



Nora St. John

Nora is the Program Director for Balanced Body University and Pilates on Tour. She is also the co-owner of Turning Point Studios in Walnut Creek, CA.

Nora began her training in Pilates with 10 years at St. Francis Memorial Hospital's Dance medicine division, where she worked primarily with clients with sports related orthopedic injuries. She has continued her training with Pilates master teachers Eve Gentry, Michele Larsson, Carola Trier, Alan Herdman and Romana Kryzhanowska. Before teaching Pilates, Nora was a professional modern dancer for 10 years. Nora co-founded Body Mind Spirit, the largest educational conference for Pilates, Gyrotonic and Nia instructors in the country.

Programming Tips Pilates and the EXO™ Chair

by *Nora St. John*

Designed as a complete workout system for a small space, the traditional Pilates Chair consists of a seat and a foot bar where springs are attached. Your clients or members can sit, lie or stand on the chair or the floor and push the foot bar with their hands or feet. Traditional Chairs offer a multitude of different exercise categories with an emphasis on core strength, leg strength, shoulder girdle strength and stability and functional movements such as standing, climbing, pushing and lifting.

Because of its size – you can easily fit 8-10 Chairs in a 20 x 20 space – the traditional Chair has become a boon for clubs and studios who want to offer group Pilates programming but may not have room for several Reformers.

Despite its versatility, the traditional Pilates Chair has a few limitations. While it is good for pushing with the arms and legs there isn't much pulling that you can do. In addition, it only offers a few abdominal exercises, hip mobility exercises, and chest presses. The traditional Chair is great for strength training, but for a complete Pilates workout you would usually supplement it with exercises on the Mat and other pieces of Pilates equipment.

A complete Pilates workout on a Chair

Now Balanced Body has redesigned its traditional Wunda Chair to create something that's never been seen in the industry before. The new EXO™ Chair becomes the first Pilates Chair capable of providing a full-body Pilates workout. At Balanced Body, we feel that this is a major development in the Pilates world, as it gives fitness centers and studios even more Pilates-based group exercise programming options.

I was part of the EXO Chair development team and can personally say that the EXO Chair was developed in order to give a more full-bodied Pilates style workout in a very small footprint. How? Unlike the traditional Pilates Chair, the EXO Chair contains attachments for resistance tubing, letting users create a workout that touches every muscle group from every angle. With the resistance tubing you can now do most of the exercises on the EXO that you could do on a Reformer. For example, you can now do exercises like roll-ups, roll-downs, feet in straps, and box abdominal exercises. Those were four key components that were missing from traditional Chair work.



Additionally, the EXO Chair is stackable and portable, with a 40% smaller footprint than competitive products when storing six chairs. So it's perfect for fitness centers or studios that may want to offer group Pilates classes but have limited space.



Great for group programming

How has the EXO Chair greatly increased group exercise programming options?

First off, you can offer strength workouts, which can help improve athletic performance and strength. This gives you the opportunity to create specific sports-related classes for the athletes at your facility – like Chair classes for skiers or runners. These have become popular in fitness centers and studios all over the country, as it allows you to get members with similar interests together.

From that platform you can then add in the resistance tubes and create an entirely different Pilates choreography for people of any ability. As an example, you can start with double leg pumps or footwork, then add arm work as they progress. Now you've morphed your strength-based workout into a Pilates-based cardio/aerobic workout. The possibilities are limitless.

Packages to help you get started quickly...

Balanced Body now offers combined EXO Chair training and equipment packages designed to let clubs and studios get your chair programming started quickly and affordably.

The education program provides a complete introduction to Pilates and is designed so that anybody can take it. You don't have to have Pilates experience to become an instructor on the EXO chair. It is a fun starting point into equipment-based Pilates programs. And instructors can complete their training in just 12 hours and begin teaching classes right after that,

Packages start under \$4,300 and include training for 6 instructors and 3 EXO Chairs. To find out more, call Balanced Body at 1-800-PILATES (800-745-2837 or 916-388-2837), or visit www.pilates.com.