

also sought to achieve a balance of strength and flexibility.

Indeed, the success of Pilates derives from the fact that it's truly a comprehensive system. Pilates, perhaps more than any other one method, involves an excellent balance of both strengthening and stretching exercises, along with a mind/body connection that aims for fluidity, grace and control. Indeed, long before Pilates caught on with the general public, it had become a success in the world of dance, claiming such devotees as Martha Graham and George Balanchine. Dancers found that Pilates gave them the strength, flexibility, grace and focus that they needed to perform.

Further, a unique aspect to the Pilates method is the emphasis that Joseph Pilates placed on strengthening the musculature of the core of the body, a region that he called the "powerhouse." Pilates understood that if the muscles of the powerhouse—in other words the muscles of the pelvis, abdomen and thorax—are not only strong in isolation, but also neurally coordinated to work in unison with contractions of the peripheral musculature of the extremities, the body will naturally work more gracefully and efficiently (Figures 2 and 3).

We now understand that when the musculature of the core is strong, the core is stabilized. This means that movements of the extremities become stronger because the distal end of a muscle can move more efficiently if its proximal attachment in the core is stabilized (Figure 4a-b).

How Pilates Can Help You

Certainly, the Pilates method of body conditioning is an ideal choice for anyone wishing to get into shape. For a massage therapist, it's an especially ideal choice. Massage therapy is a profession that, even with the best body mechanics, places rigorous physical demands on the body. Having a strong and stable core can

add Pilates to your practice

In the quest to work effortlessly and sustain a long and successful career, Pilates is an ideal body conditioning method for massage therapists to practice. Becoming a Pilates Instructor is also an ideal career choice for the practicing massage therapist. For more information on becoming a certified Pilates instructor, visit the following websites:

www.pilatesmethodalliance.org

www.unitedstatespilatesassociation.com

www.classicalpilates.net

www.artofcontrol.com



Figure 2 illustrates a Pilates exercise called the "flat back on short box series" that primarily aims to strengthen the core musculature of the body, but also coordinates strengthening of upper and lower extremity muscles with the core musculature contractions.