



Ken Endelman

is Founder and CEO of Balanced Body Inc. Ken began his career as a designer and craftsman of fine custom furniture – a background apparent in every piece of hand-finished equipment the company makes. Since the early 1970s, Ken Endelman has updated Joseph Pilates' equipment with state-of-the-art engineering, materials and technology, many of which have become industry standards. The company has been awarded fifteen U.S. patents, with more pending. Balanced Body Inc. continues to actively promote Pilates to the fitness industry, the medical profession and the media. Ken can be contacted at 800.745.2837, or visit www.pilates.com.

The Pilates Chair: Little Footprint, Big Workout

By Ken Endelman, Founder & CEO, Balanced Body Inc.

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Looking for a unique service to offer your members and differentiate yourself from other clubs? The Pilates Chair is a simple piece of equipment that combines elements of the popular mind-body exercise with overall strength conditioning. Some experts think the Pilates Chair could be the “next big thing” in group exercise for health clubs on the cutting edge of fitness.

Nora St. John, co-owner of Turning Point Studios in Walnut Creek, CA, has taught many chair classes and thinks it is an ideal fit for health and fitness clubs. “It is a perfect piece of equipment for a club. It doesn’t take up much space and it offers a serious workout for even your most fit members.”

Small but challenging...

On average, chairs stand just over two feet tall with a footprint of approximately only five square feet. Designed to stretch and strengthen muscle groups not easily reached by more traditional techniques and equipment, it consists of a seat and a foot bar where springs are attached. Members can sit, lie or stand on the chair or the floor and push the foot bar with their hands or feet. There are over 28 different exercise categories on the chair focusing on core strength, leg strength, shoulder girdle stability, mobility and strength and functional movements such as standing, climbing, pushing and lifting.

The chair is considered to be the most challenging piece of Pilates equipment in terms of building strength in the legs and shoulders. Exercises on the chair are great for skiers, runners, tennis players, golfers and for clients looking to increase power in the upper body for throwing, lifting and racquet sports.

“In terms of an exercise the chair is more athletic than a Reformer. Whereas the latter deals more with flexibility and coordination, the chair is more physically challenging and will get your clients sweating,” says St. John.

In a 20' x 20' room a club could easily fit ten chairs with room to spare. Many chairs are now equipped with wheels which make portability and storage extremely easy. It is a great alternative for clubs who want to offer equipment-based Pilates but may not have the room for Reformers.

Extremely versatile

What many instructors like about the chair is its versatility. Chair workouts can be easily combined with bands or mat work. Members can do abdominals on the mat, stand up and work on the chair, then easily go back and do more mat exercises. It is easier to do this on the chair than it would be on a Reformer, which, because of the sliding carriage, ropes and springs, is a little harder to quickly climb on and off.



Chair classes can also be offered to specific segments of your club's members. This allows people with common interests to get together and is usually popular from both an exercise and social aspect. Sessions aimed at skiers, runners, bicyclists, or basketball players are just some of the specialty chair classes a club can offer.

It is also good for attracting men – a target group that has been a little slow to catch on to Pilates at some clubs.

Valentin, owner of The Pilates Body by Valentin in Dublin, CA, started a men's chair class at her studio two years ago. Since then the class has grown so large that she now offers multiple sessions. "The chair is a great way to get men into your Pilates program. It's fun, it's challenging, and the men in my class have formed a great camaraderie."

Quick education for instructors

Instructor education is always important – particularly in Pilates. But the chair has less exercise nuances than a Reformer or a mat, and a solid educational program can be accomplished in just a weekend. "After that your instructors should be ready to go - especially if they have a Pilates background," says St. John. "They will be able to teach the whole repertoire plus different programs for different skill levels."

An additional revenue stream...

The chair is considered specialty equipment and is Pilates-based. And like all other equipment-based Pilates programs, people will expect to pay extra for it. Clubs that offer chair classes will be able to offer the service for a fee, thereby adding to its revenue stream.

For savvy clubs, offering chair classes is an easy way to add additional profit-generating services to their portfolio. They'll also be getting the jump on competitors as much of the industry is just now discovering this equipment but have yet to implement programming.