

## The Principles: Control

Do you remember Michael Jordan's gravity defying air time? How about Michael Jackson's dance moves that no one else could ever quite replicate? What was it that made Jeanine the top dancer on "So You Think You Can Dance?" Gymnasts, dancers, runners, swimmers, and even hockey players achieve a level of control over their physical movements that is breathtaking to watch.

You can breathe a sigh of relief, you don't have to think about attaining that level of control over your physical movements, but you can always work towards increasing and improving your control over your body's motions. Completing each exercise with control allows you to gain the most out of your Pilates workout and prevent injuries caused by improper movements, and the same principle carries throughout your daily life.

So what does that mean anyway, moving with control? To me, control is comprised of and the result of all of the other principles of Pilates: Concentration, Centering, Fluidity, Precision, and Breath. It means using your intrinsic musculature to stabilize your body as you slowly elevate and lower your limbs rather than flinging them through the air like wet noodles. It means drawing your deepest abdominal muscles towards your spine as you roll up from the mat, one vertebra at a time, as opposed to the jerking motion of your grandparent's sit-ups and crunches. It means being aware of how your body is intended to move in each exercise and working towards achieving that movement, even if you can't quite get it today. It means committing yourself fully to each exercise and moving deliberately and intentionally. All of the sometimes baffling cues and visualizations you receive from your Pilates instructor -- like "cross the eyeballs of your pelvis," and "keep the bowl of your pelvis from spilling as you move," -- are invaluable feedback that will help you develop control in your unique body.

Control of movement is not something that can be achieved overnight. I can't raise my chest as high off the ground in chest lift position as Rael can, nor can I do the swan dive with anywhere remotely near the grace of a swan. I do, however, work towards control in each movement of my workout, even when I start shaking from the fatigue of muscles that are not used to being worked. Each time I practice I get a little bit better, incrementally, and so will you as you put your intention towards developing control. Make a commitment to yourself to gain better control of your body, start with just one repetition of each exercise, or just one exercise in each workout, and you'll be amazed at what you can achieve.

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Source: Gina Axelson Pilates Instructor and Studio Owner