

Metro
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METHOD PUTKISTO A FINNISH TECHNIQUE TO LENGTHEN AND STRENGTHEN MUSCLES AND BODY

The long and short of it

How do you wear your body? Around your skeletal frame, do you drape a sharply-tailored suit of toned kaftan? If it's the latter, let us give you the name of our tailor —Marja Putkisto, founder of Method Putkisto.

For ten years, she has been leading a gentle revolution from Finland, using deep stretching and breathing to realign the body: elongating short, tight muscles, lifting waistline, smoothing and balancing muscles and even tackling cellulite.

The premise is, when muscles aren't used, they shorten and collapse over the frame like a deflated balloon. Method Putkisto counters this, using a Pilates-like series of slow movements to restructure the body's shape.

In class, Marja showed us how our foreshortened muscles can distort the body. She pointed out tightened hamstrings, which pull the buttocks down and push the stomach outwards. The stunted pectoral muscles of our chest, she explained, force the shoulders forward and tilt the head into an unnatural position. Even our facial muscles suffer; we wrinkle and crease our eyes to protect from computer-glare and clench our jaw, which in turn restricts our breath.

But all this, says Marja, we can fix. The technique concentrates on the core muscles (the large group of the back, abdomen, hips and pelvis). Stretches are very deep and, although there is some limp manipulation from the tutor to start off with, all postures are designed to be done unaided. Limb by limb, we are taught to open the body, to stretch (never tear) the sinew, relax bones towards the floor and to breathe deeply to aid a more intense stretch. Postures range from deceptively subtle to lip-bitingly painful but, after aligning first one side of the body and then the other, we are left confronting a more erect, relaxed and, yes taller reflection. Method Putkisto doesn't pretend to be a quick fix but, with practise we are assured it could be permanent.

Like other re-educative therapies, it strengthens bones and lengthens muscles, allowing greater internal space for the organs to function and improving circulation, posture, skin and general vitality. It's no miracle, Marja says, it's just using what nature's given you. "I'm like your Delia Smith," she explains. "She realised we had haute cuisine but the nation had forgotten how to boil an egg. We might have Botox and liposuction but we've forgotten how to use the body — and it's the simplest ingredient of all."