

# Sharon Lewis

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## **LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION: Most addictive pilates instruction in Joburg**

Leigh O'Brien has been my guide, coach, instructor, therapist and friend through the most recent chapter of my pilates story since 2016. Her serene and caring approach is layered on top of deep technical knowledge about human anatomy and science, and a steely will to help each client succeed in achieving their personal health and fitness goals.

I am a professional working in the development field, and have a working life that is shaped by stressful deadlines. Spending too much time in front of my computer screen each day, I face a constant battle to sustain my fitness and maintain a healthy weight. Pilates is my exercise discipline of choice because of the effectiveness of the exercises and equipment in achieving targeted muscle toning and strength; and overall body sculpting and flexibility. The focus on core strength improves my posture and the mind-body discipline is a welcome therapy that helps me cope with stress and improves my mood. I find the mental effects of Leigh's class last for days.

In my 30's I found I could get away with infrequent exercise (including an introduction to pilates mat-work and reformer). As a working mother I neglected my own health and fitness. After I turned 40 I resolved to take control of this aspect of my life and spent a year focussing on re-establishing my fitness and achieving a better work-life balance. This included two pilates classes a week and a lot of walking each day. I was based in George in the Western Cape at the time and found a pilates studio where I was able to do both reformer and mat-work classes.

At the end of the year, when I was due to return to Johannesburg, one of my classmates recommended Leigh as a pilates instructor. I was thrilled to find her working at a well-equipped studio in Bryanston that was conveniently located near my home; and her teaching style was a good match for my preferences. I particularly enjoy reformer work and was able to join a class with an emphasis on reformer once a week. Leigh later managed the move to her own studio carefully and the transition to a nearby location was seamless. Leigh's studio is as serene and stylish as she is.

The reformer class has been the highlight of my week for the last three years. I have made friends through pilates and the brief conversations we have before and after the lessons have led to meaningful social connections that go beyond the class. The cost of pilates classes in Johannesburg makes this a significant spending item in my budget, but Leigh's classes are worth every cent. She is also very understanding about offering make-up classes when I am not able to get to the regular class.

I will miss Leigh and her gentle ruthlessness terribly when I move to a new job that involves an overseas posting. I am sure it will be almost impossible to find another studio that makes me so happy and healthy.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal line.