

FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

METHOD PUTKISTO

FOR AN ATHLETE



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Foreword

My background is in athletics. I quit training sprints and hurdles in 2003. It was a big change after many years systematical training and competing. It was time for me to find something else to my life. Naturally I was interested in doing something that was related to sports and the body. In the beginning of 2004 I realized I was being drifted to Method Putkisto Pilates training in Helsinki. I had been doing "in a way" Pilates training while still training sprints but I really didn't have the overall picture of what Pilates training really was. Anyway, I realized that I wanted to know more about body control and that's where it all got started.

MP Pilates training taught me a lot about body awareness, breathing and how to strengthen the primary muscles. In April 2005 it was time to deepen my knowledge. That was when I started Method Putkisto training in London. With a little bit of knowledge of body control already, it was easier to start studying the method. I had to start studying more anatomy and muscle connection to understand how to stretch properly for example hamstrings – how to move the pelvis to create a deeper stretch, how to drop the weight into the right area etc. I realized, again, that if I just had known these basic tools when I was doing my stretching while still training professionally, how much more efficient would my running have been. By that time I really did stretch quite a lot, but I was still too stiff around my pelvis and I was running hurdles where you need to have the most flexible muscles around the pelvis. I was also suffering from hyperlordosis in my lower back which caused me not to get out the optimal strength to move faster. My wrong position in the pelvis was because of short muscles and weak deep postural muscles but also because I didn't have the knowledge in what position my pelvis should be.

Now when I look back to my training in sprints, I realize how little I really knew about how to use the body correctly in order to maximize strength, speed, endurance and relaxation. And what is alarming is that I am not the only one. I can see many Finnish athletes working hard, doing training for their sport without really understanding how to use their body correctly.

Many athletes think they know how to strengthen the core muscles and how to stretch properly.

That's what I also thought before getting to know Method Putkisto and MP Pilates.

I'm not saying that there are no athletes that don't have the knowledge, but I think the majority of athletes don't know enough about body control. I think every athlete who is taking his/her work seriously should know the basic anatomy of movement: what is the correct posture, where are the primary muscles attached, what are the most important postural muscles of our body and how to breath correctly.

Many athletes, especially the younger generation and their coaches should think more carefully how to bring an athlete to a very demanding sport training whether you are doing sprints or tennis. I believe that body control exercises like Method Putkisto and Pilates should be side by side with event training and be considered as important as event training itself. Everyone should have the knowledge and body awareness of how the body is meant to work. When this is achieved training for your own sport will be much more efficient.

Method Putkisto is a top product. A product like your running shoe or recovery drink but it's not material, it's knowledge. Method Putkisto instructors are there to bring the knowledge of kinesiology and physiology into a practical level that the athletes will understand and be able to use for their own benefit.

Let's take the sport into its new level!



1. Introduction

The Method Putkisto Statement

Flexibility is the link to your body's strength and balance.
In principal each muscle should be longer than the bone whose
movement it initiates or supports.

Marja Putkisto, the founder of Method Putkisto, started teaching Method Putkisto for over twenty years ago.

Concentrating on perfecting long, intense, precise stretches and mastering the breathing technique she developed the training Method with its unique way of changing the body to help athletes to master their sport.

Method Putkisto offers you four components which will give you better; posture, body control and muscle balance.

Components are:

1. Lengthens tight and short muscles

The stretching technique will take your muscles into a deeper stretch – beyond the normal stretching you might ordinarily do.

2. Strengthens the primary postural muscles of your body

This includes the muscles that are responsible for creating a strong, *functional* core for your body . Improving these core muscles will help you to use your body more efficiently in your sport.

3. Improves your breathing technique

By learning how to use your diaphragm as the primary breathing muscle and the muscles that assist breathing, you will unite the body to work as a functional unit – following the centreline. Efficient breathing is the key to achieve a good posture and muscle balance. Correct breathing also supports the stretches by making them more comfortable, and far more efficient.

4. Improves your body awareness -> getting to know your body

In order to for you to work on your tight muscles, you need to connect your mind as well as your body. As you travel through the Method Putkisto deep stretching programme, you will gain an awareness of your body in relation to stretching. You will learn to know your body better which means you can also move your body more precisely and efficiently.

2. The five elements of Method Putkisto

1. Focus

Work from inside out! Set your target by visualizing where the bones and muscles connect. Visualize your centreline and stabilize your body. Focus on the muscle you want to lengthen and send it the message to relax. Imagine how it would feel to have longer and more elastic muscles.

2. Breathing

Efficient diaphragm breathing is the key for successful results in Method Putkisto. Inhalation and exhalation creates a pressure into your body. Use that inner pressure to expand your muscle from inside when breathing in. When breathing out, feel the pressure easing and muscle relaxing. Conscious control of diaphragm and assisting breathing muscles is required for reaching the optimum level of fitness. Method Putkisto breathing exercises will help you to develop the necessary flexibility and awareness of your body to make this kind of breathing more accessible.

It's important to know that tensions in shoulder area and a bad upper body posture are usually consequence of ineffective breathing.

3. Space

Learn to move in space. Three-dimensional awareness provides a foundation that enables you to reach your target. Also be aware of the space inside you and learn to increase that space. The direction in which you apply and release your weight is the key for allowing your muscle to open and your bones to move into the position you have chosen. While working through the muscle and creating the stretch you need to know which part of your body is moving up and which part of your body is moving down (opposite forces), which part is moving in towards your centreline, and which part is moving away from it (opposition of movement).

4. Weight

"First drop the weight – and then transfer it".

To create a deep stretch you need to apply a sufficient weight through the muscle using your own body weight. The muscle or muscle group you have chosen to stretch must remain passive. Relax and allow the gravity to take over.

5. Time

The length of time you take on each deep stretch is the key to progress and success. To reach the deep stretch you need to take more time than with normal stretching. Usually it requires a minimum of 2 minutes up to 5 minutes. To get the muscle into its full or new length, you have to relax the muscle first. Only then will the filaments glide away from each other and allow you to work on your long deep stretching exercises.

In a "normal" stretch, the muscle will reach it's original (full) length which takes about 30 seconds. No stretch will work unless your muscles are given time to respond to the conscious message to relax. Once your muscle has reached beyond the "biting point" to a more passive state (i.e. once the muscle is no longer contracting against the stretch) slowly stretch your muscle to its new length. Rely on your awareness. Listen to your muscle's responses, which will determine the time.

3. Method Putkisto for an athlete

The length and strength of your muscles reflect the efficiency level of your movement.

With Method Putkisto you can achieve:

- strength, endurance, speed, relaxation, ability, agility
- better ability to relax the muscles
- larger and easier rotational movement of body
- larger range of motion
- efficient breathing
- injury prevention
- large range of motion in antagonist muscles enables greater speed of movement

For how many athletes are deep stretching/strengthening exercises an important part at its own of the training program and not just optional “do if you like” regime? How many athletes think that focused stretching exercises are as important as event training itself? I think they should be. I believe all the athletes are doing stretching exercises but I also believe that it's not as focused as it should be. You might be chatting with a friend or then your focus is somewhere else than in the muscle you are working on.

And even if you are focusing you probably don't have enough knowledge of how to deepen the stretch or how to strengthen the postural muscles correctly. When stretching you will easily reach the areas that are loose – it's harder to reach the areas that are tight and not used to movement and circulation. In Method Putkisto these areas of the body are referred to as ‘blind spots’. The body will naturally find its way to the easy, comfortable positions and will resist the difficult areas. Method Putkisto will teach you the skills needed to focus the stretch on a precise area of the muscle. Throughout a stretch it is important to focus on feeling, connecting and understanding your body. Finding the ‘blind spots’ in your body will improve your body control and you will learn to know new muscles in your body.

In every sport the correct posture and knowledge of the body's centreline is crucial for optimum strength, endurance and technique.

Then how can you achieve this good body alignment? Is it when the runner's coach is shouting: “keep your running high!”, “pelvis higher!”, “larger arm movement!”, “lean forward!”. If you don't have the tools and understanding at how your body works it's very hard if not impossible to gain lasting results in improving technique.

What about in the gym when you are told to keep your abdominals contracted, what is that you are really doing then? Are you using the right supporting abdominals and not just the superficial one? If you haven't exercised your abdominals more precisely so that you would know how to use the deeper supporting muscles it won't happen during a heavy strength exercise session. And when I say exercised the abdominals more precisely I do not mean those 100 sit ups or crushes you probably can do. The efficiency and power of your core comes from the deeper abdominals. That's where Method Putkisto can help you. We bring the terminology and knowledge to you. What ever your sport is you can transfer that knowledge into your sport, it is not easy and it is not going to happen fast, so be prepared to work!

A Method Putkisto instructor will teach you the stabilizing points of your body and thus enabling you to support and move the body correctly and efficiently. Using the stabilizing points you will learn to arrange your body: your head, ribcage and pelvis to the centreline so that your movements will be easy and efficient.



Correct alignment can be achieved through:

1. Flexibility
2. Strong postural muscles
3. Correct breathing
4. Body and Mind connection -> recognising the body's correct posture

3.1 The pelvis – the body's foundation

The correct positioning of the pelvis is fundamental to building the correct body alignment. A good awareness of your pelvis area builds a solid foundation for achieving a higher sense of balance and quality of movement. If the muscles around your pelvis reach their optimal length and strength, they can lead you to a higher level of a three dimensional movement of the legs. If the pelvis is out of alignment and you don't recognise the correct movement of the pelvis it's impossible to achieve the optimum power or speed.

A new movement, muscle connection or technique must be learned to do slowly and controlled first. Body control exercises are much more difficult to do slowly controlling your deep supporting muscles. After that it's possible to transfer the new technique to a faster and stronger movement like e.g. running. In Method Putkisto you will do exercises focused and slowly using your body and mind connection which will allow your body to build new muscle connections.

Relaxed and strong running comes from the core centre. When the muscles around your pelvis are long and strong and the "power house" works efficiently the legs have a chance to work efficiently as a "locomotor".

3.2 Free your shoulder girdle– gain greater movement for your arms

Proper placement of the shoulders is important as it affects the movement of the arms, neck and head. The shoulder blades in the upper back are the initiators for arm movements. Shoulder blades must be connected to torso which allows free and strong arm movements. When the muscles that support your shoulder blades down towards the core centre are working then the elevating muscles won't have to overwork which could cause tightness around the neck.

Method Putkisto exercises will teach you how to connect the shoulder blades to your trunk and how to strengthen the muscles that allow that movement to happen.

The shoulder area must also be very flexible, to allow the arms the huge range of motion which they require. Very precise stretches in Method Putkisto will help you to release the tension and find the neutral position for your shoulder girdle.

It's important to know that the tensions in shoulder area and a bad upper body posture are usually consequence of ineffective breathing. With Method Putkisto deep breathing exercises you will lift your upper body posture which will release the tension in your shoulders. Correct breathing is also the key to deepening your upper body stretches. When practising you can realize how breathing changes pressure inside your body and how it can move the ribcage so that the ends of the muscles can be taken even further away.



3.3 Strengthen your deep postural muscles by bodyweight exercises

A very common misconception in sports is that tight, contracted muscles are strong. The research has shown that this statement is wrong. The goal should be toned and elastic muscles, which are both long and strong.

Method Putkisto is not just a stretching Method but its primary target is the overall balance of the body. That's why exercises also consist of very precise strengthening exercises.

To have a strong functional body a good posture is required: a strong abdominal corset and an efficient breathing technique. The smallest change in position of either the ribcage or the pelvis affects both the abdominals and the back and thus the core stability.

A muscle may shorten up to 50% of its normal length when maximally contracted. When muscles are short and tight they can not contract properly. The strength comes from elasticity i.e. the ability of the muscles to pull.

"A muscle contracts against resistance and, with perseverance, over time, becomes stronger. For the strength to increase, the amount of resistance or load worked against must also increase over time. Hence the problem with bodyweight conditioning - as the resistance (weight of the body) is fixed, is how to continue to increase strength? Surprisingly the answer is simple - by decreasing the amount of leverage it is possible to exert on an exercise, the resistance of an exercise becomes increasingly greater.

With experience and creativity it is possible to learn or design exercises that, done correctly and with the proper progressions, are so lacking in leverage that even at bodyweight levels of resistance it is possible to build staggering amounts of strength. In addition to strength, the athlete will also develop excellent balance, coordination, agility and exceptional core strength.

Why does correct bodyweight conditioning work so well? Basically, the harder the contraction over a greater part of the body during an exercise, the more effective the exercise. For maximum improvements training to failure is not necessary, but maximum contraction is". (Christopher Sommer)

Method Putkisto strengthening exercises focus mainly on deeper muscles that usually are too weak even with athletes. Muscles that we focus on are:

- transversus abdominis (deepest abdominal muscle)
- pelvic floor muscles
- diaphragm/assisting breathing muscles
- hip adductors/abductors and rotators
- multifidus muscles in your back
- lower trapezius and serratus anterior muscle (supports the shoulder blades).



Although Method Putkisto doesn't have exercises like this I will challenge you: no heavy weight training before you can do push ups like these!

4. When and how much ?

You should place the Method Putkisto sessions apart from the event training. Method Putkisto exercises should be done on their own day when there is no other training. You could place them between the harder training days so that it would work as a recovering exercise. Still, it's important to know that a Method Putkisto session can be hard both physically and mentally, so you must be prepared. After a long deep stretching exercise I recommend to have at least a 24 hour rest before the next technique demanding exercise. My recommendation is to have at least two Method Putkisto sessions per week, plus you should have several Pilates/bodyweight strengthening exercises in your training program. The most important thing is that you learn to listen to your body's messages and you will find the balance that is the best for you.

5. Athlete's comments

The Finnish magazine 'Kauneus & Terveys' tells us about a Finnish top 100m sprinter Markus Pöyhönen and his experiences about Method Putkisto. Markus started MP 'Body Care School' with Marja Putkisto. Markus has had great problems with his body and he knew that his body wasn't in a good condition. During a deep stretching period the focus was to return Markus' body in neutral posture by lengthening tight muscles into their correct length.

Markus describes how deep stretching feels really good in his body. Markus says that he now stretches 3-4 times a week and Method Putkisto has come a part of his life. Markus says that the greatest change in his stretching after learning MP has been the knowledge of correct body positions and efficient breathing. Markus is happy about how good and relaxed he feels after every deep stretching session.

The greatest and the most important change has happened in running. The range of movement in his legs used to be limited because of tight muscles. Now Markus feels that his body alignment is better which allows the energy to go into the right direction -> forward! Markus did know what the correct running position was but he couldn't run in that position because of the tight muscles. Markus looks forward to seeing how he can keep the correct alignment in sprint running. If he can do that it will be the first time in Markus' career that he can really use all the power and knowledge that he has.

I hope this introduction helps you to realize how Method Putkisto can help you to master your sport. We already have good examples of the changes Method Putkisto can do. Now It's your time to act!

-FOR A HEALTHY LIFE AND FUNCTIONAL BODY-



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