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Let the Healing Begin

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Imagine walking pain free in a pair of high heels without popping a Xanax? Determined to learn how, I recently dragged my tired and swollen dogs to the Backbone and Wingspan Pilates Studio for a High Heel Recovery Clinic. Trudging from the subway to the studio I imagined a scene from the documentary *Paris Is Burning* and a task master instructor barking “Girl, you better work!”

Instead, I was greeted at the door by the zen countenance of Tim Driscoll the studio director and a respected teacher on the NYC pilates scene.

Tim along with fellow teacher Cathy Ferrara have developed the clinic in response to clients with all kinds of lower back pain, calf strain and shin splints related to wearing vertiginous heels.

In making these connections you will feel a subtle shift back onto your heels and away from the balls of your feet. This works.

According to Tim “The heel is probably the most under-utilized part of the body. When someone can expand into their heels and into the back of their shoe rather than letting their heel shove forward onto the ball of the foot then they can get relief.” The key, he explained, is to connect with the upper back of your legs rather than your lower back or the balls of your feet.

To put us in touch with this sensation it was time to walk around the room. We’d been asked to bring a ‘challenging’ pair of heels. I put on my red patent leather Fendi sandals that slice into my toes like a cheese knife. Walking with all the grace of a middle-aged cross dresser in size 13 pumps, I noticed the woman in front of me. Elisabeth, a slim 50-something was navigating swan-like in a pair of 6” St. Laurent platform sandals. How could she stand it?...

Next, we lay down on mats and for the next 30 minutes Cathy led the group in a series of exercises designed to help us open up the pelvis and to feel the hamstring/bum connection. With our knees bent and our calves and heels flush with the top of the ball, we were directed to place our arms at our sides, palms down, and to raise our bums until we created what Tim Driscoll calls a ‘suspension bridge’. Visualize what a suspension bridge looks like and this make perfect sense. Ahh! An immediate release of tension in my flexors.

Please try this at the gym or at home if you have an exercise ball at the end of the day to work out tension...In making these connections you will feel a subtle shift back onto your heels and away from the balls of your feet. This works.