

Isolation PBA Testimonials

PBA asked students to write about their experience of Isolation Pilates: the audio and online (Zoom) classes, the impact on their fitness and wellbeing and also the community created on or rather by WhatsApp. Here they are, transcribed from email and WhatsApp.

I have found PBA to be such a valuable lifeline before and during the pandemic. In the past year, the classes helped me bounce back after falling ill with Covid, to heal from a patellar injury in one knee, and to strengthen the muscles around a torn meniscus in the other knee. With the reality of longer work days and increased stress, the exercises helped me avoid potential back strain. Chris' training, wisdom and optimism kept me going when life felt tough and my body felt tired. She was able to tailor her teaching in order to apply her vast knowledge of Pilates and the body to best fit the unique situation we were all in. Many thanks to Chris, PBA and my fellow students for being a happy constant in my life for so many years.

Cate

Lockdown was made immensely more tolerable with our fantastic teacher, Chris Hocking. She quickly transferred her teaching skills to AUDIO and Zoom (the latter with some mishaps that united us all students and made us laugh together). She is still leading these classes to this day. Chris's expertise allows her to use her 'third' eye and, even during audio instructions, she knows where a foot or hand is going astray. It has kept me stronger physically and mentally throughout this last year. The joy of seeing classmates on Zoom on dark evenings of deepest lockdown crisis was pure joy as well. Thank you, Chris.

Marie-Josée

Thank you to Chris for the phenomenal effort of sustaining Pilates training throughout lockdown. Whilst not the same as being in the studio, the audio classes have all the spirit of the real thing, and the opportunity to pause, play back and listen to later. Coupled with the online PBA community, continuing classes has been a wonderful link with the outside world, especially the artistic and nature-based shares by the group. Looking forward to getting back to the studio, but perhaps also having the opportunity to do some remote learning going forward as well?

Katie

An absolute lifeline during such a difficult time. Chris went above and beyond to adapt to new technology and provide classes for her school and keep her tuition to an exemplary standard. I can't thank her enough for the effort, giving us brilliant classes to focus on during the lockdown, and for helping us all maintain our Pilates community!

Alison A

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For many years I have been enjoying attending Pilates Body Awareness classes (PBA), with Chris Hocking, in a studio setting. When Lockdown happened, PBA switched to Zoom, which I hadn't even heard of! There were a few technical issues to start with, whilst we were all getting used to the technology and Chris was figuring out the best camera angles and sound equipment to use. Once this was sorted out, it's been a great delight to continue these classes during Lockdown at home.

PBA classes are divided into different levels and taught very thoroughly. Chris demonstrates the exercises and gives very clear, precise instructions and information explaining why we are doing an exercise in a particular way and what we are working on, anatomically. She will then watch us doing the exercises on screen and give further clarification to enable us to achieve the best result we can.

Keeping my exercise regime going during Lockdown has been very valuable for me and PBA has given me a focus to look forward to each week. Chris's attention to detail and dedication to giving us the best possible class is inspirational and I'll be looking forward to attending more of her classes in person (or on Zoom, if necessary) for many more years!

Kathryn

What a gift Chris' Pilates classes have been to me during all the lockdowns over the past year. I have enjoyed both the audio and Zoom classes; it is always good to hear Chris' voice and to see Chris and fellow students at the Zoom classes. All classes have been of a very high standard I cannot imagine how difficult it was for Chris to set up and classes so quickly but she did so in her usual efficient and professional manner.

Chris, thank you so much for helping to keep me fit and sane during this very unusual time. Thanks so much

Steph

I have been so grateful for the Zoom classes during lockdown! They've enabled me to keep up my practice, and also, I found it very helpful to have a scheduled event each week. I always feel better both physically and mentally after a class. Although live classes are great, the Zoom classes have the advantage of no travel time. As always, Chris has been very generous with her time and her teaching.

Alison B

PBA continued through the global pandemic and three lockdowns due to Christine Hocking's personal ethics were undefeated and she continued to her chosen retirement. Special tranches of classes were then offered through the third lockdown. PBA students seized this golden opportunity to maintain and improve fitness, as well as to enjoy connectivity with the PBA community.

From the first lockdown, she set up a PBA WhatsApp group with information about fees for the number of classes desired, class booking, and to ask for help understanding certain movements and minimise any pain felt.

I leapt at the chance to have audio lessons. They were thorough, pleasant and welcoming. Chris read out the participants names at the start of each class. Chris created an atmosphere where we could envision being in the classroom with the convenience of being at home.

PBA students were overjoyed Chris decided to continue teaching post-retirement with carefully conceived courses that developed our range significantly. Savvy students encouraged Chris to offer Zoom classes. I had used Zoom and welcomed this evolution. My very limited space was a challenge to be visible to the viewer, as well as to access walls. I enjoyed the understanding gained by seeing an expert demonstrate whilst teaching.

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The benefits of audio-only or audio+visual classes lie in how the information is taken in and translated into movement and understanding of how one's body works. Both produced an intense focus on how to maximise what was taught, and to improve with each lesson. In an audio-only class, if we did not understand a new movement, Chris would provide clarity on the PBA WhatsApp group after class. She often added enhanced verbal cues the next time the exercise was taught.

Having the opportunity to take nearly continual lessons during the lockdown has benefited us with improved fitness, extended our Pilates skills and experience, and enabled connections with the PBA community. Chris' indomitable spirit and inherent drive to continually expand our Pilates skills inspired attention and commitment to try to match hers. The emotional connectivity was important during the months of isolation. All of us shared photos of gardens, food, pets, music and comic videos.

In the future: I live relatively close to the Engine Room, and the convenience and time saved by continuing with Zoom or Audio-only classes is attractive, if offered. The benefit of in-person training is clear, and I would join this if offered in the future. May I also suggest that perhaps the Engine Room would consider installing a large, wall-mounted screen up connect to a laptop. The teacher could see the Zoom students whilst she is demonstrating.

Kimberley

As a fellow Pilates teacher, Chris's classes have proved invaluable to me in lockdown, not only by keeping me focused and fit but as a great inspiration for my own teaching. Chris's clear and precise instructions have made the audio classes easy to follow; the Zoom classes have been a great connection to the other members of the class and helped us all to feel part of a community.

Sara

During the last year I have participated in so many things digitally, many of which due to time or location would not have been an option previously: Lectures and presentations, concerts, book clubs, line dancing and of course Pilates! Being able to continue Pilates training as everything changed was crucial: it gave structure to the week, provided much needed time for myself and kept me fit. I've missed the studio, but it has been great to see everyone regularly on Zoom, and we have developed such a supportive and funny community. Thank you to Chris for her unstinting determination to deliver challenging classes in the face of adversity. Not only a fantastic teacher, but a great role model.

Joey

When the first lock down hit and everything closed it was hard. Zoom, Teams etc has been literally a life saver. The audio classes were a fabulous start, but not being very auditory I found them less appealing. However, I did find Chris familiar voice very hypnotic and soothing.

Zoom enabled me to continue classes helping both my sanity and fitness. Also doing it on my own seems to have given me time to think about the exercises more and what they are physically doing. Chris set up the Pilates social site before classes started. This was lovely, creating such a sense of community. People posted thoughtful caring, funny stuff. Plus, helpful information on C19. For example, regarding access to the NHS vaccine site.

As I am not able to attend classes in London regularly it will be lovely if Chris can continue with some form of Zoom class.

Michelle

I've been doing Zoom and audio classes with Chris for about a year and I'm so thankful we've been able to continue classes and connection with each other in this way. Chris started out with audio classes via WhatsApp in the first lockdown. Hearing her voice and calm, clear instructions was wonderful - not just because it brought back the discipline of doing Pilates on a regular basis, but also because it brought connection back to people in class - I really liked the feeling that so many of us were doing the class together, breathing and working together, even though we couldn't be together or even see each other. Many of us then progressed to Zoom classes and it was great to see Chris again and each other. The technology has worked fine for me. The only thing that hasn't worked so well is my camera, as it's on the laptop which I'm also using to watch Chris. So, I've never been able to get it at a good angle so Chris can see all of me when she switches to watching us rather than demonstrating (probably I would need a separate camera). Chris is always meticulous in her instructions and in engaging us in good technique and her approach hasn't faltered. Of course, I miss being in the studio because she would come round and correct us when needed, or I could ask a spontaneous question, but continuing the classes has been so important to me - to my physical health and also my mental health, as it's given me continuity and discipline. Although I've focussed on doing Zoom classes since Chris launched Zoom, I actually really like audio too. Listening to instruction brings a different kind of concentration - you can become over reliant on visual and audio forces you to remember how much you know. How and when we'll be back in the studio is unknown right now, but I hope Chris continues with some form of remote instruction as it gives much wider access to her excellent teaching.

Jenny

I would not have thought of doing Pilates classes via WhatsApp audio recordings. It has worked rather well. I remember how happy I was to hear Chris's voice in the first audio class. It provided some form of familiarity in this uncertain time.

The lack of visual guidance was a limitation; Chris addressed this by sharing relevant videos. The instructions were clear as always. The materials were varied and interesting. Her reminder of what not to do seemed to be always right on cue as if she could see me making the mistake as I was doing it in a live studio class. I could pause or revisit the audio recordings to go over some points. The audio class also offered the flexibility to do the class later if I could not make the class in real time.

The classes / PBA community have helped both my physical (in particular, stiffness from staying/working at home) and mental wellbeing.

Thank you, Chris, for all the efforts you put in to keep the community/classes alive. I have a lot of respect for your resilience, your dedication to quality teachings and the community. Also, thank you to the fellow students for your witty quips, for sharing your experience, jokes, photos, etc.

Yong

Being able to do Pilates with Chris during the lockdown has been invaluable. When the lockdown started, we were all stuck by ourselves at home, unable to go to our regular classes and do the exercise as we did before March 2020. Initially the PBA Pilates group transferred to WhatsApp and Chris very kindly decided to provide us with audio classes so that we can continue our Pilates practice. With progress to Zoom classes it was nice that we were able to see each other online and have a group class even though we were not in the same place. Zoom classes worked very well as we could see Chris demonstrating each exercise and she could see us and give corrections and further instructions. Each class started with an inspiring music and Chris always gives a detailed explanation of every exercise, with every move explained in detail. It has been good to have both Zoom and audio classes to choose from on different days during the week. Audio classes are really good because we

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can pause and listen instructions again, or we can take/repeat a class at a later date, which I have done a few times. A detailed and expert instructions that Chris provides in both audio and Zoom classes have enabled me to continue and progress my practice further, and has definitely helped with taking my mind of the current situation with Covid-19.

Being a part of the PBA community, with audio and online classes from Chris, and the WhatsApp group, has been amazing and helpful, and it has been a real privilege to be a part of the group. I think that being a part of the group has definitely had a positive effect on all members' wellbeing and helped us through the isolation and lockdowns, with the encouragement we got from each other and Chris - if you're feeling down, or sluggish, or even bored or frustrated with work, the exercise is the best remedy. Doing Pilates with Chris during these uncertain times has certainly helped with both my mental and physical wellbeing.

Gordana

Overall, both Zoom and Audio classes work for me, and I can imagine combining them with in Studio classes post Covid. I'd like to just have a good top up of being in the Studio again because I have missed it, I don't think anything can replace that because you are in a dedicated space which is good for the mindset, having Chris in the room teaching was important so she could properly see you and rectify any mistakes, and you could properly observe her, plus practicing alongside others in the room is great. You can pick up on more things in the Studio.

Also, I missed the Intensives with the lunches, I really liked doing a good chunk of Pilates followed by a nice meal and conversation.

Listening to Chris on speakers for Audio or Zoom works well, that has helped me focus on improving my Pilates knowledge. She really does present well; her voice has been a good anchor for me in the lockdowns. I have the previous audio files from 2020, and have repeated the classes. Even though Covid19 is a tough situation, I have to say my wellbeing has improved in one sense because both my frozen shoulders have pretty much thawed over the last year - PBA's Audio classes were a fundamental part of my recovery program.

Zoom of course can be problematic with internet connections, the camera positioning has limitations, and generally it's not great for spontaneity - whether for in-class practice, or for general communication.

However, the PBA Zoom classes have been great for recreating real time in group practice. And it's just really nice to see my classmates again.

The WhatsApp PBA group has overall worked for me, really nice sense of community, of course some people have been a headache but that's people! The PBA Community keeps this in check :)

Because we're still in Covid19, I don't feel I have a distance from the situation to properly reflect on the benefits, so these thoughts are from where I am right now. I don't think the world is going back to how it was, but not all change is bad of course.

Patricia

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I am so grateful that our dynamic Pilates teacher embraced technology in the early days of the first lockdown. It started with audio classes which meant I had my weekly class with the familiar voice and instructions, cleverly explained so even forgotten exercises were quickly remembered. Corrections were given as if Chris was in the room (and Granny's clock soon a favourite chiming in the background). There was a sense of community as class-mates were welcomed at the beginning of each class. Later Zoom classes were also offered and again this has meant continuity, structure, focus, pleasure in seeing fellow students and the exacting standards of the exercises which are so important to my wellbeing, both physical and mental. Thanks to Chris for keeping classes going in the most challenging of circumstances and also providing a fabulous audio resource for home practice, although nothing beats the studio.

Geraldine

How has Zoom/audio worked for you?

Minor initial difficulties, but resolved after gradual proficiency.

Did PBA (classes and or community) help your health/fitness/mental well-being?

Yes.

Would you use Zoom/audio in the future post-covid?

Yes, I definitely would prefer to use Zoom when I am unable to attend studio sessions.

What did you like about Zoom/audio?

I can see what the teacher and others are doing.

What didn't you like about Zoom/audio?

I personally dislike audio due to the lack of visual guidance and the inability to immediately ask for help. Also, there are sometimes difficulties in clearly seeing what the teacher is doing due to video quality and angle

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Have you repeated audio classes?

No.

Has your tech (online)ability improved?

Perhaps.

Online PBA community versus in-studio community- any thoughts?

Although online PBA is more convenient, I value meeting others at studio.

Namy

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Pilates has worked excellently for me over the last year of lockdown. Once it was up and running it quickly shaped up and all kinds of advantages became apparent:

No horrid travel (very stressful for me). Excellent view of Chris (often denied to all but the nearest in the classroom). Sound was a difficulty in spite of linking computer to quality audio output. Music sounded like someone frowning in a bath and still does (can't wait for an invitation to fix this!).

How has Zoom/audio worked for you? Great

Has your understanding of Pilates improved? A lot.

Did PBA (classes and or community) help your health/fitness/mental well-being? Definitely, substantially.

Would you use Zoom/audio in the future post-covid? Most certainly.

What did you like about Zoom/audio? Having the extra attention by not having to strain to hear the vocal instruction and being able to pause when I wanted to check a detail.

What didn't you like about Zoom/audio? Nothing.

Have you repeated audio classes? Yes

Has your tech (online)ability improved? Not directly.

How do you feel about technology now? Same as before, uncomfortable but persistent.

Online PBA community versus in-studio community- any thoughts??? Love the online it has transformed the feel of the classes for me. I feel I am amongst friends.

Plus anything else you would like to add about your experiences. I am deeply grateful to be part of this amazing school.

Roddy

Did PBA help with health/fitness? I personally don't have the discipline to do exercises without a class and teacher so I was delighted when Chris reinvigorated the classes through WhatsApp. My body is much happier when I attend a weekly class, in the gap between terms my body craves for weekly Pilates so I'd like a shorter window between terms.

Tool (Zoom/Audio) Both audio and Zoom have been really helpful for me, obviously Zoom is more beneficial as sometimes I struggled with visualising the audio instructions; for me it's more about seeing the demo, having said that the WhatsApp audios were really detailed, concise and organised. I generally managed to keep up with the audios but I've failed to repeat the audios in my own time. I've recently bought a standing desk which helps me with a better camera view at my end, previously I found it hard to get the angles right and show the full mat. I also suffered some bad network issues which have been overcome now. I prefer to attend Zoom than Studio for mid-week classes (weekends I can attend studio from time to time).

Understanding of Pilates The audio did help with my understanding of the Pilates as I truly had to focus on getting it right as no one could see or correct me and I found that rather eye-opening!

Online vs. in-studio community I think the community did come a lot closer during the lockdown. When we were in-studio I knew some of my classmates by name and knew only 2-3 of them

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a little more primarily because of the PBA socials. I'm not generally a very active participant in the PBA channels but I read most of the posts.

Sanaz