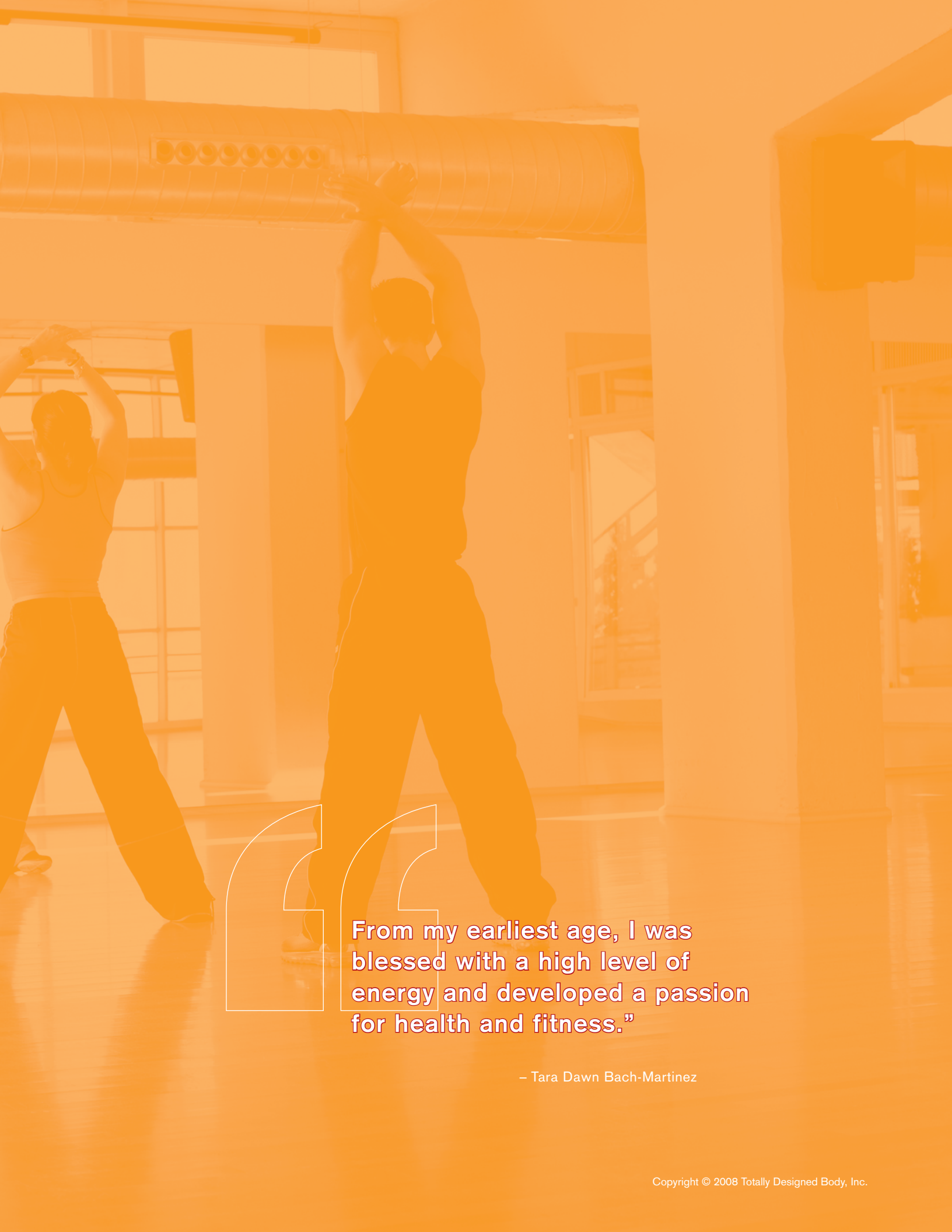


**PERSPECTIVES ON
FITNESS AND EDUCATION**

MY PHILOSOPHY
by TARA DAWN BACH-MARTINEZ



**From my earliest age, I was
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for health and fitness.”**

– Tara Dawn Bach-Martinez



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Co-owner, Totally Designed Body

TARA DAWN BACH-MARTINEZ

From my earliest age, I was blessed with a high level of energy and led a very active life. Even as a child, I developed a passion for fitness and health, along with music and dance, and this turned into a lifelong dedication to these fields. For me, the living body has always been the realm where art and science meet.

By the age of two, I had already begun to study both dance and skiing, and eventually I became a professional dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, and a ski racer. Home-schooled, I grew up in a family committed to outstanding achievement. My mother was a concert pianist, and so learning the piano was a basic part of my education. As it happened, the mother of one of my mother's piano students was a yoga instructor, who taught me about the basic mechanics and the importance of deep breathing. From this, a focus on breathing became a cornerstone of my fitness philosophy.

MY EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

My passion for health and fitness led me to study a wide range of techniques and philosophies, including both Eastern and Western disciplines.

On the one hand, I hold a Master of Science degree from Columbia Teacher's College in Exercise Physiology, and hold certifications from numerous fitness organizations such as The Pilates Method Alliance, The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), and The American Council on Exercise (ACE). I am a certified Medical Exercise Specialist from the American Academy of Fitness Professionals (AAFP), a Board Certified Reflexologist, and studied neuromuscular therapy with Dr. Paul St. John.

On the other hand, Eastern disciplines, which recognize and incorporate the importance of the spiritual aspect of our lives, have also played a central role in my fitness education. I received international yoga teaching certification at The Sivananda Ashram in India and hold a Masters Degree in Spiritual Psychology from the University of Santa Monica. In addition, I am an ordained minister in the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness.

Finally, I have learned by listening to my own body. Over the years, I have fought my way back from serious sports-related injuries, including a bad skiing accident and a bicycle accident that terminated my ability to run, which had been one of my most passionate activities. I have also had to consider other health issues, too, such as diabetes and cardio-vascular disease, which run in my family.

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Still, every physical challenge has been a steppingstone to improving my understanding of the body. My setbacks have taught me to work within my limitations and to help my clients accept the constraints their bodies impose on them. And yet, at the same time, my experiences have taught me that we can draw upon the amazing natural power and strength that resides within our bodies, and to harness it in order to heal ourselves and optimize our physical capabilities.

GUIDELINES FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF FITNESS

Fifteen years ago, I founded Totally Designed Body, and today I manage it with my husband, Victor. It is a full-service fitness company in New York City, dedicated to offering programs that bring together Eastern and Western techniques.

My work there, and with all my clients – whether working with the Rockettes, professional models, housewives, or with wheelchair-bound amputees – has been imbued with the same basic philosophical convictions. Chief among these are:

- **Breath.** Breath is the essence of being alive, and proper breathing is a basic key to all aspects of good health.
- **Balance.** To achieve comprehensive health demands seeing the whole picture. It means understanding how all parts of the body work together, to design sound exercise programs to help clients achieve optimal strength. On a higher level, it entails nurturing a balance among all aspects of one's self, including the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, in order to be truly healthy.
- **Consistency.** Developing a consistent practice in one's exercise and fitness routine is a key concept in achieving the goals one desires.
- **Discipline.** Anything worth achieving demands hard work and dedication.
- **Taking Responsibility for Oneself.** A teacher or trainer can only facilitate – each person must take full responsibility for their body and for working towards one's goals. Rewards will come only in proportion to the investment you make.
- **Body Acceptance.** Whether you are an Olympic athlete or an amputee in a wheelchair, accepting your body, and using the resources available to you, is key to improving your fitness and to maximizing what you can achieve.
- **Being Psychologically Present.** To achieve the fitness results you desire, it is imperative to be in touch with your intentions and actions.
- **Spiritual Awareness.** On the simplest of levels, spiritual awareness leads a person to be thankful for the wonderful gift of life and the miracle of the human body. This is a powerful component for tapping into one's strengths, using one's natural healing power, and for creating a positive and healthy outlook.

ON TEACHING

For me, teaching has always been a source of great satisfaction and enjoyment. I have more than 20 years of experience as a teacher and a motivational speaker, including 12 years on the faculty of Marymount Manhattan College's Fitness Instructor Certification Program. I take pride in having gained a reputation as a teacher's teacher, and to have served as a model and an inspiration for others.

Over the years, I have developed fitness programs for a variety of populations, including Olympic athletes and elderly people with osteoporosis, and created the T-Bach Exercise Method, blending yoga, weight training, Pilates and stretching.

My most important guiding concepts in teaching include:

- **Co-creation.** Teaching is a cooperative endeavor, which results in empowering the students. As in training, where we work with clients to unlock and enhance their natural potential, in teaching, I endeavor to provide my students with the tools to enable them to proceed on their own with direction and confidence, and to be able to design appropriate classes for their own target populations.
- **Motivation.** I try to inspire my students and convey my passion to them, and to push them to achieve heights they never imagined they could reach.
- **Communication.** It is important to be a good communicator and to speak in a language that my students will understand. This also means knowing when to use layman's language, and to translate technical concepts into everyday terms.
- **Practical Results.** From each lesson, I try to give my students at least three things that they can take away and immediately put into practice.
- **Continuing Education.** A teacher must always remain willing to learn from her students, and to continue with her own education through ongoing classroom study and hands-on work.



In closing, I believe that every individual body is unique. Every person has a right to live a life that is as productive and as fully functional as possible. It is a privilege to work with clients and students to help bring them to a higher level of learning, of both the body and the mind, and to empower them to live with more grace, ease and confidence, no matter at what stage in life they may be.





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