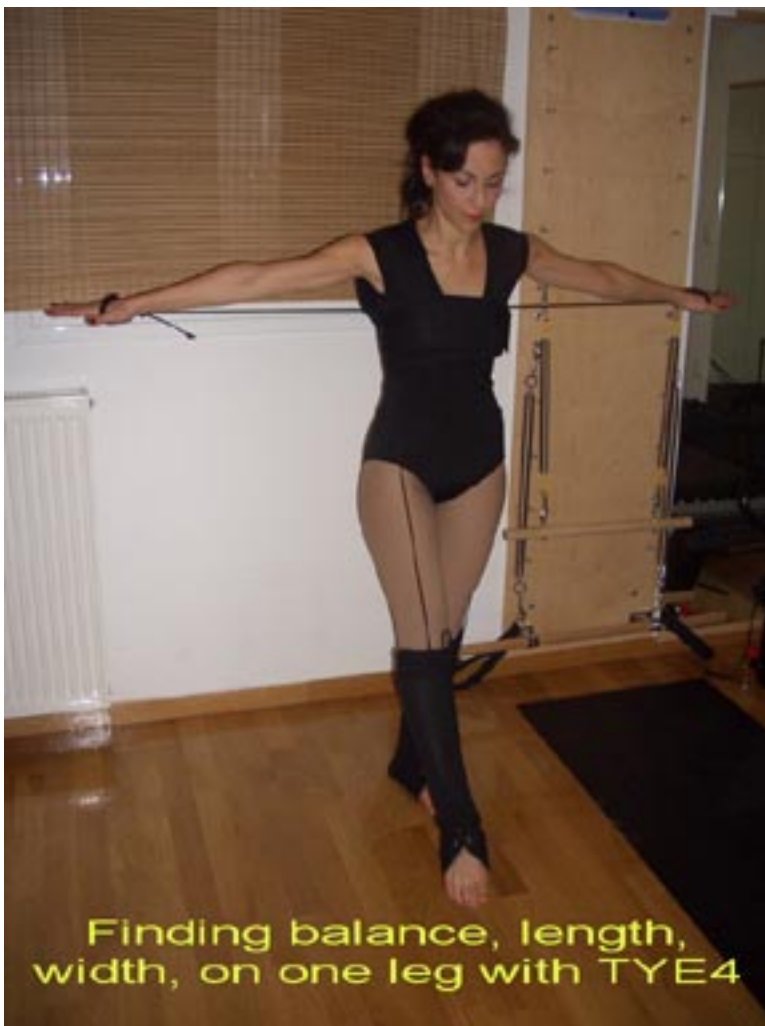


My Pilates Story

By Vicki Koutalianos

The name Koutalianos is famous in Greece: my great, great grandfather, Panagis Koutalianos, was a man of Herculean strength and power. He was famous for pulling an anchor out of a boat single handedly when 10 sailors struggled at the task. Legend has it that he stopped a train with his bare hands!! These stories were my first impressions of the *potential power of the physical body*.

Given my famous ancestor, it seems natural that I would have been attracted to exercise, but, in fact, I studied Art which led to an ad agency job. Then, a sudden job layoff, and I decided to become a flight attendant going back-and-forth between Toronto and Athens. On arrival in Greece, customs officers would chuckle seeing my passport and usually start singing the song 'Koutalianos'.

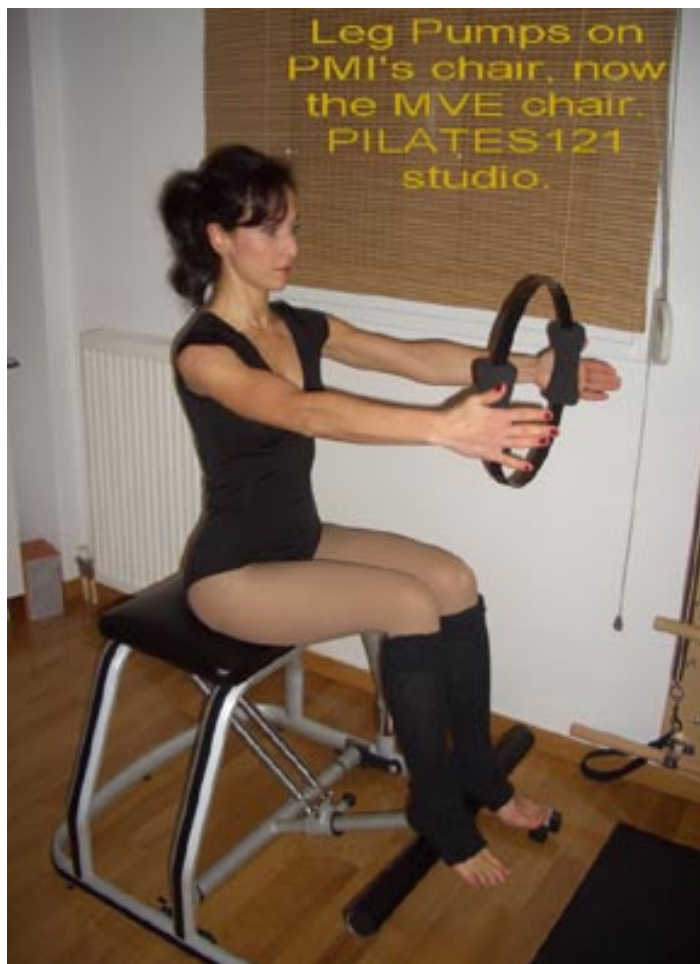


While I enjoyed the perks of transatlantic travel, the *physical demands* of my job, jet lag, and the lack of quality physical activity took a toll on my body and my wellbeing. Complaining of aches and pains, being overtired, and a lack of energy, I saw a doctor in Greece who, of course, recommended *exercise*! It was then (2000) that I heard about Pilates. I thought that this seemed like exercise that I could do anywhere; it looked different and interesting, so I tried it, and I became *hooked*. Then people at work noticed that I walked *tall*, with *ease*, and that I was more *toned*. On the inside I felt a sense of *calm* and an increase in *energy* which translated to the workplace. Upon arrival at my hotel room after a 15 hour day, I still looked fresh. All that great breathing was oxygenating my skin and hair, ridding me of impurities.

Within a year of learning, practicing, and studying every book and video about Pilates, I decided to get certified through the PhysicalMind Institute. The Fundamentals and Standing Pilates were the *missing links*

that bridged the gaps in the classical matwork. Understanding of the Fundamentals is the *foundation for body awareness*, proper form and *function*.

Wherever I traveled, Pilates was fuel for me to live a *functional and vital life* and help others. Often a crew member would say, ‘Hey are you that flight attendant who does Pilates?’ We would get to talking about The Method and soon after I would be giving lessons to flight crew on layovers. This then led to house calls!



Finally, I became certified to teach on the apparatus and I set up a studio in my home in Greece. I tend to clients on a one-to-one basis, hence the name, Pilates121. Clients get first class service, for reasonable prices. Even though Pilates in Greece had been viewed as very trendy and expensive, my clients do it because they like how they feel—proof that *Pilates is more than just exercise*.

Language was a challenge when I started teaching in Greece because I had learned all the anatomical vocabulary and Pilates cues in English. Needing to convey movement through words, I had to figure out how to communicate phrases like ‘free the joints’ and ‘float the arms’ as opposed to simple commands such as pull, push, up/down.

The PhysicalMind Institute taught me about learning, growing, evolving, and thinking. I am constantly exploring, *fine tuning* my cues and pace, and taking workshops. My recent studies have included the Franklin Method and Rolfing. I network with other Pilates instructors and medical professionals to exchange and share ideas. I have been featured in *Prevention Magazine Greece*, and I also write monthly articles for *Vista*, a Greek alternative health magazine.

My family tree includes a legendary man of strength. I am grateful for having had the strength and taking the risk in learning and following the Pilates Method (*my third career*) to a happier and healthier life. **Thank you, J. H. Pilates, thank you, PhysicalMind.**