

# PILATES IN EVERY DAY

YOUR GUIDE TO MIND & BODY WELLNESS



## Cultivating your mind & body wellness using Pilates

By Tracy Ward | Freshly Centered

Pilates is movement from your centre, the core area of our bodies. All movements start from here and it is strongly emphasised throughout exercise to move from here for full body efficiency.

The activation of the core muscles, and therefore Pilates exercises are described as mind-body exercises. This is because the core muscles become active BEFORE you actually carry out a movement. So before you move to bend over, or reach your arm out, the transverses abdominis will already be activated, protecting and supporting your trunk!

Pilates exercises combine strength & mobility. They strengthen the muscles surrounding your spine, as well as the deep, smaller muscles surrounding your major joints. This corrects muscle imbalance. Pilates also encourages natural movement patterns for better efficiency.

PRINCIPLES OF PILATES

THE 5 KEY ELEMENTS

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR CORE

PILATES FOR BETTER POSTURE

PILATES & BREATHING

MENTAL CLARITY



## Hi, I'm Tracy Ward, founder of Freshly Centered-

I help busy people strengthen their core, optimise their strength and feel good every day. I do this by educating, inspiring, and teaching Pilates with a focus on rehab, strength, and wellness. I created Freshly Centered to consolidate ALL of this information in one place!

Pilates in Every Day; Your Guide to Mind & Body Wellness provides you with simple tools you can start straight away to enhance movement that feels good without over-doing it or creating pressure to work out in a way you don't enjoy.

I can't wait to bring a little more Pilates to you and enhance your every day!

**Tracy**

## Ready for a fresh outlook on your every day?

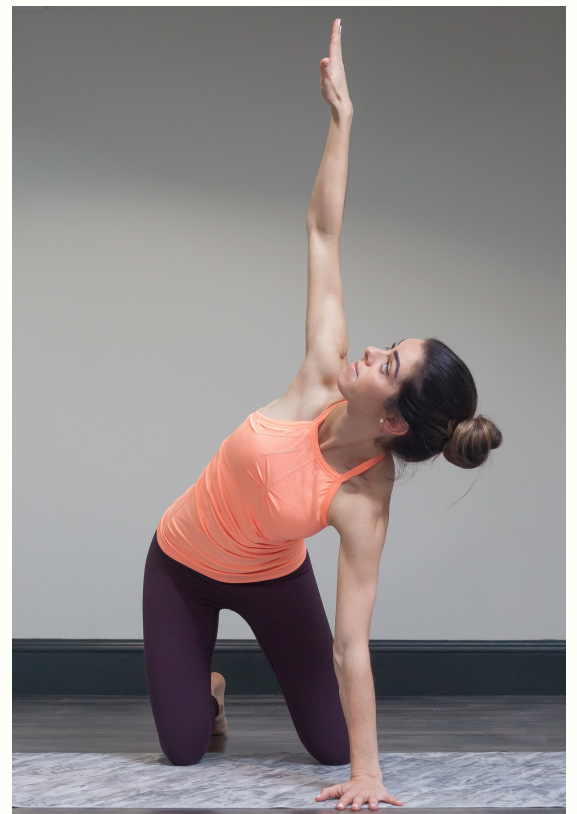
Every day life can be busy, overwhelming, and all consuming, where you find yourself forgetting to move well, breathe intuitively, and respect your posture.

If you could make small changes to your every day and know that you are working on yourself from the very beginning, imagine how much better you could feel daily and how much more effective your body and mind could work!

Would you want to know exactly how to improve your posture so that you alleviate any aches and support your body the best way you can? Specifically how to apply Pilates principles to your every day life? And how to make this all fit easily in to the chaos of your regular routine without feeling overwhelmed?

**I've got you covered!**

**The Pilates in Every Day; Your Guide to Mind & Body Wellness** covers all this in really simple steps that will fit easily into your schedule. Right now.



## HOW TO GET STARTED

Introducing the Pilates Principles & Key Elements in to your every day movements and posture can really enhance how you move and how you feel.

Being aware of your breath throughout your movements and exercise allows better efficiency, muscle activation, and a sense of calmness you can carry through all your every day activities.

# Principles of Pilates

There are 8 principles of Pilates that are integrated in to the exercises and account for the balance, grace, and ease that Pilates portrays. They provide a sense of intention and expression to the way the movements are approached.

## Centering

This concept is defined as physically bringing the focus to the centre of the body, the area between the lower ribs and pubic bone.

## Concentration

Bringing your full attention to your movement and completing with full commitment provides optimal physical benefits. Mental clarity also occurs as your awareness to the present moment is maximised.

## Control

Every exercise is done with conscious, deliberate movements that are controlled mindfully, and with complete muscular control.

## Precision

Awareness is sustained throughout each movement with appropriate placement, alignment and proper technique executed. Specific cues are used to ensure this precision and strengthen efficient movement patterns.

## Breath

Pilates exercises are coordinated with breathing patterns to allow the most efficient activation of the core muscles eg. Transversus abdominis is recruited more during exhalation, therefore we exhale on the exertion. Breathing also regulates your speed, encouraging further control and precision.

## Flow

Pilates exercises are completed with fluidity, grace, and ease to ensure a flow from one movement to the next. This replicates efficient movement patterns and provides the body with coordination and proprioception to become more effective overall in strength, mobility, and movement.

## Integrated Isolation

Pilates exercises isolate various joints, muscles, and body regions to provide the most effective muscle activation, and therefore most effective movement patterns. This allows specific targeting to areas that need addressed.

## Routine

Pilates should be completed regularly for maintenance, and exercises completed in a routine to restore efficient movement, and strengthen the mind-body connection for total overall wellbeing.

# MOVE BETTER

Consider these 8 Principles of Pilates within your Pilates workouts, any other form of exercise, and even within your every day life off the mat too.

This new way of thinking can improve your focus and strengthen your intention. Moving with intention allows for more purposeful movement and therefore more effective overall.



# The 5 key elements

Pilates teaches us to begin exercises in the “rest position”. This consists of 5 key elements to align your body optimally. This correct technique ensures your muscles and joints are where they should be, so their work is optimised and you achieve the best results from moving more efficiently, without compensation elsewhere. It also ensures safety from injury.

## 1. Neutral spine:

This means resting your spine and pelvis in “neutral”; with your lower back neither tilted in towards the mat or arched away from the mat. This is the most efficient position for activating the core muscles compared to exercising in the tilted positions. Plus, we don’t walk around with our backs flattened or with exaggerated curves therefore we shouldn’t exercise like this either! The exercise position should reflect our “normal” spinal position for best results.

## 2. Ribcage position:

Drawing your ribcage down towards your hips allows optimal spinal alignment. By having this connection it also activates your core muscles. Ribs that regularly “flare” or lift upwards mean that you have lost your core connection and ideal posture, therefore you are no longer working in the optimal position or getting the core tension you require/want.

## 3. Centering:

Once you are fully in the neutral position, engage your core by gently drawing your lower abdominals in towards the mat. Imagine drawing your front hip bones towards each other or a belt tightening around your waist.

## 4. Shoulder blades:

Relax your shoulder blades down towards the mat by letting go! Allow them to rest on the mat. Widen the collar bones across your front.

## 5. Head/neck position:

Lengthen the back of your neck and keep your head neutral. This restores normal head posture and stops tension building around the neck/shoulders.



## HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR CORE

- Place your fingertips over the front of your hip bones and move them 2 inches inwards and downwards so you are in your lower abdominal region.
- As you exhale, gently draw these muscles IN towards your mat about 30% or so.
- Imagine your belt is tightening and pulling you inwards.
- Hold for an inhale, and then release.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Try some longer holds of up to 10 seconds.

# Posture

Pilates develops a strong core, which provides a strong trunk, and therefore a strong upright posture. This can ensure your pelvis sits in the neutral position and does not cause stress to your lower back. This also provides support for your upper body by providing a stable base and posture.

Many day-to-day activities involve bending or flexing forwards repeatedly and for prolonged periods of time. There is very little that we do that involves extending backwards, so we may end up tight at the front of our chests and hips, and weaker through our upper back and buttocks. Pilates exercises incorporate extensive strengthening for the whole back of the body (also called the posterior chain). Specific exercises work the shoulder blades (scapular muscles), which can provide a stronger framework for the head and neck to rest upon.

Sitting for prolonged periods naturally weakens our gluteal muscles as they are inactive throughout this period, and muscles need regular contraction to maintain strength. Our gluteal muscles are the primary muscle group involved in initiating the hip movements in walking, stair climbing, running *etc* therefore weakness here can quickly lead to hip pain and low back symptoms with simple activities such as these.

# Breathing

Becoming familiar with your natural breathing pattern can have a positive effect on your mental health, emotions, reactions to stress and anxiety, and muscular tensions. Breathing more efficiently during exercise can also improve your muscle activation and performance.

Pilates exercises are encouraged with a natural breathing pattern to breathe in wide and full to the sides of the ribcage. This is called “lateral” or “intercostal” breathing and promotes the full use of your ribcage and respiratory muscles. Like any muscle, they need to be exercised to cope with increased physical demands. As you exhale you should empty your lungs fully and allow relaxation of the muscles and ribcage. This pilates breathing system of inhalation and exhalation allows the gas exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide to occur effectively and minimises any build up of muscular tension.

Breathing is one of the main principles of Pilates and its use is further promoted so that we exhale on the aspect of the movement that requires the greatest effort. This is because the core muscles are activated earlier during expiration, therefore by breathing out on the hardest exertion you will create the greatest support from your core muscles. This gives local spine stability and support.

## BREATHING EXERCISE

Sit up tall and place your hands on the lower half of your ribcage. Take a breath in and feel your ribcage widening outwards and deepening. Your finger tips will move apart from each other. Now exhale and imagine the sides of your ribcage

sinking in towards each other.

Try this every time you feel a little overwhelmed and repeat for 5-7 breaths, or as many as you feel necessary to return your breathing control to a slow, steady pace.



## Mental clarity

At a very basic level we need to breathe to promote the circulation of oxygen around our body and up to our brain to ensure optimal brain and body functions. If our breathing is inadequate, eg. if we take lots of short, rapid breaths then we restrict the oxygen and blood supply to the brain, creating stress and panic. As we panic we restrict this supply even further, reducing the optimal state of our brain and imbalancing our hormones and emotions. More of our “fight or flight” hormones will be released creating a sense of tension, and there will be a reduction in our calming hormones.

Breathing effectively with steady inhales and exhales encourages these calming hormones and can restore relaxation and mental clarity as you focus without stress or anxiety.



## When you're ready

1. Read so much more on Pilates, exercise & wellness in the **Freshly Centered blog.**
2. Try some of my **free Pilates Videos.**
3. Subscribe to my **mailing list** to be kept up-to-date with all of my offerings.
4. Join me for live and pre-recorded **weekly online Pilates classes** that are modified to suit all, allowing you to move every day regardless of injury or ability.

I can't wait to support you with Pilates and a fresh outlook on your wellness the right way and enhance your every day!

**Tracy**

## TRACY'S MESSAGE

Whether you do Pilates regularly, mix it up with other exercise forms, or just want to feel a little more focused and calm in your every day life, I believe adding some of these elements can be of benefit!

Start easy with applying maybe just one of two principles, then check-in on your posture. Use the breathing exercise when things get a little busy, and give yourself the space to think and unwind too!