

A Workout With the Benefits of Pilates—Plus Cardio and Music

Melody McCloskey, founder and CEO of StyleSeat, blends Core40 classes with running, spin and yoga



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Melody McCloskey, founder of Style Seat, a beauty and wellness booking service, uses a machine called a Megaformer at Core40 fitness in San Francisco for a workout fusing Pilates, cardio and strength training. *PHOTO: PETER EARL MCCOLLOUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By

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When Melody McCloskey finishes a Pilates class, she looks as if she has run a marathon. “I’m dripping with sweat,” says the chief executive and co-founder of StyleSeat, an online and mobile beauty and wellness booking service in San Francisco.

Ms. McCloskey practices Pilates on a Megaformer, a machine that turns a traditional Pilates session of lengthening and toning exercises into a full-body strength and cardio workout.

Ms. McCloskey, 30, danced at the San Francisco Ballet School from the time she was 7 until she graduated from high school. “When I was dancing all day I could eat whatever I wanted,” she says. “When I stopped, I had to make a point to get in cardio.”

Ms. McCloskey made time for the gym or a run—until she launched StyleSeat in 2011. “I was working seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. I stopped exercising, I wasn’t eating right, and I was stressed,” she recalls. In the first year of her business, Ms. McCloskey recalls, she gained 15 pounds. “Our second year I made getting fit a priority,” she says. “I needed to regain balance in my life.”



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Ms. McCloskey likes how workouts on the Megaformer lengthens and strengthens her abs and trunk, while getting the heart rate up. *PHOTO: PETER EARL MCCOLLOUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

She looked for a workout that was efficient and fun. She liked the Pilates she did as a ballerina although she never felt she got a good cardio workout. Yet when she was running daily, she suffered from muscle strains and tendinitis. “I wanted something that lengthened and strengthened my muscles, that was easy on my joints, but got my heart rate up and was set to music,” she says.

A friend introduced her to the Megaformer, a machine that works multiple muscles at once from different angles. Workouts develop core strength and muscular endurance as you work your muscles to the point of fatigue, with many repetitions and quick transitions between exercises.

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Ms. McCloskey now takes 40-minute classes in San Francisco from Core40, a studio that sets Megaformer workout classes to music. “There’s a SoulCycle mentality,” she says. “The music is upbeat and high energy, and I’m sweating and shaking by the end.”

She says after three classes she noticed her ab muscles seemed more defined. “My body felt transformed,” she says. Now she goes to at least three Core40 classes a week and has begun offering a free yoga session once a week in the StyleSeat conference room for her staff of about 40.

“It’s a great way for everyone to blow off steam and remember to make time for themselves,” she says.

The Workout

Living a mile from a Core40 studio in San Francisco, Ms. McCloskey jogs to and from the 6 a.m. class three mornings a week.

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Core40 classes are performed on a Megaformer, a version of a traditional Pilates reformer that is tricked out with springs attached in front of a sliding carriage. The more springs attached the more resistance is created, making exercises more difficult. Both ends of the machine have straps for core, lower-body and upper-body work.

Classes always vary slightly but focus on time, not repetitions, with each movement lasting about 60 seconds and some working up to 600 muscles at once, Core40 says. A typical Megaformer workout can get a student's heart rate up to 180 beats a minute and often burns an average of 500 calories, according to Sebastien Lagree, creator of the Megaformer.



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Ms. McCloskey's weekly workouts also include a yoga class, a spinning class and running. *PHOTO: PETER EARL MCCOLLOUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Exercises might include performing plank pose with your hands on the front bar and feet on the carriage. You slide the carriage forward by engaging the core so your behind rises up in the air until the body is in a V-shape. Then you push the carriage back until you are in plank pose again. Or the instructor might make the class perform lunges starting with the right foot on the floor and the left leg bent and kneeling on the carriage. As the left leg slides backward on the carriage, you drop down into the lunge, with the right knee bending to a 90-degree angle. The left leg slides forward on the carriage as the right leg straightens back to the standing position.

Ms. McCloskey takes the weekly yoga class at the StyleSeat offices, and tries to fit in a spin class once a week. She will run for 60 to 90 minutes on the weekend. Some of her favorite routes include running along Crissy Field toward the Golden Gate Bridge, or along the Embarcadero toward AT&T Park, or up the Filbert Steps to Coit Tower.

The Diet

Ms. McCloskey follows a mostly Paleo Diet, avoiding dairy and grains in favor of meat, seafood, fruits and vegetables. She makes a protein shake for breakfast. Lunch, her biggest meal of the day, is usually a salad with turkey meatballs or grilled chicken from Whole Foods. She snacks on nuts and dried fruit during the day. Dinner is usually a salad. She tries to limit alcohol to weekends; her splurge is the salted caramel ice cream from Bi-Rite Creamery, in San Francisco. "I dream about it and can't say no when it's around," she says.



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Melody McCloskey, founder and CEO of StyleSeat, before her workout at the company's headquarters in San Francisco. *PHOTO: PETER EARL MCCOLLOUGH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*