



Want more mobility? STEP ON IT!

The Rossiter System can relieve pain and give you increased mobility and greater range of movement, making it a perfect complement to Pilates.

By Rebecca Leone

Earlier this year, I was in the middle of a home renovation project. For days on end, I pulled down dry wall, bagged it and hauled it to the dumpster. I wore thick leather gloves to protect my hands from nails and rebar, but by the end, I felt that I had hooks for hands. I had overused and strained the muscles in my forearms that bend my wrists and fingers to the point that they tingled and pretty much stopped working.

As you can imagine, that caused all kinds of problems. Typing was so painful that my computer work slowed to a glacial pace, causing my productivity to plummet. I also had trouble cutting my own steak!

It was so bad that when I got up in the morning, I had to open my hands using my opposite forearm. But all that tightness and tingling disappeared when I started Rossiter training with Chuck Lubeck. Picture this: I'm on the floor lying on my back with my arm angled out to my side, palm down for a Rossiter stretch called Forearm Down. Chuck steps on

my forearm, instructs me to position my other arm and both legs in a certain way, then he slowly increases the weight on his foot until I tell him to stop. Then he leads me through hand and wrist movements that look easy but feel very, very hard. In about five minutes, I go from Miss Hook 2013 to miraculously being able to bend my wrists and open and close my hands. (And, yes, I could immediately type without any pain or tingling.)

That was more than six months ago and in spite of pulling yet another wall down (the remodeling project continues), I've stayed free and loose and able to grip. Not only have I been through three levels of Rossiter training with Chuck since then, but I have my boyfriend step on my forearm every night to offset the abuse of the day. Using some basic Rossiter stretches, I go into every new day ready, able and eager for the manual labor that lies ahead.

HOW I FOUND ROSSITER

I first learned about Rossiter in 2008, when

I began researching mobility/flexibility modalities that I could introduce into my Pilates practice to help me and my students, many of whom are so restricted in their mobility that they struggle simply trying to get into the position of Stomach Massage, Criss-Cross and even Spine-Stretch Forward. Because of my schedule, it took five long years before I made time to pursue studying with Chuck.

FAST-FORWARD TO 2013

So what was worth waiting five years for?

Rossiter is a stretching program that focuses on restoring the looseness and flexibility to the network of fascia, ligaments and tendons that hold the body together. Healthy connective tissue is naturally loose. Pain, immobility and other problems occur when this tissue gets shorter and thicker, which can be due to injury, overuse, a sedentary lifestyle, age or any combination of these factors.

The Rossiter program requires the active participation of two people, the practitioner, who in the Rossiter nomenclature is called the Coach, and the client, who is called the Person-In-Charge or the PIC.

Generally, there are three steps to a Rossiter stretch. First, as the PIC, I lie on the floor while the Coach (in my case, Chuck) places his foot on the body part that needs to be stretched. Then I do what in Rossiter terminology is called "the lock"; I position my limbs in such a way that they contain and amplify the power of the stretch.

The coolest thing about Rossiter is, it's not at all what it looks like; the person getting stepped on—not the person doing the stepping—is actually in charge.

Then Chuck adds weight into his foothold until I tell him I've got all I want (and in my case, I could take all 170 pounds of him). Finally he instructs me on how to move underneath his anchoring, weighted foothold so that I can stretch against it as much or as intensely—or not—as I want. Don't make assumptions! The coolest thing about Rossiter is, it's not at all what it looks like; the person getting stepped on—not the person doing the stepping—is actually in charge.

There are hundreds of different Rossiter stretches that loosen the connective tissue system and expand the space inside your body and the result of that is an increase in mobility. Instantly. As in right now.

Since I completed Rossiter training with Chuck in April, I have used it with my clients, who have experienced the same mobility gains and relief from pain in their hips, arms, shoulders and legs that I have.

THE ORIGINS OF ROSSITER

Richard Rossiter, the creator of his eponymous System, was living in Little Rock, AR, when he became a Certified Rolfer in 1983. From 1984 to 1990, he worked with a neurosurgeon to help the doctor's patients with their pain. In 1989, Richard became a Certified Advanced Rolfer and began teaching workshops to his clients so they could learn how to work on each other using their hands, knuckles and elbows.

You've heard the old saying that necessity is the mother of invention? Well, for Rossiter that was absolutely the case. He

HONORING JOE, THE ORIGINAL STEPPER, AND ROSSITER TEACHER TRAINING

Want to be like Joe? You can! I've put together a four-hour class called Step Pilates to teach you how to safely and strategically step on Pilates clients while they're performing classical Pilates mat exercises.

Want a streamlined, customized Rossiter training especially for the Pilates industry? You got it! Chuck Lubeck and I are creating a six-hour course featuring specially selected Rossiter stretches that facilitate the type of flexibility that most Pilates clients don't have but need. For more information on the Step Pilates and Rossiter for Pilates schedule, email me at Rebecca@RebeccaLeone.com.

Now, about straight-up Rossiter training: Today, there are many Rossiter Coaches to choose from but Chuck Lubeck is the only Rossiter educator I personally endorse. And here's why: Chuck was a professional Broadway dancer (CATS!) for 20 years, he can perform any Pilates exercise beautifully, he maintains impeccable physical conditioning, he's an orthopedic massage therapist and he teaches at his local massage school. Because of his unique combination of experience and education and his understanding of movement, anatomy and Pilates, he embodies everything Pilates is about. Unique among Rossiter educators, he offers the absolute best possible education in blending Pilates and Rossiter. For more information, check out his website, www.dontfearthefoot.com, or contact him directly at chucklubeck@gmail.com. He is based in Augusta, GA, and is also available for in-your-studio workshops.

If you find your own Rossiter Coach through the Rossiter website (www.therossitersystem.com) or any other way, please heed this warning: Make sure they satisfy your every concern about experience, safety and producing reliable and consistent results.

And no matter who you learn from, please protect yourself from the obvious extreme liability of stepping on people. Have your attorney draw up a waiver that covers this type of stretching and the types of risks that putting your foot and weight on someone might include. Deficiencies in bone matrix/mineral density are often unknown to us and they are not always obvious from the outside of the body!
—R.L.

eventually worked with a couple: The woman was so small in stature and her husband was so large that there was no way she was strong enough to work on her husband with her arms and hands, so Richard taught her to do the same releases with her feet. And with that, Rossiter, as we know it today, was born.

THE ORIGINAL STEPPER

In February 1951, Joseph Pilates posed for a photo for a *Life* magazine article where he was shown standing on the ribs and hips of 21-year-old opera singer Roberta Peters while she was performing the Hundred. In the caption, it said that Joe weighed 174 pounds and Miss Peters weighed 119.

It turns out, from tiny Roberta Peters to strapping Joe Pilates, when somebody steps on you and pins you down, the stretch and strength required to move under the foothold is dramatically intensified.

I bet that's why Joe was doing it and I know that's the reason I love the stretch that can only come from being stepped on.

HOW ROSSITER COMPLEMENTS PILATES

If you're the average Pilates client, you spend an hour or two a week strengthening and stretching your body in the studio. But outside the studio, you spend many more hours performing less varied physical activities or statically holding positions—and those are the real killers. As a result, your body becomes significantly more rigid because of how little you move, how poorly you move or how many times you repeat the same movement. Over the course

of an average week, what you do that makes you less flexible and less mobile is nowhere near offset by an hour or two of balanced work in the Pilates studio and that's why most Pilates clients don't experience appreciable and ongoing increases in mobility simply by performing Pilates.

When I realized the wonderful possibilities of combining Pilates with Chuck's teaching of Rossiter, I began writing about it on Facebook and in my regular marketing emails and, sure enough, some of my readers were quick on the uptake and booked Rossiter workshops with Chuck.

WHAT "EARLY ADOPTERS" SAY

Pilates teacher Caroline Neal Johnston of Augusta, GA, has been doing Rossiter on her clients separately as a stand-alone service and in conjunction with regular Pilates sessions. She has seen increased mobility and greater range of movement within a matter of minutes. "Rossiter is a great complement to Pilates because if we can't have a good movement experience, our whole body health will be affected," she says. "With Rossiter, we can loosen and stretch our fascia and then we are able to have more efficient movement, which leads to better alignment, healthier spines and happier lives. Don't we all want and need that?"

Charlie Toohey, a Pilates teacher in Port St. Lucie, FL, uses Rossiter to eliminate clients' tightness and help with such problems as plantar fasciitis, migraines and low-back, neck and shoulder pain. "They have tried and failed to get relief from chiropractic, physical therapy, massage, etc., and shots and surgeries are options they desperately want to avoid," she says. "Clients can get what they need within minutes and it's financially viable for so many with limited resources."

DO THEM TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY

Pilates and Rossiter blend beautifully both within the same session and as a complement, one separate from the other.

Let's say you're in for a Pilates session and you need a good, deep stretch before you can comfortably get into the round-back position for Stomach Massage. When your Pilates teacher is also a qualified Rossiter Coach, she can get you on the mat right there in the middle of your session and step on your legs and hips while you move around under her foothold; five minutes later, you will own "round" Stomach Massage.

Want more than an integrated experience? Of course, you do! Rossiter is also available as a stand-alone service at studios that offer it. Unlike Pilates, Rossiter sessions can take as little as 20 minutes and cost generally ranges anywhere from \$20 to \$150.

You'll want to wear clothing that you're comfortable getting on the floor and moving around in.

READY TO TRY IT?

Great! But first...here comes the fine print.

No studies have been done to prove that Rossiter works or how Rossiter works, though there is plenty of anecdotal evidence of its safety and efficacy. Richard Rossiter has been stepping on people for 25 years without serious incident. Rossiter has also been introduced into industrial settings where the Coaches and PICs were factory workers with no prior movement experience; after Rossiter



We are able to have more efficient movement, which leads to better alignment, healthier spines and happier lives.

was implemented, workers' comp claims and production time loss plummeted. But if a Rossiter Coach is not well-trained and really, really careful, he or she could do serious damage to joints or organs.

I believe Rossiter is the missing mobility link in Pilates and that it gives us a fighting chance to equalize those equivalencies between what makes you tight and what releases that tightness.

Whether you call it Pillositer or Rossilates or just plain old magic, adding Rossiter to your fitness regimen—and if you're a Pilates teacher, to your scope of practice—will make a huge difference in helping you and your clients move more easily, more freely and more gracefully. After all, isn't that the whole point of Pilates? You bet it is. **PS**

Rebecca Leone is a classically trained Pilates teacher, global educator, writer/videographer and former PMA board member. Before entering the Pilates industry she was a freelance business consultant. Rebecca was the first in the industry to teach business development, the first to offer after-market education and the first to make spine safety an issue. She also leads the industry in sharing free substantive and safe educational videos; her video site has racked up more than 400,000 loads in the past three-and-a-half years. She recently opened a new studio, Body Avant Garde, in Saint Petersburg, FL.

WHERE TO FIND CHUCK LUBECK—TRAINED PILATES TEACHERS

Here's a list of Pilates teachers who've taken Rossiter training with Chuck and who are already incorporating Rossiter stretches into their Pilates sessions.

Aliesa George
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