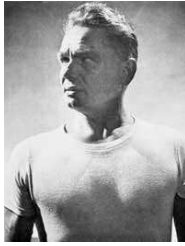


# History of Pilates



Joseph Hubertus Pilates  
(1880-1967)

Pilates wrote two books  
Pilates — Return to Life through  
Contrology  
&  
Your Health

“I must be right. Never an aspirin. Never injured a day in my life. The whole country, the whole world, should be doing my exercises. They’d be happier” —Joseph Pilates in 1965 at the age of 86

Joe was born in Monchengladbach a small town near Dusseldorf, Germany in 1880. Joe’s father was a prize winning gymnast of Greek origin. Joe’s mother was a German naturopath. A Naturopath believes in stimulating the body to heal itself which leads you to believe she greatly influenced his philosophy and approach to corrective exercise.

Joe was a sickly kid, he suffered from asthma, rickets and rheumatic fever. It was this suffering that began his journey to fitness and health.

A family physician gave him a gift of an Anatomy Book. He memorized and learned every page. He then began to analyze how animals moved. He studied both Eastern and Western forms of exercise Yoga, Zen, Ancient Greek & Roman Regimens. At the age of 14 his system was in place and he was modeling for anatomy charts.

As a young adult Joe grew up in Germany he was a successful boxer and gymnast and liked to ski and dive for hobbies.

In the early 1900’s he moved to England and trained as a boxer and performed a Greek Statue Act.

During World War I he was imprisoned in an enemy aliens camp in Lancaster. This is where he fine-tuned his powerful revolutionary approach to life enhancing corrective exercise called “Contrology”. While he was interned in this camp he worked with those that suffered wartime disease and incarceration. He took springs off of beds and devised apparatus. During this time there was an influenza outbreak and neither Joe or his followers got this terrible disease. A testament to his system?

The last half of Joe’s life was spent in America. He was invited to train the New German Army however he didn’t like the political direction of Germany and fled.

On a boat to America, Joe met a women, Clara, who was suffering from Arthritis he worked her with her on the boat to give her comfort, cured her and married her in the states.

Upon arriving in New York City, he and Clara opened a gym in a building with several dance studios and they began fixing dancers.

Over the next 40 years, Joe and Clara’s studio flourished, teaching dancers, plumbers, doctors, socialites, etc.

Josephs definition of physical exercise “the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with sound mind, fully capable of natural, easy and satisfactory performance of many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure — everything should be smooth like a cat, exercises are done lying, sitting, kneeling, etc., to avoid excessive strain on the heart and lungs, natural movements....with the emphasis on doing and being.”