

# Pilates: A Personal Perspective

By Jill Wheeler

As I head home from my debut as a marathon runner in New York City, I reflect upon the efforts that brought me to this point. Miles upon miles of pre-dawn training runs, massages, injury prevention exercises, and injury rehabilitation.

A friend and training partner gave me a magnet for my car prior to my race that says "Running is Cheaper than Therapy". I am a mental health therapist, so there is an inside joke that goes along with that. A bigger joke, as my husband retorted, "running is really expensive when you're injured and paying to rehab your injuries!" Yes, I guess it all balanced out in the checkbook, in the end. As I ran for freedom of thought and elation of spirit, it was perhaps at the risk of various physical ailments. More than halfway through my four-month training, I realized had I stuck with my weekly Pilates sessions, I would be in much better shape and able to recover from the strains of training and running a marathon.

We all have to make choices as to how we spend our money. For so long I looked at wellness practices such as massage, Pilates and yoga as luxuries, extras that I could not afford or justify. Unfortunately, with my passion for sports and active endeavors, I have ultimately ended up at sports rehabilitation centers, chiropractors' offices and podiatrists' offices more times than I care to add up over the past 15 years.

How does this all relate to Pilates? Well, at a time four years ago, I reached the point when I was chronically cranky from headaches and neck pain and I'd had enough. I had spent close to a decade rock climbing, surfing, and mountaineering and had suffered various falls and accidents, as well as a fender bender or two and shin splints from the occasional jog. I was in pain and was taking it out on those around me. While I had tried yoga off and on for years, Rolfing (Structural Integration) and acupuncture, it was only when a friend suggested private Pilates sessions that I began to relate to my body in a way that made a lasting impression.

A friend had actually told me she "grew" an inch taller after practicing Pilates for less than a year. What she was referring to was the continued focus on her structural and postural alignment

