

# Energize me!

**F**rom where do we get our energy? Are we blocking our own energy source?

I have a dear friend with whom many of you are familiar. Patti DiGangi is a national speaker in dental hygiene. I have roomed with her for many years on various dental hygiene adventures, both as speakers and as delegates for the American Dental Hygienists' Association Annual Session. After being with Patti for several days, I observed the continuous pace at which she moves and realized the need to improve my cardio routine to keep up with her. I marvel at her energy and zest for life. When we've finished at the end of the day, I'm usually exhausted. Not my friend Patti; she is like the Energizer Bunny that keeps on ticking. If I could bottle her energy, I would ... and then sell it!

We all have an energy that runs through our bodies called Qi (pronounced chee). Patti's Qi happens to be supernatural; some of you may know people like that. These Qi building points have a high electrical conductivity at the surface of the skin and thus conduct the body's energy most effectively. Qi energy work uses acupressure points to enable energy to flow easily.

Ergonomically, dental hygienists' Qi is constantly being blocked and obstructed. By developing this life force, you can relieve a range of emotional complaints and common ailments such as depression, anxiety, headaches, backache, insomnia, nausea, carpal tunnel syndrome, and many more. We, as dental hygienists, can have all of the above.

The same Qi building practices of traditional Chinese medicine are pivotal for practicing martial arts, Asian bodywork therapies, and massage healing techniques. Acupressure, an ancient healing art developed in Asia

over 5,000 years ago, is effective in the relief of stress-related ailments, in self-care, and in preventive healthcare. Acupressure Qi points release tension, increase circulation, reduce pain, and develop vibrant health.

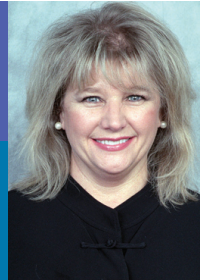
## What is yoga?

According to Michael Lerner, author of *Choices of Healing*, "Yoga is best known as a set of physical practices that include gentle stretches, breathing practices, and progressive deep relaxation. These physical practices are intended to ready the body and mind for meditation as well as for a meditative perspective on life. These meditative practices also follow a

of dynamic balance, or health. Basically, yoga teaches that a healthy person is a harmoniously integrated unit of body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, good health requires a simple, natural diet, exercise in fresh air, a serene and untroubled mind, and the awareness that a person's deepest and highest self is identical with the spirit of God. As a result, to many devotees, yoga becomes a philosophy that offers instruction and insight into every aspect of life: the spiritual, the mental, and the physical. Of course, because it is all encompassing, people who want to pick and choose from its smorgasbord can do so without being disappointed. Yoga is equally satisfying as a physical therapy alone.

## MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

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sequence. First developed is the capacity to withdraw the senses from focus on the outer world, then, the capacity to concentrate on a meditative subject — a candle flame, a sacred or uplifting word or image, or the movement of the breath. Finally, and for most of us only occasionally, the concentration leads into a wordless and timeless experience of inner peace. The yoga masters describe various subtleties among these states of inner peace, but most of us, at best, achieve moments of this experience from time to time."

In practice, yoga is an applied science of the mind and body. Yoga itself does not create health; rather, it creates an internal environment that allows the individual to come to his/her own state

The yogis believe that we are all searching for happiness and that this is everybody's main goal. It's just that most people settle for the brief, watered-down version of temporary pleasures.

The yogis also believe that at some stage in our spiritual evolution over many lives, we will become dissatisfied with brief, temporary pleasures and start our quest for eternal bliss. Methods to achieve this were developed and perfected by the yogis thousands of years ago. They consider nature's laws to be designed so that we must evolve. The main mechanism nature uses in the early stages is pain. When we find that relationships, money, or alcohol, for example, do not produce happiness or a sense of purpose, we will start looking

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more deeply into life. Yoga waits patiently for a person to reach this stage.

In the later stages of spiritual evolution, pain is no longer needed to spur us on. Each stage of progress produces such peace and happiness that this entices us to go to a higher level of happiness. Ultimately, instead of pain, reward becomes the prime mover.

The above is a very brief description of yoga philosophy, which is so comprehensive that it deals with every aspect of life. It is obviously beyond the scope of this column to discuss it fully.

Kristy Menage Bernie, a celebrated dental hygienist who is becoming the “Yogi of Dental Hygiene,” has held several classes at dental and dental hygiene events. She is also beginning to lecture on the correlation between dental hygiene and yoga. This is what she wants us to know about yoga and our profession:

“Yoga can have an amazing impact on the longevity of the clinical practice of dental hygiene. Our unique circumstances through clinical practice place the profession at risk for repetitive stress syndromes, poor posture, and back and neck pain. This, combined with the fact that the hygienist deals with many individuals who are fearful, make for not only a physically challenging practice but also one that is emotionally challenging and stressful.

“Yoga combines breath and postures that provide critical weight-bearing exercise and the opportunity to focus on one’s self. Even after one session, many realize the physical and mental health benefits! Stretching, flexing, internal organ stimulation, and oxygenation of the body all lend to an improvement in overall health.

“Yoga is truly for all body types and constitutions! Finding the right class is essential for success. For beginners, check out Oxygen’s “Inhale”; this program is a terrific and energizing way to start the day. Additional resources include *Yoga Journal* and local studios. Even major exercise chains usually offer a yoga session.

“Remember, yoga is not a race or competition, but the opportunity for you to reflect, improve your health, relieve pain, and even approach the world with a compassionate point of view.”

Kristy’s classes have been held early in the mornings before seminars or after the courses when you need these wonderful stretches. I would not miss one of them. It can begin your day with a fresh mind and flexible body and end your day with a “pick me up” to work out all of the kinks from sitting all day in seminars.

## What is Pilates?

Pilates was originally started in Germany by Joseph Pilates. In 1926, he moved to the United States. With his many years of perfecting Pilates (then called Contrology™), many well-known choreographers such as Martha Graham and George Balanchine sent their dancers to do fitness training with Joseph and his wife, Clara.

Pilates had physical difficulties as a child, but overcame them with determination and trying his own techniques on himself. He was greatly influenced by the early Greeks and reemphasized coordination and balance of body and mind. Contrology™, as defined by Pilates in his 1934 book *Your Health*, is:

“the conscious control of all muscular movements of the body. It is the correct utilization and application of the leverage principles afforded by the bones comprising the skeletal framework of the body, a complete knowledge of the mechanism of the body, and a full understanding of the principles of equilibrium and gravity as applied to the movements of the body in motion, at rest, and in sleep.”

One of the things that make Pilates so great is that the movements and exercises you do seek to give you strength and flexibility, but not to build any serious amount of bulk to your frame. Pilates is not about building muscle; it is about working with your body and not against it. You need to be able to take what you have been given and make that work for you before attempting anything else. That is the philosophy upon which Pilates was founded.

As you learn more about Pilates, you will find that it is designed for each person’s body. Pilates will align your bones through a series of movements, and this will allow your body to work with less strain, thanks to the activity of exercise you are achieving.

Pilates appeals to a number of people. It doesn’t matter what type of person you are or at what level of training your body is. Pilates can help you improve your body’s natural functioning as well as help boost confidence and your mental wellness.

The most wonderful thing you will discover about Pilates is that you don’t have to suffer through the movements to feel better. You are training your body with intelligent design and, therefore, you will not need to work twice as hard, as you may have to do with other workout programs.

Pilates is intended to create balance within your body. This will help you to realign your bones and can also help to improve your posture. Another positive feature is the lean muscles that you will form, thanks to your workouts.

Pilates is excellent exercise for everyone, no matter what their shape or size. In fact, many videos and exercise clubs have created classes for people with disabilities, arthritis, general strength or weight loss issues, and even for pregnant or birthing mothers.

Practiced faithfully, Pilates yields numerous benefits for dental hygienists. Increased lung capacity and circulation through deep, healthy breathing is a primary focus. Strength and flexibility, particularly of the abdomen and back muscles, and coordination – both muscular and mental – are key components in an effective Pilates program. Posture, balance, and core strength are all increased. Bone density and joint health will also continue to improve. Pilates teaches balance and control of the body, and that capacity spills over into other areas of one’s life. Originally, there were 34 exercises, and now, with modern-day trainers, they have customized their own Pilates training applications.

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You may want to investigate which one would work best for you.

As dental hygienists, we need the most strength in our abdomen and back muscles to endure a day of bending over patients. Dental hygiene is increasingly becoming a longer career for many of us, and in order to prevent the breakdown of our bodies, techniques and exercises like Pilates and yoga are essential. Perhaps you may want to think of beginning the new year with joining a class — a great New Year's resolution!

In conclusion, no matter where we find our Qi, we just need to find it! Remember, we are the pulse of the practice, the energy source. Get energized in 2006! And with that thought of energy, I want to congratulate RDH magazine on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I'm proud to say that I am old enough to remember the very first issue!