

photos courtesy Gyrotonic.com



Workouts Use Natural Body Patterns

by Aimee Hughes

Imagine an exercise system that strengthens the body enough to be used in training world-class athletes, stretches more safely than any form of yoga and expands the core training concepts of Pilates into natural full-body movements like those used in everyday reaching and walking, along

with jumping and swimming. This is the Gyrotonic system," says Angela Crowley, a Gyrotonic master teacher, trainer and exercise spa owner in Coral Gables, Florida.

A former gymnast and dancer, Crowley took to the Gyrotonic approach after being severely injured

in an automobile accident. "Traditional physical therapy only addressed certain aspects without bringing me back to normal," she says. "Running and yoga felt intolerable. Gyrotonic exercises became a perfect bridge. I was able to rehabilitate safely while challenging myself to return to normal expectations and now, beyond." The system of fluid movements leverages specially designed equipment that can be customized for every individual.

"The Gyrotonic system combines elements from many different modalities into three-dimensional, circular movements. A primary focus is on all the different motions of the spine and how to create rhythmic, flowing movement within the entire body," says Stefani Schrimpf, Gyrotonic instructor and studio owner of Physiques, in Overland Park, Kansas. "The exercises strengthen, lengthen and stretch muscles, while stimulating connective tissues around the joints. They also improve balance, flexibility and coordination. This system allows you to push beyond specific limitations and to isolate and fine tune movement skills," says Schrimpf.

While a Gyrotonic workout has similarities to yoga and Pilates, it is also unique. According to Melissa Jutras, a Pilates instructor, weightlifting coach, personal trainer and gym/studio owner of Big Blue Strength, in Lexington, Kentucky, "Hatha yoga is a series of static postures, whereas Pilates and Gyrotonic movements focus on flow, using equipment to



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enhance core strength, stability, control, coordination and flexibility. The difference is that Gyrotonic exercises work on three dimensions with every circular movement, like the body naturally moves. It uses weights and a pulley system, whereas Pilates is more linear and uses spring tension."

Jutras believes the Gyrotonic system, Pilates and yoga all complement weightlifting and strength training, affording a mind-body balance. "The body then experiences low- and high-threshold exercise, low-intensity and high-intensity, weight-bearing and non-weight-bearing activity," she says.

Crowley sees the Gyrotonic approach complementing virtually any activity. "The exercises help practitioners learn how to move more efficiently, easily, powerfully, gracefully and successfully in every facet of life."

The method is also offered without equipment in the form of Gyrokinesis, a flowing class done on a chair, mat and standing. This affordable option can be practiced independently at home.

"My youngest client is 7, my oldest is 94," relates Crowley. "We have clients that have become bored by repetitive exercise and enjoy the limitless variations of movements that keep both their minds and muscles alert. We have chronic pain clients that have

exhausted other medical options and are improving their ability to function more optimally and enjoying their lives again."

Both Schrimpf and her husband, Juan Trujillo, teach the Gyrotonic method. "Our greatest reward is the feedback we get. Once people try it, they're hooked," she says. "It transforms how people think about movement and brings a sense of joy and accomplishment. They feel their joints becoming more supple and balanced, and find their bodies responding well

to the natural movement patterns."

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