios owner Robin Tate.



**Q. The best advice you were ever given as a teacher...**

**A.** Not everyone is going to love your teaching style, and that's totally okay!

**Q. Is there something you try and instil in each of your clients?**

**A.** That movement is a privilege. Moving your body is a method to enhance every facet of your life. A way to meditate, a way to master an art form, a way to connect to yourself.

**Q. The best Pilates course you ever did was...**

**A.** I really enjoyed my Mat Pilates course at Studio Pilates. I felt that the anatomy knowledge I gained from that course is unparalleled and I am forever grateful!

**Q. What's your favourite piece of equipment to use with clients in studio and why?**

**A.** Hands down, the Pilates Ball. It is so versatile as it can be used to further challenge and strengthen, but can also be used to expand and release. There is something so beautiful about that dichotomy!

**Q. How do you stay motivated?**

**A.** Motivation is hard to come by... I rely more on discipline to get things done. I thank my ballet training for that!

**Q. What makes you laugh the most?**

**A.** I would have to say my partner, Leigh. We laugh over nothing for hours on end – it's the best.

**Q. What's your favourite way to spend a day off?**

**A.** A dream day off would include some morning movement, a dip in the ocean, soaking up some sun whilst reading a book, followed by meeting up with friends for some snacks, wine and a giggle.

**Q. How many pairs of grip socks do you own? ? Do you love or hate a stretch band?**

**A.** Controversial but I don't own any! I am all about using your feet to their maximum potential, and that includes seeing how your feet and toes are positioned.

**Q. Does your family 'really know' what's involved in your job?**

**A.** I speak to my family all the time about my job and my mum is always in my classes so I think they have a pretty good idea! I am lucky to have my family so involved.



Sascha teaches at [M.I.A Studio](#) and co-owns [House of Sculpt](#) in Sydney.

***If you'd like to be featured in  
The Pilates Journal***

***reach out to***

***[hello@pilatesjournal.com](mailto:hello@pilatesjournal.com)***



# Get appy

GET SOME PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT MIGHT BE THE BEST APP FOR YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

by Cie'Jai Zarb

Have you been using the same booking system since you started running your business? Does it frustrate you from time to time but you just don't know where to turn to or what else is out there?

What you may not realise is that this experience may be the first touch point you have with your customers so the way they interact with it matters. In this edition, we share feedback from Pilates Studio owners who currently use these booking systems and the verdict on the pros and cons of each.



## Studio Owners Reviews

	MindBody	Wellness Living	Acuity Scheduling	Ubindi	Bookamat	Vagarо	Momence
Ease of set up	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Ease of use	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Tracking metrics	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Flexible booking system	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Contact support	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
Risk free trial	NA	NA	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Live classes	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Hidden fees	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

### MindBody Online



Highest Score comment – It was so easy to do live classes but it was expensive.

Lowest Score comment – The hardest part for clients was just getting them to our page. I also now realise how clunky the reports were and how they weren't enough reports.

### Wellness Living



Highest Score comment - The set up was easy and very intuitive. Clients have found the branded app, Wellness Living app and website easy to use.

Lowest Score comment – I just wish the live training would have been better. It was fine, but we had to ask the questions to get the training.

I only had one time where I couldn't get a hold of someone, but I sent an email and they got back to me the next day. They usually pick up right away and can help me with my issues.

**Acuity Scheduling**

Highest Score comment - Easy to customise with logos and brand colours, easy to automatically send reminders and all those things.

Connects to stripe and or paypal for easy payments. Works with packages and subscriptions. Tracks class sizes, appointments and classes used, etc. It's easy to change appointments, cancel and reschedule from both sides.

Lowest Score comment - There are extra charges on subscriptions but that's because stripe charges a bit more.

**Ubindi**

Highest Score comment - Very easy to get set up. What I especially appreciate is that it's intuitive so I didn't have to spend time learning a new system. It automatically sends confirmation and reminders to clients. It's easy for my clients to use and works on all devices, there's no app to download.

The platform is totally flexible, and I can change classes very easily.

Their level of contact support is also stellar! Always available, friendly and they go above and beyond to help. I also like that I only pay a booking fee if I get a registration. Seems very fair to me.

**Bookamat**

Highest Score comment - Easy set up with lots of support, FAQs and pdf printouts. The level of contact support is brilliant. I am very happy with Bookamat and the way it has developed over the last two years.

Lowest Score comment - You can't change a class if someone has booked into it. You can change the time, the instructor, location and add notes but you have to keep the same class. You can change it if no one booked in.

**Vagaro**

Highest Score comment - Is the system flexible? Absolutely. You control the system and can have it do whatever you want it to do.

It does a great job of tracking attendance, payments and purchases.

Lowest Score comment - I've found that those clients who are not technologically savvy struggle with booking with Vagaro. I personally don't mind offering them assistance with booking the classes but I can see where it could be bothersome for some studios. I would say when it works it's good. Anytime you delete a client from the system you lose the historical information.

**Momence**

Highest Score comment - The features are good, but still basic. Once you start having conversations with them about using their platform you get access to the backend and I got the first month free. It also integrates with Zoom and sends auto links. For a small studio without complexities, it's great.

Lowest Score comment - Because they are a fairly new start-up, there are a lot of features that are yet to be developed for ease of use for owners/operators. For example, you can't schedule a closed business day and if a client changes their billing card for a specific payment, it automatically updates the card in the backend and assigns it to auto payments.

The contact support hasn't been the best. I've had to chase for responses and a lot of my requests have no resolution. I've been told it is in the queue for development but with no ETA.

**The Pilates Journal  
celebrates  
World Pilates Day  
May 6**



# Upcoming courses

## BASI AUSTRALIA

The Mat Program, Mat and Reformer Program and Comprehensive Global Program are now offered in  
 Canberra - Pilates Centre Canberra - 19 May to 13 Aug  
 Sunshine Coast - Pointe Pilates Studio - 14 Apr - 30th July.

Registration closes 28th April  
 Find out more [basipilates.com.au/education/](https://basipilates.com.au/education/)

## BODY ORGANICS EDUCATION

Goals and Programming - Brisbane - 10-12 June  
The Tower of Power - Sydney - 21 July  
Springing this joint - Sydney - 13 October, Wamberal - 14 October and Brisbane - 4 November  
Hashimoto's Disease - Bondi, Sydney - 15 October  
 Springing this Joint and Hashimoto's Disease - Canberra - 29 October

Is offered as an online course. There will be follow-up face-to-face courses in QLD, NSW and VIC, other states to follow.  
 A full event calendar can be found [here](#).

Find out more [www.bodyorganicseducation.com](http://www.bodyorganicseducation.com) or contact [info@bodyorganicseducation.com](mailto:info@bodyorganicseducation.com)

## REACH MOVEMENT HEALTH

Further your education with one of Reach's online or in-person workshops.

Online workshops include Pilates for Pregnancy, Visceral Mobilisation through Movement, LumboPelvic Rhythm with Lisa Jackson, Hands to Arms to Shoulders with Sally Anderson, or Load and Progression with Lanette Helene and much more.

Find out more [reachmovementhealth.com/continuing-education-programs-2023/](https://reachmovementhealth.com/continuing-education-programs-2023/)

## PILATES ITC

Blended (Online + In-Person) or Online (start anytime) options available.

(10838NAT) Diploma of Pilates Instruction, Matwork and Reformer + Small Apparatus Pathway, Reformer and Small Apparatus Pathway, Matwork and Small Apparatus Pathway, Studio Instruction Pathway, Anatomy + Physiology (Online only), (10839NAT) Advanced Diploma of the Pilates Method.

Upcoming Blended Entry Points

Enrol and start your online Coursework at any time ahead of your first in-Studio session!

QLD, SA, NSW – Enrol now for May Entry Points  
 WA – May Entry Point is sold out! Enrol now for July Entry Points.

Give the Pilates ITC Careers Team a call on (08) 9330 4570 to secure your place - [pilatesitc.edu.au/](https://pilatesitc.edu.au/)



## POLESTAR PILATES

Upcoming Continuing Education Courses include:

SPINEFITTER by SISSEL® - 15 Apr - Sydney, 4 May - Tas and 7 July - Perth  
Balansit - 20-21 May - Sydney  
Oov Foundations Level 1 - 17-18 June - Sydney  
Pregnancy Programming and Critical Reasoning - 3 Jun - Sydney  
 Pilates for Chronic Lower Back Pain Online Course - available anytime  
 Online Masterclass series - available anytime

Critical Reasoning for Rehabilitation with Shelley Power - 15-16 July - Sydney and 8-9 July - Perth

For a complete list of courses see the Polestar website  
[polestarpilates.edu.au/pilates-continuing-education/](https://polestarpilates.edu.au/pilates-continuing-education/)

# Upcoming courses

## NATIONAL PILATES TRAINING

Professional Pilates Matwork Instruction

Professional Pilates Reformer Instruction

Diploma of Professional Pilates Instruction

The above courses are available in person, April intake – Canberra, April intake - Brisbane, Feb and May intake - Melbourne, May intake - Sydney.

Courses are also available online only, enrol anytime, anywhere.

Advanced Diploma of the Pilates Method - 2023 enrol anytime.

Applications close 10th February for February 2023 intake – Melbourne, in person

Find out more [www.nationalpilates.com.au/](http://www.nationalpilates.com.au/)

## STUDIO PILATES

Matwork Course - 4 - 7 May, QLD, 11 - 14 May - NSW, 18 - 21 May - MEL

Reformer Course - 25 - 28 May - NSW, 31 May - 4 Jun - QLD, 1 - 4 JUN - MEL

Platinum Instructing Course - 18 - 23 Apr - NSW, QLD, 8 - 12 MAY - MEL

For a complete list of dates in other states see the Studio Pilates website [studiopilates.com/education/book-a-course/](http://studiopilates.com/education/book-a-course/)



## TENSEGRITY TRAINING

Cert IV in Contemporary Pilates and Teaching Methodology

Cert IV of Contemporary Pilates and Teaching Methodology (52855WA) with Reformer (Cert IV and Reformer)

Integrated Diploma of Contemporary Pilates and Teaching Methodology  
Pilates Group Reformer Instructor Training (PGR)

Tensegrity offers training in NSW, QLD, VIC, SA and TAS.

For a full list of dates in all states visit [tensegritytraining.com.au/accredited-training/](http://tensegritytraining.com.au/accredited-training/)

## Feedback

Please send us your feedback, we'd love to understand more of what you learn more of.

Contact us at [hello@pilatesjournal.com](mailto:hello@pilatesjournal.com)



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