

*finding
your fitness*

fix



THE START OF A NEW YEAR ALWAYS BRINGS many new goals and resolutions, many of which revolve around finding and sticking to a new workout and diet plan in hopes of melting away the unwanted weight accumulated during the holiday season. For many people, becoming a gym rat is not appealing and finding motivation to be consistent with cardio and weight-lifting can quickly dwindle. A great way for people to stay physically active while enjoying doing so can be by finding their niche in the fitness world. What better way to search for your desired exercise regimen than by taking some fitness classes? Two very popular and empowering classes that serve a variety of people are yoga and Pilates.

Yoga, an ancient meditative practice derived from India, is a holistic practice that focuses on the connection between the mind and body. The main elements of yoga involve a variety of postures (poses), breathing techniques, stretching, and relaxation/meditation. The purposes of yoga are often misconstrued because people tend to think that yoga is solely about flexibility and meditation. However, yoga can improve overall health and well-being, in addition to enhancing spirituality.

There are many different types of yoga which focus on similar postures, but each type has a specific emphasis that caters to all kinds of people. Hatha yoga is a great type of yoga for beginners because it serves as a good introductory class with gentle and slow movements. People who want to focus on breathing techniques should try Vinyasa yoga, while those who are looking for a fast-paced and energizing class may want to look into Ashtanga yoga or power yoga. A current craze great for those who enjoy profuse sweating is Bikram yoga, also known as "hot yoga," which is practiced in a room with the temperature soaring to 105 degrees.

Pilates, a form of body sculpting that focuses on empowering the core center of one's body through strength and conditioning, is often associated with

yoga. But it is a very different workout altogether. The goal of Pilates is to sculpt and tone the muscles, while teaching the muscles how to work together to achieve greater efficiency of overall movement. Pilates is a great way to build lean muscle, as opposed to bulking up.

Two different ways of practicing Pilates are on a mat or with equipment on a machine. Pilates on a mat mainly works the core, but the equipment for Pilates allows for a full body workout that accommodates the limbs as well as the core. The equipment consists of a spring resistance which increases along a continuum, allowing muscles to elongate while remaining lean and supple. A great advantage of practicing Pilates is that multiple muscle groups are worked simultaneously; weight lifting often works isolated muscle groups.

Laura's Ultimate Pilates, located in Parkland, is an equipment-outfitted Pilates studio. Owner Laura Simoncini is a firm believer that Pilates with equipment is more fulfilling than Pilates on a mat, in addition to being an ideal workout for both beginners and advanced participants. The springs on the equipment are great for aiding newcomers who have weak cores. As the abdominal muscles strengthen, less assistance from the springs is needed, making the workout more intense. Laura's Ultimate Pilates offers several different classes that impart unique techniques, all while keeping the main focal point on the core. Cardio Reformer, great for zapping calories, is an invigorating class that is a combination of cardio and body sculpting. It has been proven that just one hour of a Pilates class is more proficient in achieving long, lean muscles than a four-hour gym workout. "Pilates works the body from the inside out," says Simoncini. —*Whitney Goldbach*