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Bushfire relief: A hands on approach



Leisa Kean, receptionist, recently spoke of her experience volunteering for the Bushfire relief. Leisa finished her 5 year degree in Osteopathy in 2009 and is leaving Brighton Spinal Group to practice in Fremantle, WA. Read on about her experience as published in the Victoria University newsletter.

Soon after the tragedy of Black Saturday, a group of Victoria University Osteopathy graduates went to the Diamond Creek Community Centre to offer osteopathic and massage treatments to volunteers and victims of the devastating bushfires.

Leisa Kean, a recent graduate, said the group set up a makeshift clinic with four beds, then treated volunteers who had been standing, bending, packing and lifting for hours on end.

"We treated feet and legs, hips and backs, shoulders and necks - anything we could to get them through the day. They were all so happy to get any relief at all and commented that they felt ready to tackle the next few hours, even after only 10 or 15 minutes of treatment."

They also treated fire victims, many of whom had lost everything.

"Some had nothing but the clothes on their backs and had lost neighbours. One woman was aching from head to toe from her ordeal and wanted someone to help her relax. She was unsettled and said she had not slept in days. But with basic osteopathy techniques, she seemed to relax, her breathing became calmer and she sat up with a smile on her face and said she felt like her body and mind had eased."

Leisa said her experience had given her new-found respect for the holistic practice of osteopathy, which treats mind, body and soul.

"I've only been in practice for a month now and I'm only just beginning to realise how much of our treatment is not just what we do with our hands. I know we all feel privileged to have been able to help in some small way these people who have been through so much."

Top 5 Pilates Principles

1st Principle) Breathing

Why is Breathing correctly important in Pilates?

- ❖ A relaxed full breath encourages focus and concentration during your Pilates exercises and helps you engage the deep abdominal muscles that stabilise your spine.
- ❖ Due to day to day stress, most of us hold tension around the back of the neck, upper shoulders and the muscles in front of the hips. Breathing correctly during Pilates helps to avoid unnecessary tension in the wrong muscles.
- ❖ Breathing correctly also ensures enough oxygen is flowing to the muscles that are being strengthened.

If you learn to breathe correctly, you can maximize your well-being and improve your energy levels. Correct breathing can also improve your exercise stamina.

What is the Correct Way of Breathing?

When you take a deep breathe in, the ribcage should expand visibly i.e. the sides and back of the rib cage; this is known as *lateral breathing*. Your lung cavity volume and capacity for oxygen uptake is increased.

Timing of the Breathe and Exercising

How you breathe is as important to the Pilates method, as is the *timing of your breath*.

As a general rule:

- *Breathe in* to prepare for a movement and lengthen up though the spine.
- *Breathe out* to draw in the transverse abdominis and pelvic floor muscles during movement.
- *Breathe in* to recover, keeping the muscles drawn in.

See below for an **exercise** to promote and improve your lateral breathing.

Exercise: Lateral Breathing

Goal: This exercise helps to demonstrate the correct way to breathe in Pilates.

Action:

- Sit in a flexed forward position as shown below, rest your head gently on your knees.
- Practice breathing into through your nose; feel the back and sides of the rib cage expand.
- As you exhale, engage your deep abdominal muscles. You can exhale through pursed lips to aid the engagement of the deep abdominal muscles. Ask your physiotherapist to show you how.

The blue theraband wrapped around your lower ribs allows you to feel how well you are expanding through the back and sides of the rib cage. It will provide sensory feedback.

This is an excellent exercise if you have any neck or shoulder tightness and you will feel these muscles relax as you work into the breath.

