**Patterns and Pilates**

Everybody has patterns, eating patterns, sleeping patterns, dressing patterns, and standing patterns. Do you think about **YOUR** movement patterns? We all have them and they go with us where ever we go!

Some are genetic. I have vivid memories of my mother telling me around 6 years old that I “walked like a duck.” So I consider my turned out foot stance as being somewhat genetic. I shudder when I see my son’s posture mirroring his father’s and grandfather’s, that’s genetic! People with scoliosis have genetic issues that cause the curvature. These genetic patterns are present and challenging, but not impossible to correct.

Then there are the “trained” movement patterns. Going back to my “duck walk,” when I added 20+ years of ballet training where one exerts so much effort to have 180 degree turnout, there was no escaping walking, sitting, and sleeping “like a duck.” Or Tennis players who are repeatedly told, “plant your feet” have a great deal of tension in their lower extremities. Or people who spend hours sitting at a desk, have physical restrictions that cause other movement patterns.

What is the big deal about movement patterns? Some patterns don’t matter but many are aberrations that cause pain and excessive wear on the joints of the body. One hopes to have healthy movement patterns so that one can continue to move pain free for many years, but many of us don’t. That is where Pilates can help.

Pilates exercises are brilliant. When done correctly, Pilates trains the human body to have healthy movement patterns. The issue is that the practitioner needs guidance from the instructor. Joe’s exercises won’t miraculously break one of their habits. No matter how brilliantly the instructor puts the exercises together or how well s/he rattles off the exercise instructions, that is not going to help the student develop healthy movement patterns! Our patterns are there for a reason, they helped us accomplish something somewhere and they stayed. Even when my “duck walk” hurt my lower back, I still find myself shuffling along with my feet turned when I am in a big hurry.

You need an instructor! You need a Pilates teacher who will work with you and **YOUR** movement patterns. I’ve seen people who take Pilates without true instruction and they are surprised that they haven’t fixed their aching back or sore knees or painful feet. They’ve been doing Pilates just like they were doing everything else. Without true personal attention from an instructor and effort on the student’s part, the movement patterns will not change! Pilates will help you fix those movement patterns, but you need help in the form of an instructor.

I am proud to say, my feet don’t turnout as much. I have worked really hard with my teachers and in my own body to have my toes pointed straight ahead, and my back thanks me every hour of the day!