

Why to Try Pilates for a Perfect 2012 Body

Written by Nadine Toren

[Television personality](#) and AZfoothills.com columnist [Nadine Toren](#) is scouring the area, finding savvy Valley features, bringing readers "on the scene." Every day she'll introduce you to [celebrities](#), [athletes](#), and give you an inside look into local events and hot spots. She'll touch on topical issues, and keep AZ fans posted on all the big talkers [around town](#).



Want to ring in the new year with a picture-perfect body? Well, you might want to give Pilates a whirl—it just might get you bikini abs for summer.

I never became so in touch with my body until trying Pilates. (Of course, I'm on a major mission to be wedding-dress-ready by April, so at this point, I'll do just about anything to get fit quick.) However, I wasn't expecting such a self-bonding experience by doing the low-impact exercise.

I came across Katrina Natori, a fully-certified Pilates instructor and owner of The Pilates Bodies. While Katrina may be a fresh 25 year old, she sure knows her stuff. The young woman grew up a dancer, gymnast, and athlete, but vows Pilates is the ultimate way to master an A-list physique. (That's because it's a serious strengthening regimen.) So I took her two cents, and committed myself to Pilates 3 times a week for one month. (That's because Katrina says the key to seeing results is consistency.)

On day one, I arrived at her Scottsdale studio location, Sommet Fitness, and so began my Pilates challenge. She first taught me how to breathe.

I know it sounds weird—*learning* how to breathe, but there's actually a technique to inhaling and exhaling. While breathing in and out, Katrina taught me how to tighten my core, and advised I make this a habit during everyday life. (Seriously, doing this one simple thing makes you a whole lot stronger.)

Simply put, Katrina describes Pilates as an exercise method that emphasizes core stabilization integrated with conscious breathing. Consider it movement with intention, concentrating on every part of your body. Truth be told, you'll feel parts of yourself you didn't realize exist. My experience is proof.

Katrina instilled in me mind-body awareness—I learned how to give craved TLC to my muscles. She led me in a number of exercises, like lying on my back with my knees bent and feet flat, simply lifting one leg at a time. Yes, this may sound elementary, but while doing so, you're instructed to tighten your abs, creating a toned tummy. Add correct breathing to the mix, and this easy exercise becomes quite effective.

We did a lot of on the ground mat work, where I'd life my lower back, enabling my hip to do all the work. Then I'd release my back one vertebrae at a time eventually becoming one with the floor. While it's kinda tough to describe, this gesture works the abs—and we all want strong abs.

Throughout our four weeks together, Katrina's instructions became more intense, and my lazy self often tried to talk around doing certain challenging things. This is when I hated Katrina (but still loved her at the same time). She didn't take my BS, kindly demanding I do the exercise...and do it right, or I'd have to do it again. (I now thank her.)

And if you're anything like me, you'll become intrigued with the Pilates equipment; there's a reformer, chair, Cadillac, and trapeze table. These helpful items utilize springs, and those springs are used for resistance. The advantage of resistance is strength training—Pilates is not for weight loss; rather, toning. (In fact, she had one client go down a pant size after making Pilates routine.) Also, it even helps you grow taller—Pilates tends to be an aid in curing kyphosis, the slumping of shoulders and a rounded spine commonly occurring when you sit at a computer all day, every day.

Truth be told, Pilates taught me more about my body mechanics and physiology. Thanks to Katrina, I now feel stronger (and a little lighter), and am definitely hooked on the therapeutic (and beneficial!) practice. Of course, it's recommended you pair steady cardio with Pilates to maximize weight loss, but that combo is bound to bring you a beautiful body.

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Since a regular routine is key, Katrina suggests investing your time and energy into consistent classes. It's also really good for those with chronic conditions or injuries. And if you don't believe me, take it from Pilates creator, Joseph Pilates. Before passing away at the ripe age of 84, he said, "In ten sessions you'll feel the difference, in twenty you'll see the difference, and in thirty you'll have a whole new body."

To book your private Pilates session, call Katrina: 480-216-7135, or visit: www.thepilatesbodies.com.



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