

# JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF 'YOUR' CORE

From the inside out, core training and fitness seeks to stabilize the regions around the spine, pelvis, and shoulder girdle for added physical support; as a result, ease of movement is gained for extremities and pelvic organ function, along with the added bonus of posture correction, sexual health and performance, and simply looking better in your clothes.

**By Kathleen Pagnini, Core Specialist, Pilates and Personal Trainer Certified**

Core fitness as seen through Yoga and Pilates, can hold tremendous outcomes in shaping our physical being; not to mention the ever-popular Kegal exercises that have been used and thought to work the pelvic floor. But in taking this idea another step further, it is the awareness of the deepest pelvic floor muscle that can offer even greater health and fitness benefits. With the encouragement of Dr. Theresa Nesbitt, OBGYN -- an author and health advocate known as "the movement doctor," I'd like to share with you this very concept in the hopes of raising this awareness and interest in the toning of our pelvic floor.

You cannot change your body without first changing your brain; and we cannot look at an old concept in a new way until we are shown how. Most people do not know they need help with their core until noticeable outcomes surface; including protruding lower abs, leaking or incontinence, falling organs, back pain, decrease sexual pleasure and endurance.

As a personal trainer, I have spent years correcting postures and sculpting bodies; but it was not until I learned about our true core -- which includes the pelvic floor, when it clicked. I was immediately intrigued, but did not understand the relevance of these muscles, as they cannot be seen. The pelvic floor muscles have the highest resting tone of any muscle in the body, even the heart. As they cannot be seen, the pelvic floor is an involuntary and is not trained directly.

The core consists of two layers -- inner and outer; the inner layer contains and compresses internal organs, as the outer layer wraps and reinforces the inner core. Think of an open suitcase with a heap of clothes: when you close the

suitcase, the inner core is activated; when you flip the locks and wrap the straps -- that is like the outer core, stabilizing and strengthening. The right order is imperative; as you do not want to pull on the straps until you have closed the suitcase good and tight.

The inner core is the canister made of the diaphragm (on top), the thoracolumbar fascia (on the sides) and the pelvic floor muscles (on the bottom). They all activate involuntarily and in unison. The outer core is comprised of the abdominal muscles -- which can be directly and voluntarily controlled and trained.

It is important to note that you train the awareness of the inner core which includes the pelvic floor.

How do you train your awareness? If you read this far, you have already started. You also use a lot of imagery when practicing simple movements-- especially everyday movements. It's like when a baby sees an object, he makes his body stiff and reaches for it, when the brain sees and/or makes a picture the inner core fires, the brain is chemically going to change to initiate a movement throughout the nervous system/motor system. This activates the innermost layer of your pelvic floor, and packs the suitcase providing you have flipped the locks (correct anatomical position), and now you can train the straps on the suitcase, your abs!

**There is NO core without the FLOOR!**

Kathleen is available to teach anatomy awareness and core 'retraining' for men and women developed by Dr. Nesbitt, for groups at your facility or private instruction at her studio. Virtual instruction also available on SKYPE.

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