

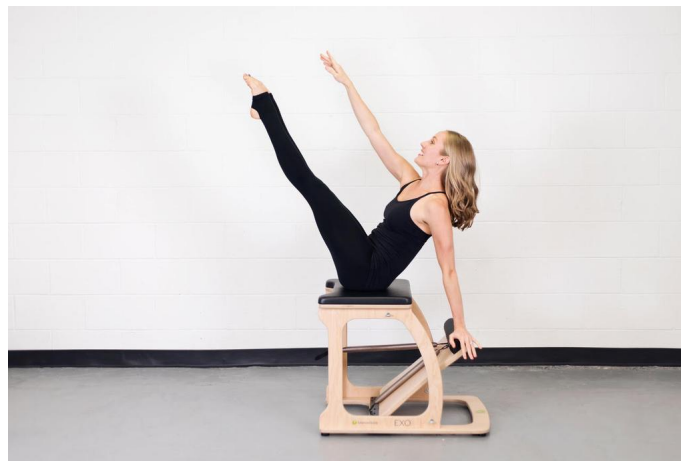
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HOME / STICKY BE SOCKS BLOG / ERIN MYERS'S SPIRAL SPINE STUDIO: PILATE, SCOLIOSIS AND SUCCESS

ERIN MYERS'S SPIRAL SPINE STUDIO: PILATE, SCOLIOSIS AND SUCCESS



MAY 09, 2018



When Minnesota native Erin Myers moved to New York for college, she was also hoping to fulfill her dancing dreams. Meanwhile, though she had

been diagnosed with scoliosis at 14, the whole medical world had mostly ignored the problem, leaving it unchecked—and out of mind.

In her senior year, Myers's dreams came true when she nabbed a spot with the Rockettes. But the day before the opening show of her first season (she toured with them for two seasons), Myers was wrought with horrible knee pain. An orthopedist gave her knee braces and Lidocaine patches for tibial torsion and overall imbalanced strength. While she got through the season, the pain was horrific, and her director demanded she get help to fix the issue before returning the next year.

So, in her quest to heal, Myers went to the Kane School of Core Integration for Pilates. Soon, she was off the knee meds and the braces were gone, encouraging her to get her Pilates certification. While at the Kane School, she also started working with clients with scoli, and witnessed the immense change Pilates could have on spine issues. She saw changes in her own body, too.

Turns out, that was just the start of her journey combining Pilates and scoliosis knowledge. Read on to hear about her special studio, Spiral Spine, her approach to teaching and working with clients with scoliois, other injuries and beyond.



SBS: When did you first open a Pilates studio?

Erin Myers: In 2005, when I was 22, my then fiancé (now husband) and I decided to move to Nashville. We wanted a family, and I wanted a business. When we got there, I opened my first Pilates studio.

Nashville is the biggest small town in America, and my studio was the first modern contemporary Pilates place there, meaning it was outside the realm of strictly classical Pilates.

SBS: How did the specialization in scoliosis come about?

EM: At my first studio, I had clients with scoliosis, as well as parents with kids with scoli...all because I had danced with the Rockettes and had scoli. They assumed I'd automatically know how to help. While I didn't have specific scoli training, I did have Pilates knowledge, so I knew how to stack a body. That decreased the curves clients had, and the ball started rolling.

I didn't intend to specialize, but people started streaming to me to help them with their backs. The scoli world is dark, and there wasn't a good thing locally...or really great resources internationally.

SBS: What came next?

EM: Four years after I opened my first studio, I sold it and had a home studio while I had my two little boys 21 months apart. I wrote my first book, which is a guide for people who get diagnosed with scoli. That year, if you typed in scoliosis in amazon, my book was the first thing that popped up! Then, people from all over the world called. I still felt inadequate, but people were desperate for help. So, I started creating more products for people internationally to gain control. A second edition of the book came out, and I created an at-home workout video, which is mat Pilates but for people that have scoli. It offers ideas like placing pads in certain areas.

At the time, one of my early clients mom's worked at Vanderbilt. She knew I wanted more medical research, so she had her assistant zip drive me everything that had ever been written on medical research, movement and scoli. I went to workshops, but I wasn't happy with what was taught. I could see that the person presenting wasn't doing so in a way for people

to understand. So all that together created my decision to dive deeper into the real path of scoli education.

Eventually I made my first video, Untwisting Scoli (as one of my first clients I had stabilized her curves), and a year and a half ago, my husband convinced me to open another studio. That's Spiral Spine.



SBS: What does Spiral Spine offer?

EM: The studio is a training center for Balance Body, but we only have one mat class on the books for teacher trainers and those pure Pilates people who want that.

The main classes are group equipment classes; each station has a reformer, chair and arc. They're like little semi-privates. That way, you don't need to spend all this money on privates...and also, I don't have enough time for all privates!

We have clients with full fusion or osteoporosis (and everywhere in between), but with all the different equipment, I can divide and conquer. I might be teaching a few different lessons at once, but everyone is happy and served.

I work with clients that have scoli, but it's even bigger than that, and we help people with really tough injuries or issues. We have clients with Parkinson's and cancer, for example.

Currently, I'm also working on book, and Fusionpilates.edu came and videotaped videos about working with scoli.

SBS: What does Pilates offer to people with scoliosis or other injuries?

EM: With scoli, the body doesn't know where it's supposed to live in space. Pilates puts it in straight lines. It stabilizes the entire body through specific work of the musculature and equipment. I can put straight lines in scoli clients on equipment and stabilize them there, and no other modality can do that in quite the same way.

SBS: What's your personal style of teaching?

EM: I have an obsession with finding the root cause of dysfunction. I always want to find why a body is acting a certain way...and work to fix it. I have that super academic part of my brain.

Also, throughout last 12 years of teaching, I've seen how people can physically crumble from words that are spoken. So, there's a dichotomy of me attempting to find dysfunction and the communication that's really lighthearted and silly. I cannot tell you the amount of tears that have been shed when people say what doctors or other instructors have told them. In order for me to help heal their physical body, I also must help heal their emotional and spiritual bodies as well. People laugh with me. Most of my clients carry such heavy weight that I don't want them to have that with them when they're doing Pilates with me. I want it to be a safe place where they can talk to me and feel three-dimensionally.



SBS: What are your favorite spine-aligning exercises?

EM: Interestingly, the medical partially defines scoliosis as this: spinal rigidity in the stressed spinal curve, or when the spine starts to go sideways ten degrees or more. Wherever it curves, it's very rigid. So before I can put straight lines into the body or strengthen those lines, I have to mobilize the curves first.

So, my first and favorite thing I do for my own body and my scoli clients is traction, like the spread eagle, where you hold on to the tower or Cadillac and hang down. For those who have scoli, gravity is not our favorite friend: If you have scoli, you can lose two to three inches in a day because of it.

Oddly, I also really like rolling like a ball because it increases proprioception.

If a person in space doesn't actively think about untwisting and straightening, they will end up doing it in a circle on the floor and facing back. I don't have to correct them, they correct themselves, and they can learn to own their scoli.

I also love lunging on the reformer. A lot of people think scoli affects just the torso, but that's not so: It can affect the back of the pelvis, bottom of the spine, hip flexors and glutes. So after we untwist a client, doing lunges is so exciting for them.

SBS: What should someone look for in an instructor, especially someone with an injury or scoliosis?

EM: First, find the person with the most amount of training in your town. Even if they don't specialize, if they've been around the block, they've probably been to a workshop where this has been talked about. When that's true, they should know how to handle it or can figure it out.

Also, 'humble' is the word that comes to me

They are a continual student of the human body

No matter how long someone has been teaching, the more they are willing to acknowledge they don't have all the answers, the more answers they probably have. Versus someone who says this is how it has to be done, and I have all the answers: don't go to them. Their heart probably is not in the right place

The more intense clients I have and the more clients I have, the more I think 51 percent is psych work and 49 is how good a pilates instructor I am

Erin's Nashville Faves:

Healthy Restaurant: Burger Up

Splurge Restaurant: Rolf and Daughters

Yoga studio: Abundant Yoga

Nightlife spot: Reading a book to my kids in bed

Fun Activity: Predators hockey game

Calming activity: Radner Lake

Music venue: The Rhiman

Online resources: fusionpilates.edu

Books: *The Home Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine* by Stephen Buhner, *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown and *Talking with Your Kids About God* by Natasha Crain

Erin's Sticky Be Mantra: Be strong. A lot of times people with scoli (myself included) or any huge body issue become entrapped in fear. They are

fearful of many things, from death to surgery, and we hole up. So being strong is something we so desperately and emotionally need. Clients weep when they finally feel they are strong. They end up explaining they never had a safe place to get strong before.

Erin's Best, Zaniest Part:

I love pushing my body, trying new things and seeing what my physical body can do. A few years ago I loved doing Ninja Warrior stuff (until I tore my lateral meniscus coming down from the spider). I was recently in Minnesota and went sledding, ice skating (which I hadn't done for 15 years) and curling. Next time I'm in the ocean, I want to go paddle boarding.

◀ **PREVIOUS**

1 COMMENT

MAY 17, 2018 • POSTED BY **BETSY KNIGHT**

Happily living in a very small town in Louisiana, however, no access to exercise program for scoliosis. No accredited yoga or Pilates available. Became aware of Spinal Spine and Erin Meyer through my granddaughter, Liza Sweeting, and the improvement that can be made with proper exercise. I would be there if I could!

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