



Valentin

is Founder of Pilates Body by Valentin, a full-service training studio in Dublin, California. Valentin's 20-plus years of experience as a group exercise leader, IDEA International Presenter, and former ballet dancer has provided her with a strong foundation for creative Pilates group training for Reformer, Chair and circuit. Her emphasis on precision, technique and motivation has proved to be highly successful for her clients. She is also a member of Pilates Performance.

Power in Pilates Training to Music

By Valentin

Numerous studies have proven the benefits of music on the mind and body. Certain styles of music have a magical power that can enhance restful sleep, reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve concentration, visualization and meditation. With certain audiences, music can boost creative thinking, speed the ability to learn, and accelerate the success in teaching your group Pilates classes.

Music is composed of movement sequences that possess dynamics, rhythm, timing, and phrasing. When used appropriately with proper verbal cueing, music can provide a unique opportunity to improve a Pilates workout. It can spark compelling outcomes that facilitate cognitive functioning and coordination of sequential motor movements. Music can support the vital elements of a Pilates programs such as control, breathwork and fluidity.

In the human body, there are several systems that respond directly to music. If the music is loud, the corporeal system is sensitive to the vibrations felt. The limbic system is affected by emotion when a certain melody is heard. The cortical system is impacted by thought and imagery. More specifically, the thalamic system is triggered by rhythm. Musical rhythm has the ability to cue repetitive movements. As patterns of engagement between music and movement solidify over time, the learning curve becomes easier, and the class can become more successful and rewarding.

Sequencing is a natural component of music: one beat follows another and sounds occur in a certain order to make a melody. Within a Pilates learning protocol, music is paired with physical movement, highly specific cues are verbalized, and all become linked with the physical experience. After some practice with the paired music and series of movements, the exercise sequence is executed with minimal or no verbal cueing.

Stimulative music typically promotes movement such as finger or toe tapping. It is described as music that has accented beats and syncopation. On the other hand, sedative music tends to be smooth, slow and legato with no percussive beats. When selecting music for Pilates training, it is best to have a selection of music that combines both styles to promote well-organized efficient actions. The music should have a predictable, rhythmic framework that cues the exercise sequence, but should not overpower and distract from the fluidity of the movement. Sensory overload can occur when the music has lyrics and can cause some confusion.

Music used in group classes can be highly effective when suitably utilized. (Music may not be

appropriate for beginner classes, as learning the key principles and basic movements of Pilates is more important.) Since the counts are already established, the workout is even and smooth. Music supports motivation to move in sync with each other, creates an expressive outlet, and manages large groups without fatiguing the instructor's voice. It improves concentration and memory and adds variety to an already existing workout.

At my studio, students often request music for their workout. Many of my students come two or three times weekly, so the accompaniment of an exercise to music sets a different environment and allows for some self-expression. Counting and finger-snapping to maintain a consistent movement phrase while verbally cueing is not as aesthetically pleasing as the sounds of a symphony. When the movements are repeatedly learned and practiced without music, they are solidified in the mind without any distraction of "trying to maintain the rhythm." Once the musical rhythm, tempo and melody are established, the rest can be poetry in motion.

In addition, when the movements are solidified in their minds and bodies, the music is more productive for both the teacher and the student. They are expanding their knowledge of learning by matching movement to rhythm. However, it can also work in reverse. If the movement is unknown, foreign, or not yet mapped out in their bodies or minds, moving to music is not only frustrating, but also pointless.

It must be noted that proper Pilates form with music is expected. I will not play music with a student or class unless proper form has been established. It should also be noted that music alone cannot improve form. But for those who are comfortable with the exercise, music can enhance their ability to execute an expected choreography matched to an anticipated rhythm.

Try adding music to your some of your more advanced Pilates classes. I think you'll be surprised at the results you'll get, and how much your students will enjoy it.