

# Fitness Pilates

Fitness Pilates Mindful, Breathing and  
Relaxation Course Notes





## **Fitness Pilates Mindful, Breathing and Relaxation Course Notes**

We are very excited to bring you our brand new online CPD course called Fitness Pilates Mindful, Breathing & Relaxation. This online CPD supports your Fitness Pilates certification training or your level 3 Fitness Pilates qualification as a beautiful way to end your classes or as a stand-alone class.

There is no assessment for this online CPD, just watch all the video's and read through these notes and then apply to your Fitness Pilates classes.

Mindful classes are very niche and sort after within health clubs, private studios and in the community so we can't wait for you to introduce this to your participants at this perfect time of year.

In true Oprah style, here at Fitness Pilates we believe one of the most important things you can give someone is TIME and this format of Fitness Pilates does exactly that.

TIME TO BREATH

TIME TO THINK

TIME TO RESET

TIME TO RECHARGE

TIME TO REFOCUS

TIME TO RELAX

In 2012, the New York Times wrote an article, called "The 'Busy' Trap", about how so many of us over-schedule ourselves in order to feel more important or to avoid being alone with our thoughts but our busyness can be self-inflicted. We often take on too much work and other obligations and can let our ambition or drive come before our health. It's not as if any of us wants to live like this; it's something we're collectively – albeit unknowingly – encouraging each other to do.

So, if being too busy – and not challenging ourselves to be more mindful of how we choose to spend our time – is ruining our health, taking time out of our day, to relax, unplug and clear our minds can have enormous benefits. So this is where you come in as the Fitness professional to offer this 'TIME' to your participants which is essentially what we are all craving.

So this is a no-brainer for us at Choreography To Go to fuel you with the tools to offer this wonderful new format of Fitness Pilates.

We really hope you enjoy teaching this beautifully relaxing style of Fitness Pilates and we can't wait to see your classes on social media and here your feedback.



## **What is Mindfulness And How Can We Incorporate Mindfulness Into Fitness Pilates?**

Jon Kabat-Zinn says:

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non judgmentally.”

As a Fitness Pilates Teacher we are not qualified to teach Mindfulness but we can take the principals of Mindfulness and teach them in our FP relaxation class or during our FP exercises.

### **Mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment.**

Practicing a mindful approach in FP can heighten the experience of the exercises, it can help reduce stress, calm the mind and give the brain a break from busy, chaotic, and nonstop thoughts.

This class marries Fitness Pilates movements, breath work, body scan and guided relaxation techniques helping clients feel calm, centred and peaceful.

You can teach these techniques within your existing FP classes or create a specialised

### **FP Relaxation**

#### **Notes For A 30 Minute Fitness Pilates Breathing & Relaxation Class:**

10 Minutes Warm Up and Preparation

Standing Warm Up & Mobility - see video

Seated Warm Up & Mobility - see video.



### **Exercise 1 & Video 1**

Stepping Out Of Auto Pilot

### **Exercise 2 & Video 2**

Mindful Eating - Bring in the chocolate.

Conscious eating

A fun idea to introduce mindful eating to your clients in class.

### **Exercise 3 & Video 3**

Reconnecting With Body & Breath

Using simple FP exercises and breath.

### **Exercise 4 BODY SCAN**

Check Kelly's Bodyscan video.

### **Video 4 Rachel's Breathing Techniques**

Box Breathing

Lateral Breath

Nose Breathing.



## **Video 4 Where Can you take Fitness Pilates Relaxation?**

- \*Contact corporates in your area using LinkedIn and Social Media
- \*Run a Fitness Pilates Wellness & Relaxation Event
- \*Run a 4 week course as a stand alone class.
- \*If you have a children/teens qualification contact schools and run taster sessions before or during exam times.
- \*Add 15 minute of FP Relaxation at the end of class.

## **What is Fitness Pilates Mindful, breathing & relaxation?**

This CPD format can be used as a stand-alone class and you can call your classes – Fitness Pilates Mindful or Fitness Pilates Mindful, Breathing & Relaxation. Or you can use the ideas from the video to help you close your class for your relaxation & breath element of your class.

This CPD will include ways to help use breath in your class effectively and how to change your Lateral breath, which we use normally in our FP classes to a more diaphragmatic breath, using nasal breathing to enhance relaxation and tap into the parasympathetic system.

It will show you Fitness Pilates moves that help to decrease physical stress & tension from the body which can be taught before you bring your class into a more deeper relaxation and then show you how to take your clients through a body scan to enhance your participants relaxation at the end of your class.

### ***What it is not:***

It is important to understand that this style of Fitness Pilates is not spiritual in anyway shape or form. It is not trying to upset or dig up memories which participants might find emotional and it is not taking participants into a meditational or hypnotic state.

We are still staying within our realm of Fitness Professionals and offering this as part of a group exercise programme to help our participants relax and release tension.

We can not use the term 'Mindfulness' or call ourselves mindfulness teachers/ practitioners / coaches.

## Breathing

Traditionally in Fitness Pilates we use Lateral breathing where we will breath in through the nose and out through the mouth, breathing deep into the rib cage and keeping the abdominals strong and braced as you exercise. We still implement this throughout our main body of the class but you may wish to change the breath slightly at the start or end of your session to enhance relaxation to more nasal breathing and diaphragmatic breath.

Breathing is often overlooked as one of the most powerful levers we can pull to impact multiple areas of our health. It can have profound impact on reducing stress, improving sleep, and enhancing endurance and overall athletic performance.

### History of Nasal Breathing

Many ancient religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism emphasize the importance of breathing and how it is tied to overall health. Most prominently, the ancient Indian breath practice of pranayama, one of the limbs of Ashtanga yoga, is solely focused on various breathing techniques to help purify both mind and body.

Interestingly the word pranayama actually means “**trance induced by stopping all breathing.**” Ancient yogis and Buddhist monks describe a state of serenity and stillness where there is literally no sensation of breath.

We do not want to cross over from Fitness Pilates into Yoga but we can definitely use the benefits of nasal and diaphragmatic breath to aid our class.

### Science and Benefits of Nasal Breathing

Ukrainian doctor Konstantin Pavlovich Buteyko made the observation that a significant percent of human beings are sub-clinically hyperventilating or “overbreathing.”

This is not the panic-induced hyperventilation where you breathe into a paper bag. Overbreathing is so subtle that most of us are unaware we're doing it. Before you start to teach someone ‘how to breath effectively’ it is important to understand why overbreathing is potentially harmful.

Aerobic respiration involves us breathing in oxygen and breathing out CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide). We commonly refer to CO<sub>2</sub> as “waste,” we need to hold onto a certain amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the blood to ensure our acid-base balance, represented by a number called the “pH” is in check.



Another important role of retaining enough CO<sub>2</sub> is a phenomenon called the **Bohr effect**. We recommend that you look at this in your own time but to keep this really simple, You have a protein in your red blood cells (large red frisbee below) called hemoglobin (smaller red balls below), which delivers oxygen (even smaller blue balls below). The conditions in your blood need to be optimal so the hemoglobin releases or unloads oxygen at its destination tissues (muscle, heart, brain, etc.). If the oxygen stays stuck to the hemoglobin, you can't release oxygen to your cells, which means they cannot produce energy or function properly.

The Bohr effect states that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in your blood is a significant factor that determines whether oxygen gets released. When CO<sub>2</sub> levels are higher in your blood (aka higher acid levels), hemoglobin more readily releases oxygen. When CO<sub>2</sub> levels are lower, like from overbreathing, oxygen doesn't get released readily.

As a result, overbreathers who have less overall CO<sub>2</sub> in their blood often feel fatigued at rest and during exercise.

How do you know if you are 'Overbreathing'?

**Here are some signs which maybe a sign of 'overbreathing' –**

- Excessive yawning or sighing
- Breathing with your mouth open
- Audible breathing (you or someone nearby can hear you breathe)
- Upper chest movement with breathing
- Fatigue, irritability
- Stress, anxiety
- Headaches

Breathing through your nose allows air to encounter greater resistance as it flows through your narrow nasal passages and your sinuses, compared to breathing through an open mouth.

This nasal route automatically slows down your breathing and allows you to retain a little more CO<sub>2</sub>, which in turn enhances oxygen release from hemoglobin (recall the Bohr effect). There are other benefits as well. Breathing through the nose allows enhanced filtration and removal of allergens and other particles, preventing them from getting delivered to the lungs.

***Your nasal passages are literally a built in air purifier which doesn't get used if you are breathing mostly through your mouth.***





So now you know the benefits of Nasal breathing, we want you to understand why we map this with diaphragmatic breathing in your Fitness Pilates Mindful, Breathing and relaxation session.

## **What is diaphragmatic breathing**

There are a few things that you lose as you move into adulthood. One of these is proper breathing.

If you have ever watched a baby, they are breathing correctly from the diaphragm. Somewhere on the journey to adulthood, adults become thoracic breathers who tend to breathe from the chest rather than the abdomen.

As a result, you are not getting the stress-reducing benefits of breathing.

By learning to deeply breathe from the diaphragm or lower abdomen, you:

- increase your lung capacity
- increase the lungs capacity to oxygenate your blood
- increase the restorative ability of your body and facilitate removal of waste products.

One way to reduce stress is through diaphragmatic breathing.

The major muscle of breathing is the diaphragm. This thin, dome-shaped muscle separates the chest from the abdominal cavity.

Each time that you inhale, your diaphragm moves downward and your abdomen expands, creating a vacuum in the lungs. This fills the lungs from the bottom.

A 2011 study found that just one day of breathing exercise relieved the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization induced by job burnout. Other psychological studies have shown it reduces anxiety, depression, and stress.

On the physiological side, numerous studies have linked purposeful breathing practices to a reduction in blood pressure, improved cardiorespiratory fitness, and a slower heartbeat.

In a 2017 study, researchers examined 20 people placed into a “breathing intervention group” and 20 people in a control group. The breathing group practiced diaphragmatic breathing and, unlike the control group, had significantly lower cortisol levels by the end of the trial. (Cortisol is a steroid hormone released in response to stress and is associated with depression and anxiety.)





## **Before starting your diaphragmatic breathing exercise with clients -**

Before starting your diaphragmatic breathing exercise it's useful to see what their breathing rate is. This is something that you may wish to do on a 1-2-1 rather than in a large group.

If you are working with clients on 1-2-1 get them to count the number of inhalations you take over the next minute.

If they are a chest breather, like most of the population, they probably breathe 10-12 breaths per minute.

This can lead to oxygen/carbon dioxide imbalance that may result in:

- increased blood pressure
- a faster heart rate
- muscle tension and dizziness

So breathing incorrectly can perpetuate the stress and anxiety cycle.

Shallow breathing may also lead to a condition called chronic hyperventilation syndrome.

Just 5 minutes of diaphragmatic breathing is a helpful start to promote health, short-circuit stress, and combat any effects of shallow breathing.

We suggest you look at yourself first to really understand this before you look at your clients breathing rate.

## **How to do a diaphragmatic breath**

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position with your back straight and your feet flat on the floor
2. Slowly inhale through your nose, counting slowly to 4
3. Slowly exhale through the mouth, counting slowly to 6
4. That's it! Repeat several times.

## **Tips on diaphragmatic breathing**

1. Place one hand on the abdomen and the other on your upper chest. If you do a diaphragmatic breath, you should feel the lower hand on your abdomen move out with the inhalation and in with the exhalation. The top hand on the chest should remain relatively still. If you find it hard to do sitting down, then try lying on the floor.

2. When exhaling, try to slightly sigh with exhalation as this can provide extra tension relief.
3. The inhale stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and when you exhale it stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. So put more emphasis on exhaling a little longer than inhaling.
4. Put more emphasis on breathing rhythmically rather than deeply.

## **Boxed Breathing**

Box Breathing, otherwise known as Four-Square Breathing or Controlled Breathing, is a great way to reduce stress and to give your mind a break for a few minutes. The Special Forces, public speakers, and surgeons use tactical breathing to help control their thoughts and emotions when faced with challenging situations that obscure their clarity.

It is a technique used by Navy Seals to help them deal with stressful situations and stay calm when forced into action. Mark Divine is a former Navy SEAL commander who has been using the technique since 1987. Mark is the creator of a fitness programme called SEALFIT and states –

"I used it every day in SEAL training...it helped me graduate as the honor man, [the] number one graduate. Now I use it for every challenging situation, and practice it daily."

## **HOW DO YOU DO IT?**

Box Breathing is a technique where you take slow, deep breaths while counting to four while you breathe in, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold for four.

- Start by relaxing your whole body and be seated if possible.
- Sit upright, and then slowly exhale, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs. Really focus on this and be conscious of what you're doing.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of three or four, very slowly in your head.
- Feel the coolness of the air you're breathing in and the way it fills your lungs, one section at a time until they are completely full.
- Hold your breath for another slow count of three or four.
- Exhale through your nose or mouth for the same slow count of three or four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen. Be conscious of the feeling of the air leaving your lungs, how the coolness has become warmth.
- Then hold your breath for another three to four counts and repeat the whole process again.

## WHY DOES IT WORK?

According to the Mayo Clinic, a medical research clinic in the United States, there is a sufficient amount of evidence to suggest that intentional deep breathing can actually calm and regulate the autonomic nervous system, a system which regulates involuntary body functions like temperature. It can lower blood pressure and provide an almost-immediate sense of calm, and improve your mood. But the benefits of deep breathing also extend beyond in-the-moment stress relief. It's an exceptional treatment for conditions like generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression. It can also help treat insomnia by allowing you to calm your nervous system at night before bed. Box breathing can even help with pain management.

Resetting one's breath, or working to make the breath leave fight-or-flight mode, is good for both the mind and body.

The unconscious body, or the autonomic nervous system, refers to the functions that take place without any thought, such as the heart beating or the stomach digesting food. This system can be in a fight-or-flight or rest-and-digest state.

In fight-or-flight mode, the body feels threatened and reacts to help the person escape or avoid a threatening situation. Among other things, the body releases hormones to make the heart beat faster, breathing to quicken, and to boost blood sugar levels.

Having this state of stress activated too often, or for too long, has adverse consequences on health, however. The physical impact of this state can cause wear and tear on every system in the body.

Long-term stress can increase the risk of conditions that include:

- high blood pressure
- headaches
- heart attacks
- stroke

The ability to consciously regulate breath allows the body to leave a state of stress and enter into a state of calm.



## **Benefits**

Box breathing could provide a number of benefits to those that use it.

### **Reduces physical stress symptoms in the body**

Deep breathing techniques have been shown to significantly reduce the production of hormones associated with stress, such as cortisol.

In one study, participants showed lower levels of cortisol after deep breathing, as well as increased attention levels.

Mark Divine stated that, "box breathing bleeds off excess stress, and gives you a handy, on-demand tool, to avoid taking on any more stress than you can handle."

### **Positively affects emotions and mental well-being**

According to some studies, the use of breathing techniques can be useful in the reduction of anxiety, depression, and stress.

### **Increases mental clarity, energy, and focus**

One study was able to show that breathing techniques could bring about better focus and a more positive outlook.

Participants in the study were also more able to manage impulses, such as those associated with smoking and other addictive behaviors.

### **Improves future reactions to stress**

Studies suggest that box breathing may have the ability to change someone's future reactions to stress.

One study found that relaxation response practices boosted the activation of genes associated with energy and insulin, and reduced the activation of genes linked to inflammation and stress.

According to the study, this effect occurs in both in short-term and long-term practitioners of these techniques. However, the effect is more significant in long-term users.

Box breathing is one of many breathing techniques that can be useful in the reduction of day-to-day stress and implemented into your Fitness Pilates Mindful classes.

Although more research is needed, current studies are convincing in their evidence for box breathing as a powerful tool in managing stress, regaining focus, and encouraging positive emotions and state of mind.



## **Fitness Pilates exercises which help to aid relaxation and decrease physical stress from the body**

You will see on your video's in the dashboard how to do each of these Fitness Pilates exercises and why they help to remove tension from the body. You can either teach all of them before you take your participants into their relaxation or just a few – it is down to you as the instructor to decide how you want format your class and this will also depend on the class length but we have listed the exercises which can help your participants relax more.

- Seated neck release
- Seated lateral bend
- Swan Dive/ Cobra position
- Thread like a needle
- Spine twist seated
- Laying supine knee hug
- Knee roll with feet on or off floor
- Shoulder Bridge
- Laying supine neck pull/ release

We suggest that you focus on the release of each of these moves and map the breath with your moves, Exhale to take the move further and keep the moves slow and controlled rather than force them.

You can also complete a couple of them again after the relaxation to help wake your participants up and refresh at the end of your class.



## **Fitness Pilates relaxation**

**Example script to read when your participants are relaxing on the floor, we have also given you an example of how to do a body scan on the videos on your dashboard.**

Let your body sink into the floor. Get comfortable. Shift and move a little to let your body settle deeper into the ground. Be comforted that at this time, everything is ok. Nothing else matters right now. Everything is okay. Nowhere to go and nothing to do. Here to simply feel your body and listen.

Do not worry or become agitated if you do not hear everything I say. It is natural to flow in and out of conscious hearing. The deepest part of you, your core self, is always listening. Whatever your experience today, this practice will still work. There is no way to do this wrong. Simply listen without trying too hard.

You are in a safe environment, protected space, held space. Come into stillness now and remain still, for deep rest, deep nourishment. Feel your natural breath. Breath flowing thru. Allow your bones to become heavy. Feel your bones heavy and sinking into the earth.

Allow your awareness to travel through your body now on a journey of sensation. Simply feel each part as it is mentioned, and without moving, remain still. Welcome all sensation, just as it is. Begin with the mouth, feel your mouth, feel sensation in your mouth. Feel your jaw, lips, upper lip, lower lip, notice where the lips touch, feel the inside of the mouth, roof, under tongue, upper teeth and gums, lower teeth and gums, tongue, root of the tongue, center of the tongue, tip, notice sense of taste in the mouth. Feel the left inner cheek, right inner cheek. Now feel all the parts together now as a whole, feel your mouth as sensation, as energy, as radiant vibration.

Feel your nose. Notice the nostrils, left nostril, right nostril, both nostrils. Notice the breath, nasal passages, follow nasal passages all the way back into your head.

Become aware of your ears, right ear, left ear, both ears simultaneously. Feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears, backs of the ears, earlobes, ear canals. Follow ear canals into the inner ear. Notice your ears receiving sound, listening. Feel your ears hearing.

Feel your eyes, left eye, right eye, both eyes together. Notice eyelids, feel each eyelash. Notice where the eyelids touch. Become aware of the surface of the eyes, centers of the eyes, backs of the eyes. Feel your eyes now as energy, radiant glowing embers.



Bring awareness to your crown, forehead, face. Feel your whole head. Feel your neck. Back of the neck, sides of the neck, throat. Notice your right palm, thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger. Feel your whole hand alive with energy. Feel your wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, whole shoulder. Notice the notch at the base of the throat. Notice your left palm, thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger. Feel your whole hand alive and filled with sensation. Feel your left wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, whole shoulder. Notice the notch at the base of the throat.

Become aware of the upper chest, upper back, shoulder blades, feel your heart center. Notice your abdomen, ribs on the back, solar plexus. Feel your belly, navel center, pelvis, hips. Feel your right hip, thigh, knee, lower leg, calf, ankle, foot, toes, sole of the foot, whole foot. Feel again the pelvis, left hip, thigh, knee, lower leg, ankle, foot, toes, sole, whole foot. Notice both feet. Feel your root, between your sitting bones, navel center, solar plexus, heart center, throat center, mouth, third eye between the brows, crown.

Feel now the back body resting on the earth. Bring awareness of your whole back body as sensation alive with vibration. Feel now the front body. Filled with radiant vibration. Pour your awareness like liquid into the right side of your body, feel the right side. Pour your awareness like flowing sensors into the left side. Feel your left side. Feel midline. Feel your body as a whole. Complete entity. Feel sensation throughout your entire body.

Let the body feel strong laying on the floor but lengthen

Focus on the breath and each time you exhale let go of the tension from the body, heart & soul

Place right hand up to forehead – press the index finger above 1 eye and the thumb above the other – take a couple of deep breaths and as you exhale press into the forehead a little firmer, releasing tension from the mind

Move hand to side of nostrils, pushing into face not nose, again press firmer as you exhale releasing tension from the breath

Move hand to heart, releasing tension from the body , Swap hands over

Gently come up to seated and standing

Repeat roll downs and take three breaths once standing bringing hands down to prayer pose.





### **Example format for your 45min Fitness Pilates Mindful class-**

- Start seated focusing on breath, implementing diaphragmatic breath & Boxed breathing
- Fitness Pilates exercises to help release tension – choose around 6 moves and focus on slow and controlled moves
- Participants lay down (use pillows and blankets if you wish) Take class through relaxation
- Read class a positive mantra / statement (we use pinterest for ours)
- Re-wake class slowly repeating some of the Fitness Pilates moves
- Bring class slowly up to standing and coming back to focusing on breath