

# AWAKEN YOUR INNER Goddess!

Pilates can be used as a meditative practice to invigorate the mind, body and spirit. This mat routine helps to open the seven chakras for a more radiant you—from the inside out.

workout by Sheena Jongeneel

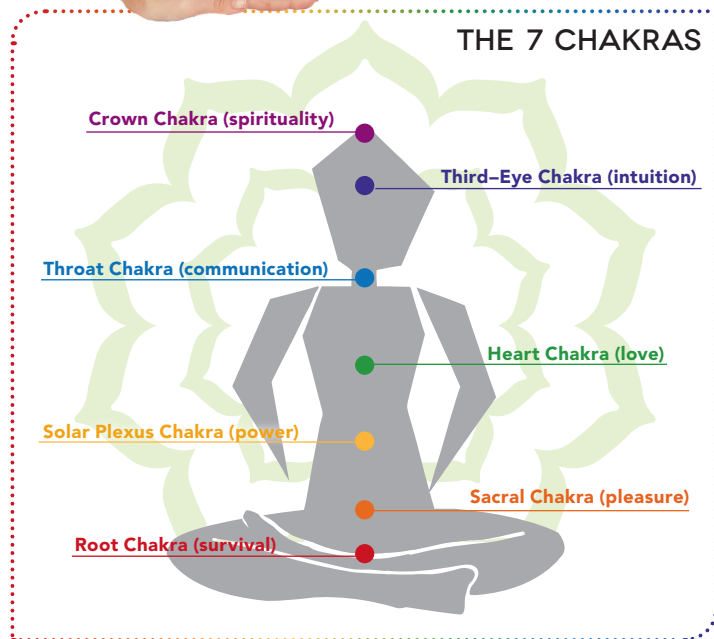
When developing his method, Joseph Pilates studied and implemented aspects from the Eastern philosophy of fitness and well-being, says Pilates pro and acupuncturist Sheena Jongeneel. So, when Jongeneel went on a recent trip to India, she decided to try combining meditation with her Pilates mat workouts. The result? Two benefits for the price of one!

"Pilates provides more than just a beautiful body," says Jongeneel. "It can be used as a meditative exercise to awaken the mind and spirit."

The following seven Pilates exercises are designed to help you open the seven chakras of the body. "They promote a peaceful mind, a happier disposition and an energized and gorgeous body," explains Jongeneel.

Do the entire routine at once, or put the moves into practice as you come across them in your matwork. You can also use this series as a meditation, especially if you have a difficult time sitting still. For a more spiritual practice, chant the mantras of the seven chakras provided by Jongeneel's guru from Devipuram Ashram while you work out (or chant them separately as meditation).

Working out is about focusing on all aspects of you. Let your inner goddess shine through!



## Bridge into Single-Leg Kick: Chakra 1

Located at the base of the spine or coccyx, this Chakra is the root of all the chakras, governing the sexual organs and energy and providing grounding, stability and manifestation.

**PURPOSE:** tones the buttocks and hamstrings; stabilizes the powerhouse

**SETUP:** Lie on your back with knees bent and hip-width apart, feet in parallel. Extend your arms long at your sides, palms facing down.

**1.** Raise your hips into the air and hold as long as possible, engaging your buttocks and inner thighs. Slowly return to the starting position, rolling your spine down one vertebra at a time.

**2.** Lift your hips again. Hold the position, and lift your left leg straight up. Kick your leg up, straightening your knee, then back down, maintaining squared hips throughout.

**3.** Lower your left leg, placing your foot on the mat, then repeat on your other leg. Do 5 repetitions.

**TIPS:** Imagine that you are hugging a ball between your inner thighs to keep your hips squared and your inner thighs and tush working.

**MODIFICATION:** Just do step 1, lifting your hips up and holding for 5 counts, then rolling your spine down one vertebra at a time.

**MANTRA:** Om Glam Glum

### setup & 1



### setup



## Half Roll-Down: Chakra 2

This Chakra, located an inch below the navel, governs our sense of creativity, relationship with people and money, and our sexual energy.

**PURPOSE:** opens the sacrum and lower back; deepens the abdominal connection; strengthens the abdomen

**SETUP:** Sit tall with your knees bent and feet parallel and feet flat on the floor, knees hip-width apart. Place your hands behind your thighs.

**1.** Inhale and round your back, lowering your body down halfway toward the floor, opening your sacrum and lower back. Keep pulling in your abdomen and holding your breath as you round.

**2.** Exhale and round forward toward your knees, keeping your abdomen in and your back rounded. Do 8–10 repetitions.

**TIPS:** Keep your eyes focused on your abdomen to make sure your abdominals are scooped in and up the entire time.

**MANTRA:** Om Saum Saum





### Mermaid: Chakra 3

Known as the power center, this Chakra is located between the navel and solar plexus. The gift of this Chakra is the ability to sense our personal power and to be confident, responsible and reliable.

**PURPOSE:** lengthens and strengthens the powerhouse

**SETUP:** Sit tall and swing your legs out to your left side, keeping your knees bent and knees and ankles stacked one on top of the other. Place your left hand on the outside of your top ankle, and extend your right arm toward the ceiling, keeping it against your ear.

1. Lengthen your waistline and move your torso toward your knees as you stretch to your opposite side.
2. Keeping your legs in the starting position, lower your right arm and place your hand flat on the floor beside your body right under your shoulder. Remove your left hand from your ankle and extend your arm up and against your ear, then slide your right hand along the floor to lengthen and stretch your opposite side.
3. Repeat this sequence 3 times. Swing your legs to your other side and repeat.

**TIPS:** Make sure to keep both sides of your waist evenly lengthened so you do not collapse into one side.

**MANTRA:** Aim Hreem Kleem

### setup & 1



### Chest Expansion: Chakra 4

This Chakra, located in the center of the chest, opens the chest and the heart. It opens us to receiving and giving love and compassion.

**PURPOSE:** opens the sternum; works the back muscles; improves posture

**SETUP:** Kneel with your knees hip-width apart. Extend your arms in front of your body at shoulder height, making fists with your hands.

1. Inhale as you draw your arms straight behind your body, opening your chest and holding your breath for 3 counts.
2. Exhale and bring your arms back to the starting position. Do 6–8 repetitions.

**TIPS:** Keep your gaze focused up and straight ahead to keep your neck long and your collarbones wide to really open the chest.

**MANTRA:** Om Kleem Kleem



### Balance Control: Chakra 5

Providing us with the voice to express ourselves and speak from our truth, this Chakra is located at the throat.

**PURPOSE:** strengthens the neck and throat region; improves flexibility of the back and hamstrings

**SETUP:** Lie on your back with your legs extended at 90 degrees toward the ceiling, feet pointed. Your arms are at your sides, palms pressing down.

1. With control, using your abs and your glutes, lift your legs up into the air as high as possible.

2. Reach your arms straight behind your head. Hinge your left leg down toward your face and reach for it with your hands, keeping your right leg pointed straight to the ceiling.

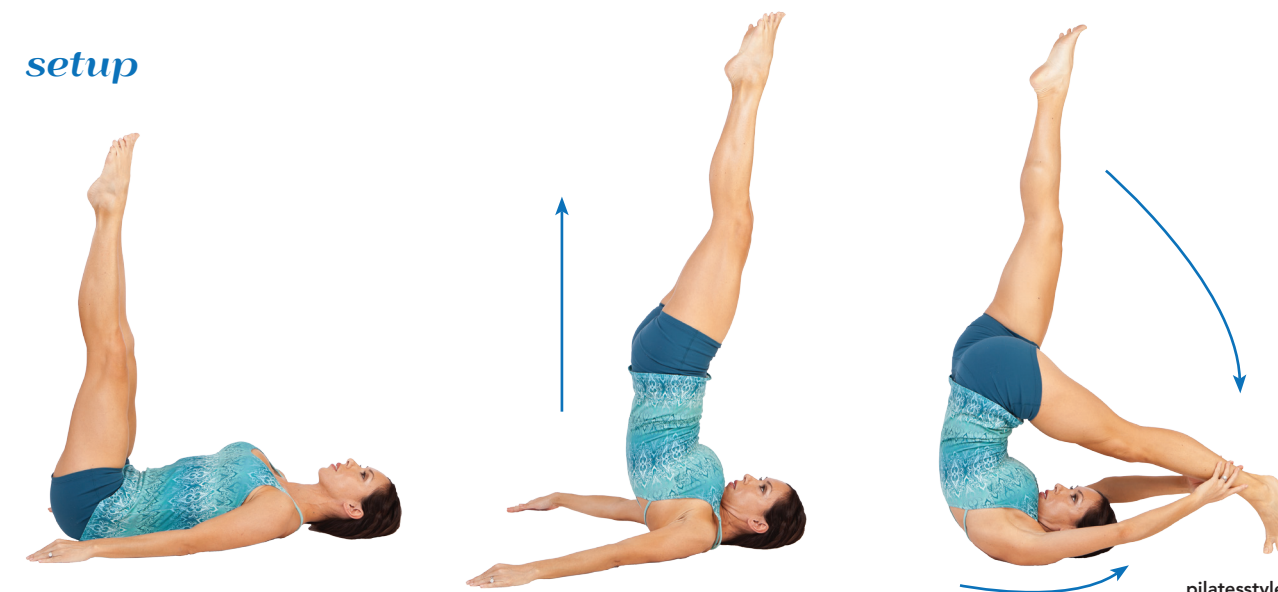
3. Bring your left leg back up to the ceiling, then repeat with your right leg. Do 3–6 repetitions of the leg scissoring.

**TIPS:** Keep your gaze focused toward the ceiling and your neck off your chest to open the throat and lengthen the neck.

**MODIFICATION:** If you have a neck, shoulder or back injury, reach both of your legs back toward your face together, or simply hold your legs straight up at 90 degrees.

**MANTRA:** Om Dreem Dram

### setup







### Crab: Chakra 6

This Chakra governs the pituitary gland and the endocrine system; it is the seat of wisdom, intuition and insight.

**PURPOSE:** builds strength in the neck and core; stretches the back and hamstrings

**SETUP:** Sit on your buttocks with your knees bent and ankles crossed. Hold onto your toes with your hands and round your back, balancing on your sitz bones.

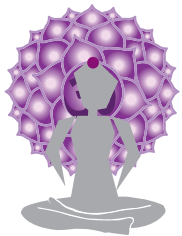
1. Using your abs to initiate the movement, roll forward onto your forehead. While balancing on your forehead, uncross your legs and grab your toes again.

2. Roll backward to balance on your shoulders, then cross your legs again, holding onto your toes. Do 6–8 repetitions.

**TIPS:** Keep your gaze focused on your abs to find your balance. This will prevent you from landing on your neck or face.

**MODIFICATION:** If you have neck problems, do the rolling and uncrossing of the legs without balancing on the forehead. Beginners, roll without uncrossing your legs.

**MANTRA:** Om Hreem Haum Nama Shivya



### The Wall: Chakra 7

Integrating all the chakras, this Chakra works on the limbic area of the brain—the ultimate of human awareness. It is located at the crown of the head.

**PURPOSE:** improves posture; stretches the spine to the crown of the head

**SETUP:** Stand tall against a wall with your spine pressing against it, trying to press all of the vertebrae into the wall from sacrum to head. Keep your feet slightly forward in front of your hips with your heels together and toes slightly apart. Your arms are relaxed at your sides.

1. Starting from your head, peel your body off the wall, rolling down one vertebra at a time until you reach your tailbone.

2. Pull your abdomen in and up and release all of the tension from the crown of your head and your shoulders. Shake your arms freely to let any tension out.

3. Slowly return to the starting position, rolling up one vertebra at a time from your lower back and ending with your head. Do 3–5 repetitions.

**TIPS:** As you roll up and down the wall, focus on all the chakras/parts of your body you've just worked on and integrate them all. As you roll off the wall, start with the seventh and work your way down; as you roll up, reverse the order and start with the first chakra.

**MANTRA:** Om Amritananda

### setup



### setup



Second-generation teacher Sheena Jongeneel, a former dancer who discovered Pilates after suffering a knee injury in college, studied under the tutelage of Romana Kryzanowska, and has since been teaching Pilates for 11 years. Recently, she also completed the Power Pilates certification program, and is the

owner of UpRise Classical Pilates and Wellness Center, a Power Pilates host studio in Santa Monica. Looking to integrate a complementary alternative method of rehabilitation to Pilates, Sheena discovered the Healing Arts of Oriental Medicine, where she earned her acupuncture license through the California State Board.