

deep connections

the revolutionary system **anatomy trains** teaches how the body is linked, head to toe

BY ROBIN WESTEN

Following a successful career as a professional basketball player, Ned (not his real name) had hopes of switching gears and working in real estate. But he never could enjoy his time off the court because of increasingly debilitating back pain, which had begun years earlier. After pursuing a number of therapeutic modalities without relief, the former pro was referred to Elizabeth Larkam, director of Pilates & Beyond in San Francisco. Suddenly, it was a whole new ballgame. Larkam watched Ned move and, based on her observations, designed a customized Pilates program for him. Ned practiced this regimen in conjunction with manual therapy for six months. Finally, after years of ineffective therapies, his ability to stand with comfort and move with ease was restored.

Larkam doesn't actually have superhuman powers. Her hypothesis was the result of years of studying the map of the Anatomy Trains Myofascial Meridians, visionary Tom Myers' ingenious approach of viewing the human body. Thanks to that training, Larkam was able to see that every time Ned would stride forward, fascia [soft tissue] would tug on his spine rather than allow for a smooth glide. She suspected that his back pain might be caused specifically by adhesions in the fascia that connected his left hip to his lower spine. Knowing that this fascia is continuous with tissue that connects the

back of the pelvis to the rib cage and arm, she realized that his spine was getting yanked from above when he raised his arm. [See illustrations of the Deep Front Line.] From there, it wasn't hard to design an effective therapeutic plan.

That's the beauty of the Anatomy Trains. Rather than refer to a standard model of the musculo-skeletal system, the revolutionary system focuses on the myofascia, the soft tissue that covers and penetrates every muscle and bone without interruption, like a net from our head to our toes. Pilates teachers who use the Anatomy Trains testify that it helps them observe postural and movement patterns in their clients with far greater accuracy. It also enables them to design specific exercises to release clients from long-endured painful patterns. Tom Myers, 59, the creator of the system, puts it this way: "Anatomy Trains provides the map to get from where you think the problem emanates to where it's really located." But that's just one stop along the journey.

By referring to the Anatomy Trains map, Larkam made the observation that the tightness in some of Ned's muscles and fascia was interfering with the mobility of his left hip when he walked. It also interfered with the ability of his spine to extend. With this understanding, she designed a Pilates Reformer program (standing lunge;



In Myers' systems, the Lateral Line (at left) is a continuous line from the outer arch to the ear.

bridge in neutral; thigh circles with loops around the knees; supine leg circles; seated lateral flexion), which enhanced Ned's mobility and hip extension.

For massage therapists and other body workers, Myers also created Kinesis Myofascial Integration (KMI) which is a hands-on soft tissue massage technique based on Structural Integration (aka rolfing), and like the Anatomy Trains, focuses on the myofascial tissue. Using varying amounts of pressure, the KMI technique dissolves the adhesions in connective tissue, allowing it to support optimum posture and glide smoothly during movement. To be certified in KMI, therapists must complete 500 hours of instruction, which is akin to graduate-level training in massage. After completing this study, they can offer their clients a comprehensive, body-wide 12-session KMI series. Today there are some 200 certified practitioners in the United States and beyond—and the trend is growing.

In the past decade Myers has taught

