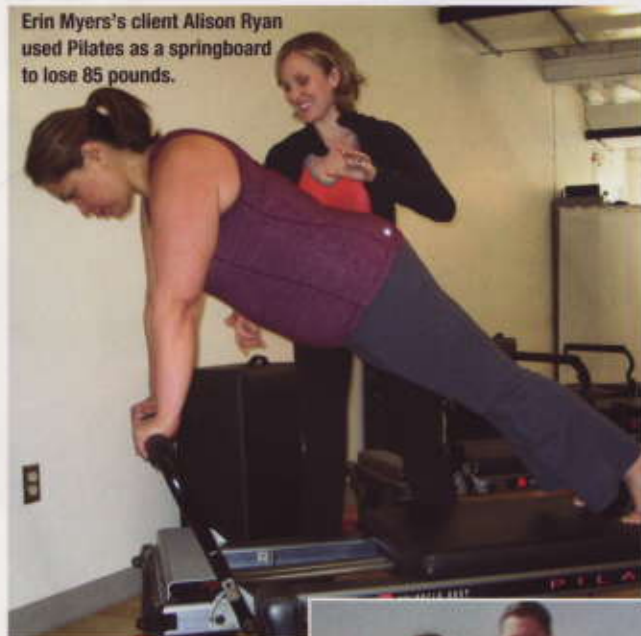


## 85 Pounds Lighter After Pilates

Erin Myers is a Balanced Body® Pilates instructor and teacher trainer in Nashville, Tennessee, who works with a number of obese and morbidly obese clients. "It's always a joy to work with clients who struggle with their weight, because I know they are taking such a huge step in their lives," Myers says. "[They're] hands down the most rewarding kind of clients I work with.



Erin Myers's client Alison Ryan used Pilates as a springboard to lose 85 pounds.

Whether people are injured or obese, Pilates is a safe place for them to start, and it catapults them into the rest of the exercise world."

Myers began working with Alison Ryan 5 years ago. "I was amazed she got through the front door of the studio. She had so much self-doubt. We needed to boost her confidence in her own strength, which in turn built her self-esteem. Ultimately, she has been a gem to work with. She's come so far, but I don't think she would have stuck to it without Pilates, because she would have gotten hurt or discouraged."

"When your doctor tells you that you're morbidly obese and you're faced with, 'What do I do?' it can be overwhelming," says Ryan. "I was 320 pounds. The weight was a sure sign of things to come—such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease."

Ryan did Pilates training three times a week and also started walking with her dogs and eating a healthier diet. Today she has lost 85 pounds. "I'm still losing. I want to lose a total of at least 140 pounds, and I believe I will. Pilates has changed my body in a way that I'm so pleased with. It was hard for me to connect with my body before, but now I can do all sorts of sports and activi-

ties. Pilates clears my mind and has helped me let go of a lot of stress. Even though I've lost a lot of weight, I don't have a lot of sagging skin—I think Pilates helped with that, too."

Ryan says the nonjudgmental environment of the Pilates studio was a big plus. "When you're heavy, you know when people are judging you. It happens everywhere you go. But I didn't find that here. At first, I felt like the elephant in the room, but Erin encouraged me to just pay attention to myself. She said half the battle is just showing up, and once she gave me that pep talk, I felt comfortable. It took me awhile to get serious about losing weight, but that's real life. This is not *The Biggest Loser*. It takes time to find the tools that work for you. Pilates was it for me."

Ryan is so enthusiastic about the pivotal role Pilates has played in her weight loss that she has created a blog to share her story, "My First Love: Exercise That Changed My Life" ([www.sparkpeople.com/mypage\\_public\\_journal\\_individual.asp?blog\\_id=4071933](http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=4071933)).

"Now I celebrate not just my weight loss but my mental transformation: confidence, self-worth, vigor, passion, a thirst for life!" she says. "It really is transformational; it's not like I'm drinking the Kool-Aid. Pilates overfloweth with positive benefits! I think if more people tried it, this would be at the top of their to-do lists."



Alison Ryan when she started Pilates.



For U.S. National Pairs Silver Medalists Amanda Evora and Mark Ladwig, clients of Connie Borho, Pilates was part of their Olympic training.

## An Olympic Transformation

Connie Borho, a Peak Pilates® level III teacher trainer, has been working with U.S. Olympic pair skaters Amanda Evora and Mark Ladwig for over 3 years. "They credit placing 10th overall in the [Vancouver Winter] Olympics in large part to their Pilates practice, which helped them work toward more symmetry, core control and extension," says Borho. She is the owner of Balance Pilates & Yoga Centers in Bradenton, Florida. >>