

Go with the flow: Gyrotonic® and its tower of strength

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Now that Pilates and yoga have become mainstream and you thought they were all you needed to develop your core strength and flexibility, along comes something to show you there's more to learn.

Gyrotonic® training is the next step; a fusion of yoga, dance, Tai Chi and swimming that works to integrate movement patterns while increasing coordination, flexibility and strength. Gyrotonic helps golfers improve their swing, the injured to rehabilitate, and anyone who wants to reshape and reinvigorate their body.

Gyrotonic can be great a tool for improving fitness while allowing overused and stressed muscles a chance to rest. It's a balanced blend of strength and flexibility training that improves posture, reduces stress and creates lean muscles without bulking up. The focus is on quality of movement rather than quantity, which makes participants feel invigorated rather than exhausted after a session. Gyrotonic takes a balanced approach so that no muscle group is overworked and the body works as an efficient, holistic system in sport and daily activity.

Like Pilates, Gyrotonic emphasizes breath as a source of energy to initiate your movements. Although Pilates and Gyrotonic develop abdominal and pelvic floor muscles, Gyrotonic movements are three dimensional, spherical and fluid, whereas Pilates movements are typically more linear and finite.

Gyrotonic was developed by Julio Horvath of Romania, who further developed his program and equipment in New York. Today, Julio splits his time between the U.S. and Europe developing equipment and conducting all the certification testing. Gyrotonic, like Pilates, first became popular with dancers, athletes and then physical therapists. It has become so popular in the last three years that the number of studios offering Gyrotonic lessons has tripled worldwide; no small feat.

The tower of strength

The primary piece of equipment of the Gyrotonic Expansion System® is a pulley tower that consists of two pieces: a seven-foot-tall, gracefully-carved wooden tower with two sets of pulleys, and a padded bench with two rotating wheels on one end.

The rotating wheels allow you to perform a series of arch and curls which smoothly guide your spine through flexion and extension while simultaneously opening the chest and shoulders. Weights on the pulleys provide resistance and support the movements of your legs, arms, or hands in the pulley's straps.

Intimidating as it may look, the equipment guides and supports you while allowing smooth, elliptical movements of your muscles to improve strength and stability. At the heart of all the movements is the activation of the deep core muscles.



Hamstring series on the pulley tower

The pulley tower was designed according to how muscles and bones should move. According to Matthew Aversa, managing director of the Gyrotonic International Headquarters: "People lose the supple quality that's required to move in three dimensions. We're designed to move freely. Gyrotonic helps to release the fascia and create muscles that have dexterity. It helps reestablish the body's natural way of moving and corrects the alignment of the spine."

Gyrokinesis™: No equipment necessary

As with Pilates matwork, Gyrotonic has an equipment-free format called Gyrokinesis™. Gyrokinesis, originally called yoga for dancers, was the predecessor of the machines.

Julio Horvath left his professional dance career behind to study yoga extensively. He spent 10 years experimenting with the movement of energy in the body and refined the backbone of this system of movement. Julio's study of yoga is most apparent here, where the breath allows the body to open. A typical 90-minute Gyrokinesis class starts on a stool, progresses to the mat and finishes with specific breath work.

Fitness, rehabilitation and injury prevention

Besides being popular with dancers, athletes, and anyone else that wants to improve their fitness and athletic performance, Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis have a huge following in the medical field. Because of the balanced approach, both disciplines are ideal for muscle, ligament and tendon recovery without sacrificing fitness.

For more information visit the official Web site at www.gyrotonic.com.