

# PILATES Illustrated

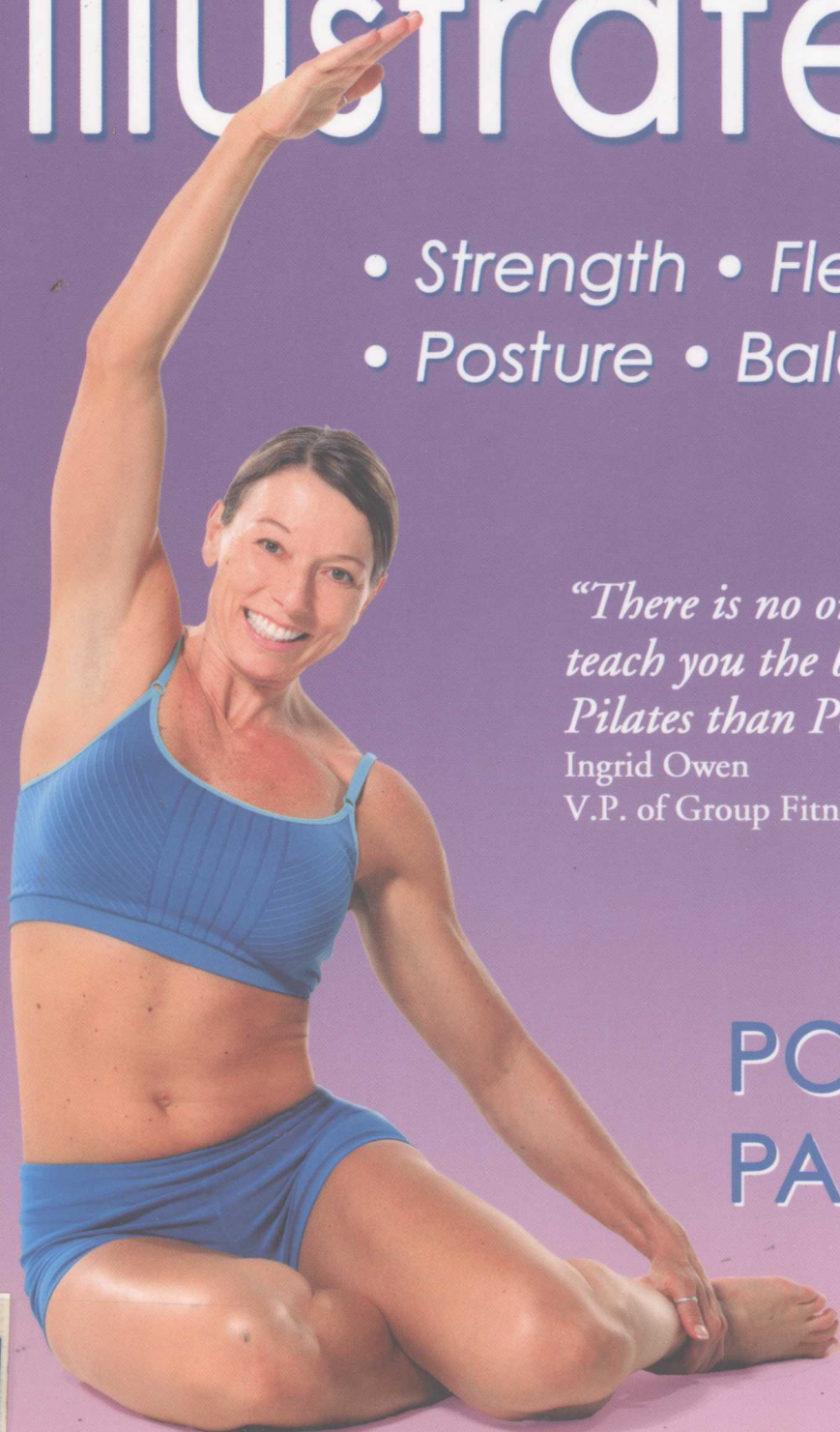
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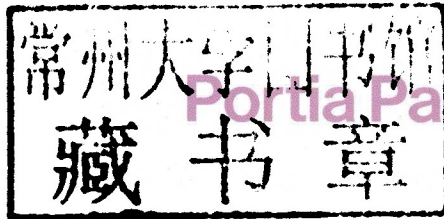
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# PILATES

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### Human Kinetics

Web site: [www.HumanKinetics.com](http://www.HumanKinetics.com)

*United States:* Human Kinetics

P.O. Box 5076

Champaign, IL 61825-5076

800-747-4457

e-mail: [humank@hkusa.com](mailto:humank@hkusa.com)

*Canada:* Human Kinetics

475 Devonshire Road Unit 100

Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5

800-465-7301 (in Canada only)

e-mail: [info@hkcanada.com](mailto:info@hkcanada.com)

*Europe:* Human Kinetics

107 Bradford Road

Stanningley

Leeds LS28 6AT, United Kingdom

+44 (0) 113 255 5665

e-mail: [hk@hkeurope.com](mailto:hk@hkeurope.com)

*Australia:* Human Kinetics

57A Price Avenue

Lower Mitcham, South Australia 5062

08 8372 0999

e-mail: [info@hkaustralia.com](mailto:info@hkaustralia.com)

*New Zealand:* Human Kinetics

P.O. Box 80

Torrens Park, South Australia 5062

0800 222 062

e-mail: [info@hknewzealand.com](mailto:info@hknewzealand.com)

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# PILATES

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# Preface

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I was first introduced to Pilates while competing in the National Aerobics Championship. My friend and mentor, Bruno Bosardi, introduced our team to Pilates, and I thought, *Okay, I'll give this a try. What can it hurt?* It was certainly better than throwing my body to the ground and landing in the splits or in a push-up, and it actually felt good. It felt positive and right, a very intuitive and beneficial form of exercise that would save my body from the wear and tear of the continual hard poundings and landings. Little did I know that I would soon become a Pilates instructor myself, much less a trainer of trainers.

What I found is that Pilates entered every aspect of my life. I soon realized that the principles of Pilates for better posture, a clear mind, and an efficient body enhanced my teaching of aerobics, cycling, kickboxing, and strength training. Pilates inspired me to become a better instructor, a better teacher, and a better mentor because the principles of Pilates matched what I had found to be innate in teaching. That first introduction has turned into a lifelong dream of teaching through intuition and a passion for what I am doing and giving to others. From the first Pilates workshop I led in Seoul, Korea, teaching a young group of personal trainers and group exercise instructors, I knew this was what I wanted to do and that I wanted to offer this to the world. Writing this book allowed me to do just that.

Approaching Pilates for the first time can be intimidating even to the most proficient fitness enthusiast, but with a little bit of understanding and time, the moves become intuitive and flow easily. The effects of a regular Pilates practice can be richly rewarding as well as relaxing or invigorating, depending on the style and pace at which you perform the exercises. Whether you are new to Pilates or just curious about it, *Pilates Illustrated* will give you a practical and hands-on guide to incorporating Pilates into your daily life.

In this book, you will find more than 100 individual exercises detailed and photographed as well as 17 Pilates workout programs to get you started. Exercises are listed in categories and defined by the starting body position. Photos of each exercise show the movement from beginning to end along with variations for modifications and challenges. For each exercise, the benefits, contraindications, breathing instructions, and alignment setup are listed. A step-by-step instruction list is given for each exercise as well as the focus and emphasis of each move.

Chapter 1 covers the benefits, history, and principles of Pilates, as well as the essential information on how to start your Pilates practice. The history of Pilates is relatively short but impressive. It is important to understand the major milestones in the development and evolution of Pilates. The physical and mental benefits of Pilates are discussed so you can understand the changes as they are occurring while you develop your practice of Pilates.

Starting your practice begins with learning how breath affects movement and how to breathe correctly so as to move with efficiency and ease. Mastering breathing can help in so many ways, from facilitating the move, to challenging your position, to providing a moment to pause and take in the benefits of the move.

Chapters 2 through 10 detail the more than 100 exercises in the book. Each exercise is accompanied by photos depicting the starting position, progression moves, and ending position. Included with the pictures is a comprehensive list of setup cues to get you into the correct position and follow-up cues to help you progress through the move to the final position. Exercises are classified by the starting position of the body: standing warm-up and stretch sequences; kneeling exercises; side-lying exercises; and prone, supine, and seated exercises. You will learn about the benefits of each move as well as the contraindications. Modifications for specific issues and challenges for more intermediate or advanced versions of each exercise are provided. Although the majority of exercises are mat focused, exercises that use small equipment such as a stability ball, Pilates ring, and stretch band are included. These pieces of equipment provide a different stimulus for the body and supplement your Pilates practice.

After the mat exercises, chapters 8, 9, and 10 feature Pilates exercises that use props—a stability ball, Pilates ring, and stretch band. Although Joseph Pilates didn't use stability balls or stretch bands (these are more recent developments in the Pilates world), these props, along with the Pilates ring, provide several benefits, from creating more or less stability to making an exercise more or less challenging. These props enhance and modify traditional Pilates exercises. In some cases, the prop will make the exercise more difficult by challenging the core or extremities or by increasing the intensity. In others, the prop makes the exercise more accessible to all levels of participants. The exercises for each prop are divided into standing or seated, side lying, prone, and supine. Each prop—the stability ball, Pilates ring, and stretch band—provides a diverse and different feel for the standard or modified Pilates moves described in earlier chapters. Standard safety guidelines and more advanced moves are included for each prop. These props are great tools for providing diversity and variety in your workouts as well as providing an avenue to progress to a more difficult exercise or series of movements.

Chapter 11 details 17 Pilates programs drawn from the individual exercises, including routines for weight loss, morning and evening workouts, the total body band, and advanced Pilates on the ball. They are in order based on the category or title name. These well-rounded workouts will satisfy practitioners at all levels and help you work around any time constraints you have. The time to complete a workout varies depending on your fitness level and the rate at which you complete the movement of each exercise. Everyone can find something in these routines. Included with these programs is the approximate time needed to complete the workout, the equipment needed, and the level of the workout so you can select the routine that works for you.

Keep in mind that you want to work with precision. Pay attention to each and every move your body makes, working methodically and slowly through each move

to attain the desired results. Consistency is important; as Joseph H. Pilates said, “In 10 sessions, you will feel the difference. In 20, you will see the difference. And in 30, you’ll be on your way to having a whole new body.”

I’ve been fortunate to travel the world teaching Pilates and spreading the word about this fantastic form of exercise. In all of my travels, I have found that Pilates is appropriate for every population—young and old, male and female, athlete and nonathlete. No matter where you are, you can do Pilates and feel its profound effects and benefits. It is a language that everyone can speak and do and accomplish, whether you are in southern California; Shanghai, China; Bangkok, Thailand; the Czech Republic; or Saipan.

This book will guide everyone—from the first-time student to the Pilates enthusiast—to the true benefits of Pilates. Enjoy, and stand straight and tall!

# Acknowledgments

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Many people have contributed to this book in so many different ways. Thanks to Human Kinetics for asking me to write this book and providing me with the utmost patience and skill in getting through this process. Thanks to Bruno Bosardi for being my first Pilates mentor and Nora St. John for being a fearless director and leader as well as coach and friend. Thanks to Lizbeth Garcia and Judy King as my best friends forever (BFFs) as well as true role models whom I fully respect and admire. Thank you to the entire gang at Balanced Body for providing an outlet for my ideas and a platform to present them to the world. Thank you to Paul Body for being such a great photographer, and to the models in the book—Bruno Bosardi, Beth Pladson, and Lizbeth Garcia—for being so patient and so talented. Thanks to my family, especially my mom and aunts for their love and support and the wonderful womanly advice and care they have given me throughout the years, as well as their undying belief in me, and my brother and his wife and kids for always making me smile and to remember the simple things in life. Thanks to my clients and students over the years who constantly remind me that I have the greatest job in the world!

A special thank you to my wonderful boyfriend and partner Gary Huhn and our dog, Nestle, for their devotion and faith, for putting up with me over the last year with the all-nighters and weekends devoted to writing and missing out on the family outings, and for lifting my spirits and putting a smile on my face when I didn't think I could go on. Also, my efforts are in honor of my grandmother, Corinne Ellen Walacity, who always reminded me that, as stated by William Earnest Henley in *Invictus*, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."



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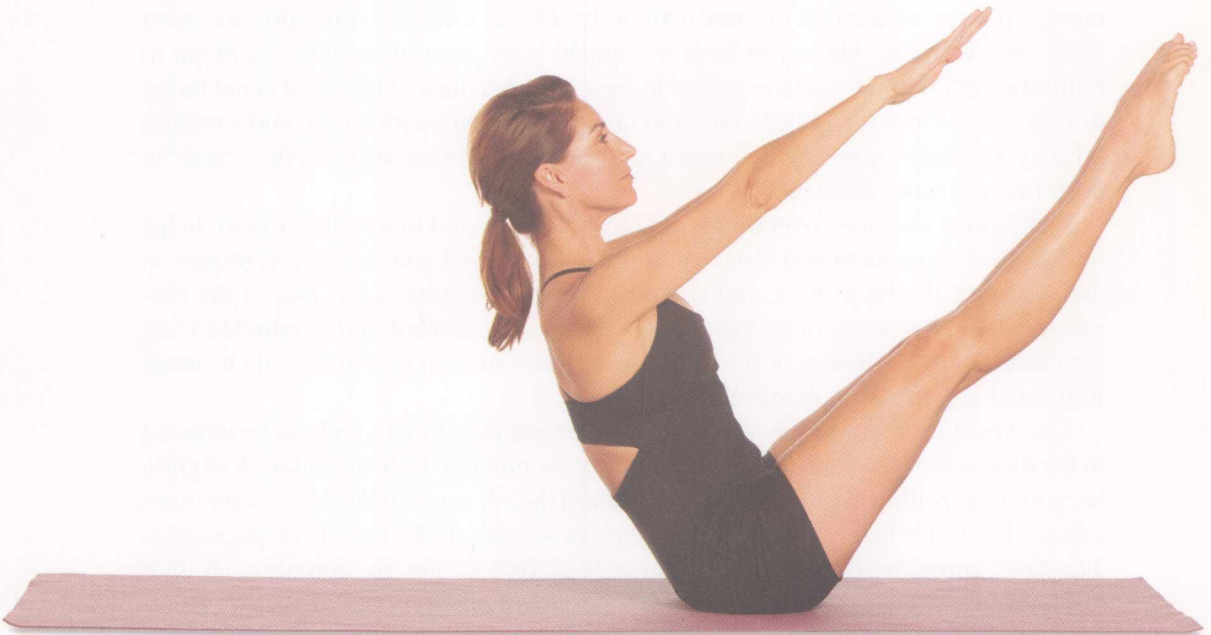
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## Chapter 1

# Art and Practice of Pilates

Pilates is something you can do a little of every day with amazing results. It is an exercise designed to elongate and strengthen the body by emphasizing balance, alignment, proper breathing, and core stability and strength. Joseph H. Pilates understood that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind: “Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness.” After a few sessions of Pilates, you too can understand how helpful correct and flowing movement can be to your mind and body.



## Benefits of Pilates

The benefits of Pilates (called *contrology* by Joseph Pilates) are summed up nicely in this quote from its creator: “Contrology develops the body uniformly, corrects wrong postures, restores physical vitality, invigorates the mind, and elevates the spirit.”

Pilates, now a household name, can help you stand taller and move and look better in a relatively short time. Anyone at any age and with almost any condition can perform the exercises easily. Pilates is practiced in homes, studios, fitness centers, and rehabilitation clinics worldwide to help people rehabilitate from injuries, increase flexibility and strength, and improve their overall health and wellness. There are numerous benefits to doing Pilates, but these are the most common ones:

- ▶ Creates body awareness
- ▶ Develops long and strong muscles
- ▶ Leads to easier and more agile movements
- ▶ Increases flexibility
- ▶ Strengthens the entire core
- ▶ Improves overall posture

These six benefits go a long way to developing a more fit and active body as well as a deeper connection with the mind and spirit.

With a regular Pilates practice, the use of precision with every movement helps create an acute awareness of your own body. This is critical to attaining the most from your workout. Once you have developed body awareness, you can begin to build strength. This strength is gained in long and lean musculature that is not bulky or restrictive. Once the muscles are moving in unison and with length and strength, all of your body’s movements, small and large, will be more graceful, easier to perform, and more efficient.

Pilates also increases overall flexibility of the body and limbs. This in turn helps with ease of movement and also will improve movement and decrease tightness in areas such as the back, hips, and shoulders. Core strengthening is one of the biggest goals and benefits in Pilates as everything is generated and conducted from the center, or powerhouse, of the body. If one has a strong powerhouse, then strong limbs and organs naturally develop.

Good posture is one of the most noticeable benefits of Pilates and can be attained in the first session. A small difference in posture—moving the head and neck slightly back and up, rolling back the shoulders, lifting the rib cage off the hips—can make a huge difference in a person’s outside appearance and in the way he or she moves. The most common thing people say after their first Pilates session, or even their 10th or 20th, is that they feel better. They not only feel better but also move better and look better. The key noticeable improvement is posture. When you stand taller and straighter, you feel better and move with more ease. Good posture can help alleviate some back pain almost immediately, and this is what I think is so wonderful about Pilates.

## History of Pilates

Joseph Pilates urged people to realize the importance and benefits of a perfectly balanced body and mind and preached that his exercise regimen, which he called *contrology*, would do just that. He believed that to achieve the most within our capabilities we have to constantly strive to acquire strong, healthy bodies and develop our minds to the limits of our ability. Although this concept and the more recent publicity about the mind–body connection and Pilates have become increasingly popular in the last decade, it is amazing to think that he developed contrology in the early 1900s.

A man far ahead of his time, he was in incredible shape even into his mid-80s and followed his own exercise routine to maintain his strength and flexibility until his death in 1967. Born in the late 1800s in Germany, Joseph Pilates suffered from several childhood diseases (asthma, rheumatic fever, and rickets) that left him with a weak respiratory system. He spent his life overcoming his frailties and developing his workout regimen; he became an accomplished athlete and physical specimen, even posing for anatomical drawings at age 14. During the early 1900s, a new awareness of health that was centered on exercise began to spring up. Revelations about the positive effects of exercise on the mind and body were in the making, and Joseph Pilates was right in the forefront of all this. The influences of these new ideas as well as the change in his own body enabled him to develop contrology.

During World War I, Pilates was interned in a camp in England and after the war returned to Germany for a short while before immigrating to the United States in 1926. On the way over to the United States, he met his wife, Clara, and they settled in New York City, where he opened his studio on 8th Avenue, attracting many dancers, athletes, and businessmen. Since his studio was located in the same building as the New York City Ballet, he worked with many dancers and had huge success with healing and helping injured dancers; thus his work became very popular with the dance community. Even so, he envisioned his work being done by anyone and everyone, from schoolchildren to housewives to business executives.

Although his work was not acknowledged much in his lifetime, a few of the people he taught went on to continue his work and in the last 20 years have brought Pilates into the mainstream of exercise. Some of those who worked with Joseph Pilates are Romana Kryzanowska, Ron Fletcher, Kathleen Stanford Grant, Lolita San Miguel, and Mary Bowen, many of whom still teach today. Today, some 10 million people in the United States alone use Pilates as their method of exercise (*Pilates Style*, January 2009). Although Pilates was developed in the early 1900s, it's taken some time to develop into the phenomenon it is today. The popularity has grown as the benefits have come to light, with people getting results and feeling better. Word of mouth, as well as key people in the media touting its benefits, has made Pilates widespread in gyms, studios, and homes throughout the world.

Joseph Pilates created an effective combination of stretching and strengthening that works for practically every body. His greatest legacy remains his classic mat exercises, the original 34 exercises detailed in his book *Return to Life Through Contrology*. Many Pilates schools teach or progress the exercises differently, with the end product

being an evolving method. Although some of the more recent fitness research might suggest that his ideas of spinal alignment are not ideal and that you need to use caution when performing some of the exercises, especially if you have certain conditions or pain, for the most part his original ideas and exercises are still sound and will help create a practical solution to fix posture and alignment issues. In this book, I have chosen to use most of the original 34 exercises (although in a different order) as a base and have developed modifications and transitions and exercises that make the flow more achievable or more challenging. The use of props is also an addition and is not considered classical, but it allows a way to expand on the original exercises.

In 1965, at the age of 86, Joseph Pilates said, “I must be right. Never an Aspirin. Never injured a day in my life. The whole country, the whole world, should be doing my exercises. They’d be happier.” Some food for thought!

## Pilates Principles

Pilates is a method of exercise that connects the mind and the body as one and allows the body to move in a more efficient way. This form of exercise uses your body to its greatest advantage, utilizing your own strength, flexibility, and coordination, and requires that you pay attention to your body throughout each movement. To help achieve this powerful mind–body connection, the following six principles should be kept in mind.

▶ **Breathing.** Controlling the breath and breathing correctly are extremely important to understanding Pilates and obtaining the fullest benefits from the exercise. Breathing properly is the first thing you should focus on, and you should maintain this focus throughout the movement. Focused, controlled breathing will help you maintain proper alignment as well as allow you to contract the muscles that need to be contracted and release those that don’t need to be used. Breathing fully and correctly will also help with the flow of the exercise and movements and allow you to continue a program all the way through. Breathing brings in oxygen to your system and clears the head, thus facilitating movement.

▶ **Concentration.** This involves the important connection between the mind and the body. Paying attention to what you are doing is critical for moving correctly and easily. Concentration allows the mind to control and move the body efficiently and appropriately.

▶ **Control.** Each movement in Pilates is controlled and should never be wasted. Keeping the movement within your capabilities is important for maintaining alignment and stability throughout the body during the exercises.

▶ **Centering.** Everything in Pilates is initiated from the center of the body, called the powerhouse or core. To perform the movements correctly, begin from the center. Building a strong, stable, and flexible center is one of the best outcomes of doing Pilates on a regular basis. A strong center makes for a strong body overall.

▶ **Precision.** Practicing concentration, control, and centering will make each movement precise and totally correct. Be conscious and aware of every part of



your body, and continually check your alignment and form to ensure that you are performing each exercise with precision.

► **Flowing movement or rhythm.** Having all your muscles working together with precision from your center and with concentration and control as well as correct breathing creates a rhythmic and flowing movement pattern. This means you are moving with extreme efficiency and flow and with just the right amount of effort. Be patient with yourself. Allow yourself the time needed for your body and mind to work together to produce flowing movement.

## Lateral Breathing

The importance of breathing and the fact that we do it without thinking is summed up in this quote from Joseph Pilates: “Breathing is the first act of life, and the last.” Even so, simply knowing that you are breathing is not enough. Breathing correctly and fully will make all the difference in your Pilates practice. Pilates exercises require you to breathe fully and deeply, using every inhale to take in lots of fresh air and every exhale to get rid of stale air. This process oxygenates the blood and gets the circulation going. Breathing fully and deeply can energize your every move. Breath is the very foundation of Pilates movement, and the exercises in this book are outlined with specific breathing instructions that coordinate with specific movements. The breath will be used to initiate and support movements as well as facilitate and energize the movements.

The breathing technique to use is called *lateral breathing*. Lateral breathing means breathing deeply and fully into the sides and back, or the lower lobes of the lungs. With this type of breath, you can keep the abdominal muscles contracted, providing support for the lower spine and back. To make this process smoother, inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, as if you were blowing out a candle. As you inhale through the nose, imagine your rib cage expanding out to the sides like an umbrella opening or an accordion playing. As you exhale through the mouth, imagine the rib cage drawing inward like a corset being tightened, bringing the rib cage toward the hip bones.

Proper lateral breathing is critical for achieving the correct alignment and focus in your Pilates practice. You might want to practice this type of breathing every day in front of a mirror so you can note the rib cage moving outward on the inhale and inward on the exhale, thereby making the actual exercises easier to follow and execute.

## Pelvic Floor Engagement

What is the pelvic floor and why do you need to know how to engage it? Pilates instructors are often asked this question as this is a common mystery to most beginners. The pelvic floor is the support structure for the bladder, rectum, uterus in women, and prostate in men. The pelvic floor is the bottom layer of the deepest core musculature and the lower support of the abdominal cavity. It helps you breath and provides support for the spine.