

The Bar Method Story

The Bar Method is full-body exercise program created by Burr Leonard. The workout utilizes a ballet bar fitness technique and draws from the principles of isometrics, dance conditioning, interval training, and physical therapy. The result is a noticeable “Bar Method” sculpted body featuring:

- Firm, elongated muscles
- Reduced body fat
- High muscle definition in the chest
- Improved posture
- Long, narrow thighs
- A lifted seat and defined hamstrings
- Strong, flat abdominals
- Increased stamina and energy
- Extended youthfulness

Huffington Post, ABC News, KUSI TV, and KUSA-TV have featured The Bar Method.

The Bar Method is based on the technique of Lotte Berk, a German dancer who, after injuring her back, got the idea of combining her ballet bar routines with her rehabilitative therapy to form an exercise system. In 1959 she opened The Lotte Berk Studio in her West End, London basement. One of her students, an American named Lydia Bach, was so impressed with the technique that she bought the rights to Lotte’s name and in 1971 opened The Lotte Berk Method exercise studio in Manhattan.

Ten years later, in 1981, two sisters Burr Leonard and Mimi Leonard Fleischman took their first Lotte Berk Method class and fell in love with the exercise. In 1991, Burr, a journalist, and her new husband Carl Diehl, a lawyer, bought a license to operate Lotte Berk Method studios in Southern Connecticut becoming the sole licensees. Burr spent the next year studying and teaching The Lotte Berk Method at the Manhattan studio then she and Carl opened their first Lotte Berk exercise studio in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Immediately, Burr noticed that some of her clients’ knees, backs, and shoulders were not responding well to the exercises and sought the help of a physical therapist. With his guidance she reworked the sculpting exercises so that they would target students’ muscles without impacting their joints. This keen focus on safety and effectiveness remain at the foundation of The Bar Method exercises.

During the 90s, the business partners opened three more Lotte Berk Method studios in New Canaan, Darien, and Westport, Connecticut. At the end of their ten-year license term, their four studios were thriving but their version of The Lotte Berk Method had become so unlike their licensor’s that they made the decision not to renew. Between 2000 and 2001 they founded The Bar Method, the Connecticut studios were sold, and the flagship Bar Method exercise studio opened in the Marina neighborhood of San Francisco, California.

In early 2008, they launched The Bar Method Franchising Company. Burr and Carl now work together to research, interview, approve, and give guidance to every franchisee. The Bar Method has quickly gained a national reputation for superior teacher training and excellent support for its studio owners.

In 2009 The Bar Method founded a Media Company, which produced two exercise DVDs, “Change Your Body!” and “Accelerated Workout”. Accessories are also available through the media company and more DVDs are in the works. Today Burr Leonard and Carl Diehl have turned their one Bar Method studio into a franchise operation with 35+ studios and a media company selling exercise DVDs and accessories. With The Bar Method currently in seven states across the country and 10+ studios in the works including three new states and Canada, the founders dedicate their time to ensuring consistency and quality in the exercise system, guiding the franchisees, and producing media products.