

Meditation in Motion



Connect your mind, body and spirit—and feel better about your body for good!—with this mat series inspired by the method's six principles.

By Tamara Newell • Edited by Amanda Altman

Awaken your mind, body and spirit as you move and meditate to the principles of Pilates. Each exercise in this intermediate mat series focuses on one of the method's six principles—concentration, centering, control, breath, precision and flow—to help you feel at peace, happy and better about your body.

This sequence was inspired by my struggles with a negative body image during my teenage and young-adult years. After healing from a decade-long eating disorder, I began my Pilates career in 2007. Through Pilates, I gained physical and mental strength, but surprisingly, my spirit grew strong as well. The principles of Pilates brought peace to my relationship with my body. I learned to respect my body for what it could do (hello, Hanging

Pull-Ups!), but also discovered newfound joy to accept, embrace and love it along the way.

Even if you can't get to the studio, you can do this workout. Practice individually at your own pace. If one principle takes you deeper into reflection, make room for more time there—don't rush. Allow your spirit and mind to guide your body as you progress through the exercises. Modifications and challenges are provided to meet your level.

Incorporate this series into your practice once a week. As you develop your spiritual connection, you'll discover a deeper mind/body connection during your regular sessions. And that's one of the most important benefits that Pilates has to offer. **PS**

SHOULDER BRIDGE

PURPOSE: Strengthens core, legs and glutes; enhances spinal articulation and flexibility in the hip flexors

SETUP: Lie on your back, with your spine in neutral, knees bent hip-width apart, and feet and toes flat on the floor. Feel the length in your spine and your shoulders gliding down your back. Relax your neck and chest, “knit” your rib cage together, and scoop your abdominals. Extend your arms by your sides, palms down.

1. Inhale, opening your mind and spirit to receive peace, joy and love.
2. Exhale, letting go of any negative past experiences with your body and health.

3. Inhale, scooping your abdominals and curl your pelvis off the floor.

4. Exhale, lifting each vertebra off the floor, keeping your abdominals and hamstrings engaged.

5. Inhale, opening your mind and spirit to receive precise wisdom for your body’s needs today.

6. Exhale, precisely lowering each vertebra to return to the starting position. Do 6 reps.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION: Your unique body changes daily and throughout many stages of life. Open your spirit and mind to listen to your

body. You’ll learn to care for and nurture it in a precise and individual way, leading to your most vibrant self.

TIPS: Detailed, precise movement makes Pilates efficient and effective. Focus on precise spinal articulation as you roll up and down. Keep your ribs knitted together and abdominals scooped for core stability. Imagine each vertebra peeling individually off the floor and then lowering back down.

ADVANCED: Zip your legs and feet together throughout, and move your feet closer to your hips. Extend your arms straight above your shoulders while lifting and lowering your spine.



SETUP-STEP 3



ADVANCED 1.1



ADVANCED 1.2

HALF ROLL-BACK

PURPOSE: strengthens the core muscles; increases spinal flexibility; prepares the body for the Roll-Up

SETUP: Sit tall, with your knees bent hip-width apart, feet and toes flat on the floor. Allow your shoulders to stack over your hip bones, and feel your spine lengthen from your tailbone and your scapulae glide down your back. Place your hands gently under your thighs without gripping.

1. Inhale, pulling your abdominals in, and round your lower, mid- and then upper spine, creating a C curve shape in your spine.

2. Exhale, leaning back in the C curve position, engaging your core muscles to sit past your sits bones.

3. Release your hands from your thighs, and extend your arms to shoulder height, elbows slightly bent and palms facing inward.

4. Inhale, imagining that you're breathing peace into your center.

5. Exhale away any stress, anxiety or negative emotions.

6. Do 4 reps of steps 4–5.

7. Inhale, returning your hands under your thighs.

8. Exhale, returning to the starting position.

9. Do 3 reps of the entire sequence.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION:

Meditate on drawing peace to your center. Let go of any anxiety and fear around your body and health. A peaceful center opens the door to hear what your body needs today.

TIPS: Reach your toes and heels into the floor for a deeper connection. Keep your chin a few inches from your chest while in the C curve.

MODIFICATION: Gently hold under your thighs for support, or minimize your range of motion.

ADVANCED: Lift one leg up.



SETUP



STEP 3



MODIFICATION

PILATES PRINCIPLE: *Control*

STEPS 1 & 2



STEP 3



HIP CIRCLES

PURPOSE: reinforces the abdominal-oblique connection; allows the legs to freely create gracefully controlled circles

SETUP: Sit tall, with your legs extended and together. Place your forearms on the floor behind your body, elbows under your shoulders and palms down.

1. Inhale, bending your knees toward your body, with your legs together and toes pointed touching the floor.
2. Exhale, extending your legs to 45 degrees, keeping your chest open and maintaining the length in your spine.
3. Inhale, circling your legs to the left and down, then exhale, bringing them up to the right and finally back to 45 degrees. Do 3–5 reps in each direction.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION: Graceful control over daily health releases freedom within your body, mind and spirit. Pilates is a structured method that challenges control over the body, while emphasizing graceful movement. Increasing your self-control while having grace within ourselves opens us to joyful living.

TIP: Invite a spirit of grace through your open chest as you circle your legs.

ADVANCED: Increase your range of motion.

PILATES PRINCIPLE: *Breath*

FRONT SUPPORT

PURPOSE: increases trunk strength and shoulder stabilization

SETUP: Get into Plank, with your legs rotated out in Pilates stance, heels together and toes apart.

1. Inhale, lifting your left leg to hip height, toes pointed.
2. Exhale, pressing into your right heel, and shift your weight back.
3. Inhale, shifting your weight into your left toes. Do 3–5 reps, then lower your foot back to Pilates stance.
4. Repeat the entire sequence on your other side.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION: Without breath, we cease to exist. Breath activates our muscles as we move. With each inhale, meditate on gratitude for your ability to move. Exhale away any self-criticism.

TIPS: Keep your hands directly under your shoulders, and your shoulders gliding down your back.

MODIFICATION: Keep both feet on the floor while shifting your weight into your heels and back to your toes.

ADVANCED: Extend your lifted leg into a full split.

STEP 1



STEP 2



PILATES PRINCIPLE: *Flow*



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEPS 4 & 5

LEG PULL-UP

PURPOSE: strengthens the core, arms, hip flexors and legs; increases flexibility in the shoulders and hamstrings

SETUP: Sit tall, with your legs straight and together. Place your hands behind your hips, fingers facing back.

1. Inhale, lifting your hips into Reverse Plank.
2. Exhale, bending your right knee to tabletop, then straighten it toward the ceiling, and lower it back down.
3. Repeat on your other side. Do 4 reps.
4. Inhale, kicking your right leg up.
5. Exhale, lowering your leg to the starting position.
6. Repeat on your other side. Do 4 reps.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION:

Living "in the flow" strikes a balance of structure and stability with fluidity. Meditate on how you can create more structure to increase the flow in your life.

TIPS: Engage your supporting leg and glutes to allow your moving leg to flow through the sequence. Focus on keeping your entire body in one straight, diagonal line.

MODIFICATION: Lower onto your forearms, or just hold Reverse Plank without moving your legs.

ADVANCED: Rotate your arms inward, fingers facing your hips.

*Through Pilates,
I gained physical
and mental strength,
but surprisingly, my
spirit grew strong
as well.*

RELEVÉ IN PILATES STANCE

PURPOSE: improves balance and concentration; strengthens the legs and ankles

SETUP: Stand tall in Pilates stance, with your heels together and toes apart. Relax your rounded arms in front of your body.

1. Lift your heels and arms together.
2. Raise your arms up, slightly in front of your head.
3. Hold for 10 seconds, meditating on bringing the joy from your workout into your day.
4. Lower your heels and arms together. Do 3 reps, breathing naturally throughout.

THE MIND/SPIRIT CONNECTION:

Concentration deepens the work within our body, mind and spirit, leading to greater satisfaction and joy with your body. As you finish the sequence, carry this deep joy into your daily activities.

TIPS: Maintain the connection through the midline of your body. Keep your focus slightly above eye level.

MODIFICATION: Keep your arms down while holding the balance.

ADVANCED: Open your arms to your sides, and balance on your right toes with your left foot behind your right ankle. Repeat on your other side.



Tamara NEWELL, a Pilates teacher and holistic nutritionist, is on a mission to inspire and empower women to manifest their most beautiful selves from the inside out through their movement, meals and mind-set. She's the owner of Tamara Newell Pilates in New York City, with several digital Pilates and cardio-ballet DVDs under her belt. This spring, Newell will release her online program, *Peace Joy Pilates: 6 Steps to a Peaceful Body, Joyful Life & Loving Pilates* (www.peacejoypilates.com). In May 2015, Newell began training with Rael Isacowitz and was

awarded the Kathy Grant Memorial Scholarship to BASI Pilates Mentor Program. This is her second appearance in Pilates Style, and she is a brand ambassador for VooLuu nutrition products.

A former ballet dancer, Newell trained at the Joffrey Ballet and Rock School of the Pennsylvania Ballet before graduating from Marymount Manhattan College. She is certified by Core Pilates NYC and American Fitness Professionals and Associates. Newell lives in New York City with her husband and son. For more information, visit www.tamaranewell.com.