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Subject: Pilates Sessions

My Pilates session starts with a gentle warm up using long wide stretchy bands held between the hands in order to control the movements. From my arms held high with band stretched I lift over my head toward the base of my spine and back for a period of minutes. From the same start position I bend from one side to the other for further minutes and so on with similar exercises until I am loosened up.

Once warmed & loosened I sit on the mat to commence the Pilates exercises, a few of which I will try to describe below. However, the method works by using the core muscles of the stomach rather than the superficial muscles and importantly through controlled breathing working the body gently but firmly through the full range of a particular movement. Some of the exercises also use small pieces of equipment such as balls and rings to concentrate the use of specific muscles.

Lying on one side with one hand supporting my head and with legs slightly in front of my hips I lift the upper leg to hip height and kick forward and back with pointed toe keeping my upper body stable. We repeat approximately 20 times and then at hip height rotate in small circles pointed foot 20 times in both directions, repeating same with other leg lying on other side.

What I call the Pilates plank is to lie face down place hands underneath shoulders. You then engage your core muscles- the basis of all Pilates exercises- and lift head slightly raising your chest extending arms forward as you lift legs a little off the mat.

My tough one usually comes towards the end and its called hundreds. Lying face up with arms at sides you curl your head and shoulder up and lift your straight legs to a reasonably sustainable level. You then begin to pump your arms up and down breathing in for 5 counts and exhaling for 5 until you reach 100.

At the end of the session we do some stretches to compliment the main sector, as you would after any type of exercise. This is followed by a short period of stillness and complete relaxation. At the end of the session I feel flexible with my muscles toned and above all a feeling of calm and well-being.