



At Play with Fred Devito And Elisabeth Halfpapp

After 28 years of teaching mind-body fitness classes, this high-energy couple continues to inspire and motivate the masses.

Organic Spa: I know you're in your early fifties. How many fitness classes a week do you still teach?

Fred Devito: We each teach about 10 hours—10 classes a week on average—when we're in town. Instructing continues to be an integral part of who we are and how we stay connected. We both also have a powerful work ethic; this yearning to teach and help people is one of the pivotal factors that drew us together years ago as a couple. We share a vivid work ethic.

Elisabeth Halfpapp: We like to think that as mind-body teachers we really do walk the walk. We are both without eggs when we enter the classroom, and we continue to be open and present and very moved by our experiences there. We both realize that we have a huge impact on people's health and their lives, and we take that very seriously.

OS: I first took a Pilates-like, Lotte Burke class from Elisabeth in Manhattan, nearly 20 years ago. How did you both get to Exhale spa?

FD: At the end of the Lotte Burke era in Bridgehampton, the CEO of Exhale, Annbeth Eschbach [an editorial advisory board member of this magazine], asked us to join her on a unique mind-body journey, and that was over seven years ago. Being steeped in the learnings of yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, Lotte Burke, and dance, we realized we had a fantastic opportunity to create new programming that blended the best of all these disciplines, add the components of pranayama (or breath work) and expand on these philosophies to heal, reduce stress, and help people.

EH: We call the melding of all these fitness philosophies Core Fusion and over 250,000 students a year in our spas are served by these classes. Over 20,000 students each month take Exhale mind-body classes. Our lifelong goal is to bridge the gap of mindfulness and expose people to the best of these movement components. We want students to carry each special moment off the mat and into the world, and allow the experience to manifest wholly.

OS: When you describe Core Fusion like that is sounds pretty woo-woo out there, and

yet I recently took your class again, and it was such a tough workout!

EH: Core Fusion balances the strength and stretching movements in Pilates mat, Lotte Burke, and yoga with the calm and relaxing energies of the ancient Asian arts. Purely from an aesthetic perspective, performing regular Core Fusion class gives you that high round butt, leaner legs, six-pack abs, and greater muscle definition across your whole upper body. It improves your posture instantly.

FD: Our programming is designed to improve athletic performance and balance muscle groups, too. It's extremely sports-specific, so doing a couple workouts each week improves your golf game and your tennis swing, it boosts endurance and flexibility, you name it.

OS: After thousands of classes, how do you stay fresh and upbeat? How can you make teaching and exercising inherently playful?

EH: We live in gratitude every day, and we share that energy with our students. Every time I start to lift my knees in my class I know that I can change peoples lives for one more hour, stay present and share my joy, and that makes every class unique and special. Every class is different and we try to foster this positive, non-competitive energy.

OS: What are some of your more playful hobbies?

FD: We maintain an extraordinary organic garden all summer long at our Bridgehampton home, and we entertain a lot out there—tending vegetables and cooking for our friends and family is very playful and fulfilling for us. We savor our summers there. We maintain a very balanced lifestyle, but we love great wine and eating well. Being kind to the earth is a big part of our lives. We're each the same weight as we were in high school and we do something active every day. We compost everything we possibly can, and we're very conscious of humane farming practices. We avoid packaged foods and when we're home we cook a lot. The world continues to change rapidly, and it comes down to awareness, being present, and making smart decisions every day. —N.D.S.

Who: In addition to directing Exhale Spa's teacher training curriculum, Fred DeVito, a former physical education teacher, is a nationally acclaimed instructor and presenter. He oversees the company's nutrition program and serves on the board of ExhaleSoul, Exhale's nonprofit charity organization.

Former ballerina Elisabeth Halfpapp is founder of Exhale's renowned Mind-Body fitness programming. Both she and Devito launched the Lotte Burke fitness philosophy over 20 years ago and continue to be at the forefront of Pilates, yoga, and mind-body fitness classes across the country.

Where: The exuberant couple, who've been married for 26 years, spends summers teaching in Bridgehampton, New York, but live most of the year in New York City in order to supervise classes at three Exhale Spas in Manhattan. In addition, they spend nearly half the year traveling to deliver innovative programming to teachers and students nationwide.

Why: Their down-to-earth style and love of continuing education enable them to head all mind-body programming for Exhale spas in New York, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, and Turks & Caicos.

