

FREEDOM THROUGH PILATES

Kaye Richardson

Memorial Day 1998 was the day that my AHA MOMENT occurred. I can still see the sheets on the clothes line wafting in the unusually warm May breeze. I smelled the fresh cut grass, admired the vegetable garden that was just planted, enjoyed the quiet of both my daughters being with friends for the day and at age 41, I was miserable. Why? I sat quietly in my lounge chair, soaking up the sun, my mind drifting back in time.

I grew up the third child out of four, all girls! I can still hear my parents words, “little girls are to be seen and not heard.” I remember not understanding much of what happened during my childhood. We were always fine. We were always obedient. We were always the perfect family. Were we? I discovered the cookie jar that my mother always kept full. Chocolate Chip cookies with the occasional Ginger Lace cookies were piled to the lid every time I would look for comfort. There were no hugs in my house, no “I love you’s”, and no bedtime stories. There was comfort in the cookie jar. Cookies can talk, they can hug, they can make life okay, and they can make life miserable in the end. By age 18 I was 231 lbs. miserable.

My “freedom” came in September 1975 at age 19 when I went away to college. I met my future husband at school, married him the day after I graduated, May 20, 1979, and he took me away to a life I never questioned until he was killed in June 1984. He left behind two babies and me to care for them. I was fairly sure I wasn’t fine but couldn’t articulate how I felt as I only knew “fine”. I had lost about 40 lbs during my five-year marriage. The cookie jar loomed and the weight found its way back.



Kaye teaching at Forever Fit Pilates Studio, 2009

I began working for the Maine Department of Human Services in March 1985. The longer I was there, the more I learned about family dynamics. My choices started looking different and the way I approached life started changing. I was questioning everything, including the comfort found in the cookie jar. Through several years of counseling, I learned that I wasn’t fine all the time. I could be happy, sad, scared (I was that a lot!), frustrated, angry, and even lonely. As I started acknowledging these emotions, matching them to a situation and learning how to work through them, the pounds, again, started to slip away. I didn’t need to hide in the cookie jar and it was becoming increasingly difficult to perform the duties of my very stressful job. I needed to find a balance and it was clear that it was no longer the cookie jar. I distanced myself from my parents and my siblings. The pounds diminished. I was down to 193 at age 41. My co-workers were commenting on how good I was looking! I was still miserable. I didn’t get it!!

The sun was hot on this particular Memorial Day. The tears were running down my cheeks, while the robins sang. I did everything I was suppose to do in my life. I did everything that I believed was expected of me. I had a good job with benefits, a house with a huge lawn to mow, two children, and by my father's definition, I had achieved success. It didn't feel that way. I needed another word but didn't have one to describe how I was feeling when the light dawned. I had lived my life to everyone else's expectations and not my own! I get it! I get it! It didn't matter what I did as long as I did what I wanted instead of what others wanted me to do. I was so excited...so scared...so relieved!! But...what do I do now? Who can tell me what to do now? I started thinking of all the things I used to dream about as a little girl. I could do whatever made my heart sing! AHA!!

I started in the fitness industry in 1999. I weighed 190 lbs. give or take a few. I worked out hard, I learned about nutrition, portion control, balancing nutrients and continued to work out. I even threw out my cookie jar!! The weight slowly came off, I felt stronger, healthier, more in control, more energetic, and more willing to risk.



Kaye in her "previous" body, 1999

After 5 years of teaching group aerobics and spin classes, I was introduced to Pilates in 2004. At 46, the aches and pains of teaching 3-5 aerobics classes a day was beyond description. My weight had evened out at 163 lbs. In 2005, I completed my Master's Degree, my full Pilates training was completed in 2006, and I opened a Pilates/Personal Training Studio July 20, 2006 while whittling away at my waistline. I was at 130 lbs!! I just turned 52 years old in October and at 5'8" tall I am maintaining my current weight of 128 lbs. (See photo of Kaye teaching)

I am asked all the time how I did it and what do I eat. People somehow think that if they eat as I do, they will lose the weight too. Maybe... Maybe not. I did the food logs, I did the weighing of the food, I did the funky diets, and in the end, I dealt with my feelings, resolved how I wanted to live my life, and as long as I am true to myself. The cookies have quieted and I am enjoying life on my terms.