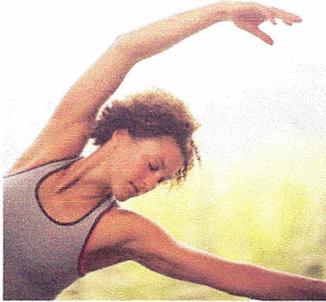


The Principles: Concentration

Rael Isacowitz, founder of Body Arts and Sciences International (BASI) divides this principle into two parts, awareness and concentration. He regards "awareness as a state of mind -- of being mindful and feeling the movement" and concentration as "a more cognitive process of understanding the movement." (Isacowitz, 9)



Awareness is the initial realization of the body, where it lies in space, how it moves, and any tightness, misalignment, weakness, habitual movement patterns or other imbalances that we may have developed throughout our lives. That initial awareness is critical to achieve a baseline from which to progress. Our muscles and joints contain proprioceptors that tell our brain where we are in space and how far a joint can move before injury. Over time, we train our proprioceptors to feel that misalignments and limited range of motion are correct and representative of our body's full potential. In order to change those patterns, we must first become aware.

Concentration is viewed as the "bridge between awareness and movement" (Isacowitz, 9) Once you have established your baseline, it is essential to bring that same awareness into every movement. Checking in with your body periodically can help to develop your concentration. If you find yourself thinking about something other than your workout, scan your body, especially those places you are working to retrain, and notice if they are engaged, relaxed, stabilized, or moving as they should be in the exercise. By bringing your awareness and concentration to a particular muscle you facilitate the firing of that muscle. Where patterns exist, it can be difficult to work the correct muscle(s) even with intense concentration, but nearly impossible without that attention. If you don't know what you should be focusing on in a particular exercise, ask your instructor.

Remember to keep it light, you can over-think things. If you become tense or frustrated, let it go. Do your best, you can always move on to another exercise and come back to that one later.

Source: Gina Axelson Pilates Instructor and Studio Owner
