



Ballet Beautiful: Transform Your Body and Gain the Strength, Grace, and Focus of a Ballet Dancer

Mary Helen Bowers

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Ballet-inspired fitness for every woman!

You don't have to be a professional ballerina to look like one! With Mary Helen Bowers' *Ballet Beautiful*, forget beating yourself up in the gym and suffering through starvation diets for some unattainable goal. You can achieve your ideal body and develop the strength, grace, and elegance of a dancer by following Mary Helen's proven program—one that's got everyone from celebrities to busy moms to executives raving!

Ballet Beautiful is a fitness method that blends the artistry and athleticism of ballet with an easy, accessible eating plan that works for every *body* – and absolutely no dance experience is required. Created by professional ballerina Mary Helen Bowers, this transformative approach to fitness and health will reshape your body and your mind!

Ballet Beautiful's three-fold approach is not an extreme workout nor is it a radical diet for an overnight fix; it's a roadmap to achieving and maintaining your ideal health, shape and size—all with the elegance and strength of a ballerina. Part One of the book introduces the program's empowering mindset, the key to supporting and guiding you through lasting change. Part Two, the *Ballet Beautiful* Method, consists of challenging, effective, and fun workouts that sculpt and tone sleek ballet muscles and build beautiful posture. Whether you have a full hour or only 15 minutes, you can tailor the program to your own schedule and needs. Part Three shares the *Ballet Beautiful* Lifestyle, a healthy, balanced approach to nutrition. With meal plans, shopping tips and quick but delicious daily recipes that will satisfy and nourish your entire body, it's a stress-free, diet-free plan that will help keep you feeling as strong and healthy as you look.

Ballet Beautiful: Transform Your Body and Gain the Strength, Grace, and Focus of a Ballet Dancer Details

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From Reader Review Ballet Beautiful: Transform Your Body and Gain the Strength, Grace, and Focus of a Ballet Dancer for online ebook

Tatiana says

Most little girls dream of growing up and becoming a ballerina, and I was no exception. So I jumped on Mary Helen Bower's *Ballet Beautiful* program, which supposedly used ballet technique to give the everyday gal the toned and graceful physique of a dancer. Not only does Bower boast a workout regimen, but also psychological and dietary strategies to create a well-rounded, balanced lifestyle. It worked for Natalie Portman, why couldn't it work for moi?

Two weeks ago, I was very excited to give this a go. The glowing reviews of Bower's DVDs on Amazon left no doubt that this program works for some women. And to an extent it *did* work for me. I saw change in my body, the tightening and shaping of my legs, as well as the strengthening of my core, after one week. I lost 4 lbs. (not that I really needed to). I was even happy to see that I have been practicing Bower's basic healthy eating choices long before I picked up this book.

I soon realized that this was not the type of exercise routine that fit my needs. As a former gymnast, I am strong but have an aversion to 'bulk.' My goal is always to sculpt the muscle I already have into a lean, lithe physique. That's why I do pilates and a low-stress cardio routine. I thought Bower's program would do that, too. Maybe I needed to keep at it longer. Maybe I was muddled by the unclear pics. (It took me an insane amount of time to figure out the moves. The pictures in the book are not very decipherable. I have taken ballet class; my mother was a dancer, and she couldn't figure out what was being asked in some cases. Perhaps the videos are easier to follow?)

In addition, with everything going on in my life right now, I can't commit to a full lifestyle overhaul just to tone up my arms and legs. I think that aspect appeals to women who are looking to lose serious weight and change their ways of looking at health and fitness.

In the end, this was an experiment that gave me a few worthwhile exercises for my repertoire and a lesson that if it ain't broke, don't go trying a new exercise program!

Grace says

3.5. I really like Mary Helen Bowers and I have been doing her program via streaming videos and dvds for a few months now. That said, I felt this book was a little too *Ballet Beautiful* propaganda-ish. I almost felt like I was being brainwashed a little, haha. The exercises themselves are great, and they are actually quite unique and distinct from other exercise programs (warning: I don't think the exercises would be easy to follow using the book alone). The "*Ballet Beautiful* lifestyle" isn't anything new, though: eat whole food, balanced meals, don't deprive yourself, exercise whenever you can even if it's just for a little bit, blah blah blah. I guess I expected something a little more novel in that area. I did really like that she sort of told her story throughout the book--that's probably what I enjoyed most. She makes herself relatable and even more likeable. Overall, the book didn't blow me away like I was expecting it to, being a big MBH fan, but I would still recommend it

to anyone already interested.

Alexis says

I enjoyed this book. The exercises described are easily modifiable for those (like me) who cannot do them in the same way that the author can and I love all of the stretching she recommends. It has really helped alleviate some of my knee and lower back pain.

I also appreciate the mindset of forgiveness and flexibility that she emphasizes throughout the book. Her approach is realistic rather than strict. It's the do what you can when you can attitude that makes her program feel approachable.

One downside is I found some of the exercises difficult to follow along to in the book. I ended up buying two DVDs of hers to do because I liked the exercises so much that I wanted to be able to be able to do the rest.

Another downside is that I found her recipe and eating section to be a little lean. I know that this isn't a cookbook but most of her recommendations were for salads, which I have trouble eating because of my dietary issues, so this entire section had very few options for me. She also did not include many vegetarian or vegan options, which also limits its applicability to her audience.

Overall, though, I have been happy with the exercises and would recommend them to others.

Mireia (Active Reviewer at www.drieduppen.org) says

Unbelievably useful. Very well written, not boring at all. The first part is very interesting as it shows you how the life of a prima ballerina in the New York City Ballet is like. And then there is the second part which shows you the main exercises which I believe are perfect for building the ballerina body. The third part gives you some recipes, many of them sound pretty good; I'll probably try some of them.

So, in general, the book is really good, it shows you some exercises, meals and ideas that are from a very healthy perspective, not a just-do-what-I-say perspective.

I recommend reading this book if you are trying to get into the ballet world.

Amanda says

I bought this book and a dvd for the traditional 60 minute workout, and my review (ands 4 stars) covers both items. The book was well organized, thought-out and gave a thorough overview of Mary Helen's impressive background, attitude / mindset for accomplishing goals, ballet moves that go along with her dvd and her recommendations on a healthy diet. It has good points, and at the same time, some points were pretty redundant. The book could have been streamlined and still would have covered the same information.(Her diet is still a bit strict for people like me :) -- yet it has some good ideas and recipes).

The dvd is awesome!! I have heard about her for a long time as well as the positive results from her work-

outs. The work-out is tough, and some days it burns more than others. She is awesome at giving instructions on performing the moves, and I really connect to her style of working out which is positive, calming and you can see results! Highly recommend trying our her dvd if you are interested in a "ballet" type work-out (toning up arms / legs and core strengthening) and ordering the book to supplement the dvd to get insight into her overall Ballet Beautiful philosophy.

Kate Owens says

Awesome book! Mary Helen Bowers is a genius! I've been doing her Ballet Beautiful workout videos (streaming and DVD) for a few months now and have loved loved loved the results! When the book came out, I was so excited. She gives great advice on how to achieve balance in your life, eating habits and exercise routine so that you can be Ballet Beautiful! I recommend this for anyone looking to get into great shape, tone like never before, achieve a balanced daily life and eating habits without using deprivation or extreme dieting! This book is great, written by an intelligent, innovative and wonderful woman! Read it now! :)

Laura says

Fantastic insight into the Ballet Beautiful concept - great introduction to ballet inspired exercise as a fitness & exercise program.

Works well in the Kindle format & includes a free video demo for eBook readers - this is great, both in quality and content, and encourages you to try out the other exercise videos available for streaming on the website.

Others have commented (perhaps on Amazon reviews) about the quality of the photography - I would say that the images when viewed along with the description are perfectly adequate and perhaps are styled in quite a traditional ballet format - certainly didn't dampen my reading (or learning) experience!

Definitely works as a starting point for the BB lifestyle, there is more than enough information to get started. However, Mary Helen is rather bewitching so I don't doubt I will be following this up with the DVD and/ or the streamed videos!

As the book states, you need nothing but a yoga mat and some space to try out these exercises, but somehow you'll feel that you want to wear ballet slippers while you read it!

Jennifer says

Mary Helen Bowers breaks down the inspiration, moves, and Ballet Beautiful lifestyle including: recipes, shopping lists and samples of weekly schedules of her Ballet Beautiful program.

The book itself is a quick read, and is very positive and encouraging. Readers will have a better understanding of Bowers' inspiration of the program and its conception/development. Readers will also have

a better understanding of Bowers, who is a genuine modern woman who doesn't guilt readers with what they cannot have and should not do. There is no shame, guilt or over-explanation about caloric concerns, which is a stark contrast to other diet/health programs out there.

The program itself is flexible to individual needs, and Bowers stresses that flexibility as a selling point for the woman on the go. The program is realistic, and Ballet Beautiful in combination with the DVDs is a great combination. The workouts will have you feeling the burn in minutes, and fitting into your skinny jeans before you know it.

Gina says

I am inclined to agree that a good portion of the book promotes the author's business, but I would argue that it is the point of the book. She is promoting and expanding her Ballet Beautiful (BB) brand.

I also agree that following the exercises could be challenging if 1) you have no ballet experience 2) you have not seen the BB videos. However, I do like that she includes the stretches and the exercise in each section, rather than asking the reader to flip back and forth in the book. That is one of my biggest pet peeves about following an exercise program from a book. The author lays out the workout from start (stretch) to finish (stretch) for us, rather than asking the reader to cobble together a workout from different sections of the book. Of course, the beauty is that the reader can do that -- when they are comfortable with the moves and the workouts. There is a nice flexibility to this program.

Rosemary says

I bought this book because I've been doing some of the free online Ballet Beautiful workout videos and enjoying them but wasn't quite ready to make the full commitment to a paid subscription. When I found a fairly cheap copy of the book online it seemed worth checking out, and it was.

I've been doing Pilates casually for awhile now but always wished I could find something that worked more along the same lines as the way I was used to working and stretching my body when I used to dance. I danced from age 5-18 and went to classes 3-4 times a week. I've only danced very sporadically in the 5 years since but I found when I was trying to exercise that was still the way I wanted to move. In answering this need Ballet Beautiful is excellent and exactly what I was looking for. I found the diagrams and instructions easy to follow. However I imagine it would take longer to get your head around if you didn't have any dance experience.

As for the mindset section of the book, I found the details about Bowers' own ballet/fitness journey interesting. I also really like the book's repeated insistence on forgiving yourself, then getting back on track if you find yourself skipping workouts/having unhealthy eating days etc. rather than beating yourself up about it and feeling despondent. On the other hand there's quite a bit of believe in yourself, how to set goals kind of affirmation stuff which seems unnecessary, maybe it works for some people though.

The nutrition chapters again aren't particularly revolutionary. The basis is eat lots of greens, lots of fruit and veggies, whole grains, proteins pretty standard stuff. In saying that however, the flexibility and the "common

sense" approach is going to be a much easier approach to follow. Honestly there's no way I'd be prepared to cut carbs out of my diet, but eating wholemeal bread is something I already do, switching to wholemeal pasta would be an achievable goal, for example. I also like the look of the recipes and will definitely be trying some of them.

Renee says

As a classically trained dancer, it's very necessary to keep it up. Ballet is one of my greatest passions, and I can't get enough just from class. These workouts can be easily adapted to your fitness level, and it's like being in an intense conditioning class; in the comfort of your home.

Roya says

I'm very inconsistent about exercise. I love the way it makes me feel, but I hate actually doing it. Sometimes I skip working out and this in turn makes me eat poorly. I picked this up the hopes that it would motivate me to be more consistent.

Bowers, whom I've been a fan of for years, is a former New York City Ballet dancer. She founded Ballet Beautiful, which is essentially barre (ballet-inspired workouts) and rigorously trained Natalie Portman for her role in *Black Swan*.

She has a very balanced approach that I love. I try and do her workouts as often as I can. They're very intense, but so graceful and effective that I'm actually excited about working out.

A bunch of moves are demonstrated in pictures throughout the book. I barely glanced at these mainly because I prefer videos (some of hers are on YouTube for those interested). The pictures are in black and white and some of the steps are vague. I'll probably go back and read them though just because I love her method so much.

Ying Liang says

Practicing. Persistence is very important.

Bree says

Notes:

photo workouts are not easily understood
movements are all similar enough to my PiYo workouts

her food advice randomly excludes "cream sauces" but not sugar

Melissa says

The benefit of this book (over the DVDs) is that it includes dietary guidelines (rather typical of calorie-restriction diets: high in vegetables, high in whole grains, some fruit, some fats, low in dairy, low in meat); it also includes Mary Helen Bowers' story of how she came up with "Ballet Beautiful" and why. Lastly she sets out her "mindset" which consists primarily of loving yourself as you are now and setting realistic goals for what you'd like to accomplish. Though a number of the exercises are in the book - with pictures and instructions - the DVDs are really a better help there.

It should be noted that although "Ballet Beautiful" (BB) was part of Natalie Portman's training for "Black Swan" (and Natalie wrote the forward to the book) it is unrealistic to expect to get a "ballerina body" in a year as Natalie did from doing the BB alone. Mary Helen explains on her blog (and in other interviews) that Natalie's training was as follows:

- Five hours of working out a day. Six days a week. Combination of cardio, mat, & ballet. (Worked up to over six months & then maintained for six months)
- Mat work that is from the Ballet Beautiful series. The videos are about 2 1/2 hours in total length.
- Swam about a mile each day, doing the front crawl and breast stroke—doing these really long, ballet-type movements, reaching ahead in the water as far as you can. This gave joints a break from the Ballet work.
- Ballet/pointe work for 1-2 hours - with a professional there to guide.
- Strictly following a diet regimen.
