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At first I loved the classical Pilates exercises and that wonderful "scoop" that relieved my tight back extensors. Since I started my career in bodywork and teaching Pilates I've been fascinated and eager to learn everything I can about biomechanics and motor control. I studied with many teachers and was always on the hunt to learn more. But to my surprise, over time I noticed my body was actually becoming weaker in some instances - particularly when lifting things or just stretching my back. One year my lumbar and sacrum needed release and the next my nerves hurt for days after getting the same area worked on or even just from doing some classic roll-ups (or anything with loaded spinal flexion). Something wasn't right...

The worst was when a 7-year-old surprised me by jumping on my back while I was already holding an 8-year-old. The chiropractor I saw wasn't surprised that I ended up with a bulging disc when he looked at my x-rays and saw that my spine was barely able to actually rotate right. I was hardly able to engage my intrinsic spinal muscles, while I could do plenty of extension and flexion exercises with my spine. He said I would have to see him 2-3 times/week for a while before he could put me on a machine to activate my rotatores and multifidi... I hated feeling powerless but I could tell that practicing my Pilates rotation exercises wasn't quite accessing those deeper muscles that, for some reason, weren't working.

A couple weeks later I had my first DNS courses (Exercise I & II) that a bodyworker encouraged me to sign up for months before my injury. At first I was on the fence listening to the DNS instructor. What she was explaining about the trunk

didn't quite jive with my background or most of my knowledge of the body up until then. But I let her use me for a demo. "It's not working," I thought. But she guided my body and my body responded as if it knew exactly what to do once she had me set up and gave me the right cues. I couldn't believe what I felt. My lumbar, which had been so tender and before that had been so tight, felt amazing and incredibly strong instantly. Like every good part of all the modalities I'd experienced all in one had been done to me with just by setting my body up to that single DNS exercise. During this beginning "5-month" exercise position my discs became perfectly aligned - as if they just popped back into their place and felt lengthened in all directions while the muscles were turned on and supporting the discs. With this I could do anything with my legs or rotate my spine and my back felt more and more relieved, strong and quite amazing. My abdominal muscles were working but they also had a sense of relaxation because of how she had me using intra-abdominal pressure (to fully and deeply activate my core) allowed for all my muscles to work together as a harmonious team - completely connected. Using this, nothing was over-working or tight, nor was anything "off". It's like all the muscles of my trunk were singing in a symphony together while my spine experienced more than it had during the incredibly relieving cranio-sacral sessions I had enjoyed with my cerebral spinal fluid flowing freely. Even though cranio-sacral sessions made my spine sing, I was unable to maintain that feeling once I began exercising or loading my joints until I began using DNS principles to stabilize my body.

I realized if I could do this to any degree in all my movements I would have a different back. The more we learned (including how to perfectly access my multifidi and rotatores) the better my body felt - as if it I was sparked with new life. How every corrective developmental exercise addressed something else in my body. Every exercise was both invigorating and relieving.

My body was buzzing - which made sense in that it stimulates the central nervous system. Everything that was tight became relaxed and everything that was hypotonic was engaged in this wonderful coordination. After applying DNS exercise principles to my Pilates practice, I could do exercises far better than I had been able to before. I had new insight and ability to activate all parts of my body. Prior to using my core the way that DNS teaches, I wasn't able to hold a neutral spine position while lying on my back. Finally I could achieve this in a way that hadn't been introduced to me before.

After those first DNS courses, I took all the courses I could. Other exercise instructors I work with have been curious and amazed by the changes they saw and felt themselves in doing DNS. They see that DNS works so well and the DNS approach to movement feels so different and incredibly good. I often hear other exercise instructors, once introduced to DNS exercise principles say, "This is where my joints are supposed to be and this is how my muscles are supposed to activate together." It makes more sense than anything we've come across — and seems to incorporate all the best elements of various modalities.

Now everything I teach in Pilates is through a different lens. I can catch how clients would potentially put strain on any part of their body and know how to address it - far beyond any biomechanical training I've had. I start every class with DNS basics for clients to feel their lumbar stabilize (and lower abdominals burn). I incorporate DNS principles into all the movements in class. Clients are as amazed as I was. They learn to have much more access and ability to engage their lower abdominals (and other muscles that weren't working so well), which releases their pain, makes them stronger so they feel younger and more in control. Their movement patterns start to change and they can apply what they learn in all activities of their daily lives. Clients think I'm a genius because of how I can

see exactly why what they're doing is hurting them and because I can show them how to fix it immediately. DNS has been the best thing I found not only for my own body and for my career, but for my client's bodies and well-being.