

WHAT IS PILATES

What is Pilates? The Pilates "method," as it is now known, is an exercise system focused on improving flexibility, strength, and body awareness, without necessarily building bulk. The method is a series of controlled movements performed on specially designed spring-resistant exercise apparatus (the Reformer, the Cadillac, the Spine Corrector, the Ladder Barrel, and the Wunda Chair) or on the floor (mat work), and the sessions are supervised by specially trained instructors. Pilates is resistance exercise, not aerobic (cardio), although the heart rate will certainly rise for a deconditioned individual. However, it's closer to weightlifting than it is to jogging, biking, or other aerobic activities, so you should consider it resistance exercise.

Two of the key elements of Pilates are core muscle strength* and spinal alignment. The core musculature is loosely defined as the spine, abdomen, pelvis, hips, and the muscles that support these structures. Some of the main core muscles are the erector spinae (located in your back along your spine), the internal and external obliques (the sides of your abdomen), the transverse abdominis (located deep in your gut, this muscle pulls your belly button in toward your spine), the rectus abdominis (the "six-pack"), and hip flexors (in your pelvis and upper leg). During a Pilates session, whether it's on the machines or the floor, your instructor will continuously prompt you to concentrate deeply on your core muscles, as well as on your breath, the contraction of your muscles, and the quality (not quantity) of your movements. These are also key elements of Pilates, and your instructor will emphasize them at every session.

The objective is a coordination of mind, body, and spirit, something Joseph Pilates called "Contrology." In his first book published in 1945, *Pilates' Return to Life Through Contrology*, the 34 original exercises that Pilates taught to his students are described along with the guiding principles of Contrology. Are there other types of Pilates? American ingenuity has worked its way into Pilates. There's Pilates on the ball, yoga Pilates and even Pilates with exercise bands.

These are not what Joseph Pilates had in mind....**PLEASE NOTE:** Pilates on its own is not occultic. **When it is combined with Yoga or other Eastern practices, that is where the "mixed seed" comes in.** The instructor is therefore VERY important whether you will be exposed to occultic exercises or not.