



Summer 2016 Pilates Challenge

August 1-31, 2016

About the Summer 2016 Pilates Challenge

This summer I've put together my 3rd Annual Summer Pilates Challenge, I think we can now say it has officially become a tradition. In May my clients already started requesting a Summer Challenge. I heard you all loud and clear, now here it is!

The theme this year is the **4 movements of the spine**: flexion, extension, side bending and twisting.

In the first portion of this Challenge there is a series of "cats" that serve as a warm-up and also a moment to observe your body, your spine in particular. This part is completely adapted for beginners, pregnant women and children.

The second more "challenging" and more "classical" portion includes a concentration on abdominal work with a continued observation of the positioning of the spine. The sidekicks are included to help improve rotation and mobility in the hip joint (also appropriate for beginners and pregnant women). To conclude there is a more challenging exercise, Leg Pull Front, which is a logical progression from the series of cats and our Spring Pilates Plank Challenge 2016.

How does it work?

To facilitate your participation, I have put together descriptions of each of the exercises accompanied by photos that show how to do the movements properly. On my website you will also find a video and an audio file which you can download onto your Smartphone, tablet, computer, etc. I suggest that beginners do the series of cats and my "Basic 10" series from 2014 available on my website in the section "Try at Home."

After the descriptions and photos, you will find a Log to note where and when you did your Challenge routine each day, followed by a space for comments about your workout. I especially want to invite you to write down your goals for participating and share them, with me or with the whole community participating via my Facebook page.

Enjoy this 3rd Summer Pilates Challenge!

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New Cat in Town*

Repetitions: 3-5

Breathing and Instructions:

Start on hands and knees: hands aligned with the elbows and the shoulders, knees are aligned just below the hips. The spine is not too round, not too arched, it is in-between, in neutral.

Inhale, leaning the weight of the body forward, come back to the start position, then exhale leaning the weight of the body back all the while maintaining the spine in neutral and keeping it long. Repeat maintaining regular and fluid breathing.



**This cat is thanks to Cathy Grant.*

Cat**



Repetitions: 3-5

Breathing and Instructions:

Start just like in the first exercise on hands and knees in the “neutral” cat position.

Exhale to round the spine from bottom to top releasing the head last.

Inhale to arch the spine from bottom to top picking up the head last.

***This cat series is thanks to Debora Kolwey from her teacher Eve Gentry.*



Cat Side Bend

Repetitions: 3-5 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

Start just like in the first exercise on hands and knees in the “neutral” cat position.

Exhale to tilt the pelvis to one side while turning the head to look towards the pelvis. Inhale to return to center.

Exhale to repeat on the other side.



Thread the Needle



Repetitions: 2-3 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

Start just like in the first exercise on hands and knees in the “neutral” cat position.



Inhale to reach one hand towards the ceiling while looking at it. Exhale to slide the hand then the arm under the opposite arm like thread through a needle. Place the head and the shoulder on the mat, breath and accentuate the twist on the exhale. Stay for 2-3 breaths.



Inhale to reach the hand back to the ceiling, exhale to place it back on the mat then repeat on the other side.



Drinking Lion

Repetitions: 3-5

Breathing and Instructions:

Start just like in the first exercise on hands and knees in the “neutral” cat position but this time with the hands turned towards the center of the mat.

Inhale to bend the elbows and lower the face toward the mat between the hands while arching the spine. Exhale there. Inhale to pick up the gaze and lift the spine. Back at the starting position exhale to release the head and round only the upper back.



The Hundred



Repetitions: 10

Breathing and Instructions:

Start supine. Exhale to pick up your head and upper back. Exhale to pick up your legs. Arms are straight and to the side. Move arms up and down quickly without stopping for the duration of the exercise. Inhale for 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds.

Beginners: Keep your knees bent.

Intermediates: Keep your legs straight and high.

Advanced: When beginning lift upper body and legs simultaneously. Keep legs straight and as low as possible.



Roll-Up

Repetitions: 3-5

Breathing and Instructions:

Start supine with arms reaching up to the ceiling. Inhale to pick up your head. Exhale to continue to lift your body off the mat stretching your spine forward. Inhale to begin rolling the spine back to the mat, exhale to finish.

Beginners: Bend your knees if needed and put your hands on the sides of your legs and walk them up your legs as you go.



Single Leg Stretch

Repetitions: 5 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

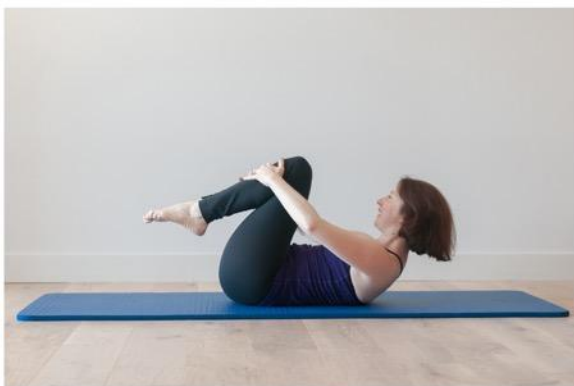
After the previous exercise bend the left leg, put the left hand on the left ankle, the right hand on the left knee, straighten the right leg curl the head and upper body into an abdominal curl to the tips of the shoulder blades. Inhale to bring one leg close to you and straighten the other. Then switch and exhale.

Beginners: Keep the straight leg high.

Intermediate/Advanced: Bring the straight leg progressively lower.



Double Leg Stretch



Repetitions: 5

Breathing and Instructions:

After the previous exercise bend both legs placing one hand on each knee. Inhale to stretch arms and legs upward at the same time, make a circle with the arms, exhale bending the legs and putting the hands back on the knees to return to the start position.

Beginners: Keep arms and legs high.

Intermediate/Advanced: Bring the arms and legs progressively lower.



Scissors

Repetitions: 5 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

After the previous exercise reach one leg up to the ceiling and grab a hold of the calf with both hands, gently pull the leg towards you for two counts then switch legs. Inhale for one leg and exhale for the other.

Beginners: Keep legs relatively high. Grab a hold of the back of the thigh instead of the calf.

Advanced: Make breath longer inhaling for 2 legs and exhaling for 2 legs.



Double Leg Lower Lift



Repetitions: 5

Breathing and Instructions:

After the previous exercise place hands, fingers crossed, at the base of the skull, maintain the upper abdominal curl, reach legs up to ceiling. Inhale to lower legs away from body and exhale to bring them back up

Beginners: Keep legs high, making a smaller movement.

Intermediate/Advanced: Bring the legs progressively lower.



Criss-Cross

Repetitions: 5 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

After the previous exercise keep hands exactly where they are and maintain the upper abdominal curl. Exhale to twist under arm towards opposite bent knee maintaining the other leg straight. Inhale back to center and exhale switch sides.

Beginners: Keep legs high.

Advanced: Bring legs progressively lower.



Spine Stretch



Repetitions: 5

Breathing and Instructions:

Start seated on sits bones with straight legs open just slightly wider than the hips. Feet are flexed, arms are straight and reaching toward the ceiling, palms of the hand facing each other. Exhale to stretch the spine forward. Inhale to stack the spine back up.

Beginners: Arms reach forward, knees slightly bent.



Side Kicks, half-circles

Repetitions: 3 in each of the 4 directions with each leg

Breathing and Instructions:

Begin lying on the mat aligned from top of the head to the pelvis with the back of the mat, both legs are bent.

Straighten the top leg to hip height lining the heel up with the sits bone.

Direction 1: Kick forward. Make a half-circle up: the leg goes up then lowers back to the start position. Start with an inhale finish with an exhale. 3 times.

Direction 2: Kick up. Make a half-circle forward: the leg goes forward, then back down to the start position. Start with an inhale finish with an exhale. 3 times.

Direction 3: Kick back. Make a half-circle back: the leg goes up then lowers back to the start position. Start with an inhale finish with an exhale. 3 times.

Direction 4: Kick up. Make a half-circle back: the leg goes back then down to the start position. Start with an inhale finish with an exhale. 3 times.



New Cat > Leg Pull Front



Repetitions : 3 each side

Breathing and Instructions:

Part 1: Start just like in the first exercise on hands and knees in the “neutral” cat position.

Stretch one foot back placing the ball of the foot on the mat. Rock the spine forward and back 3 times keeping the breath smooth and regular. Do each side.



Part 2: Reach both feet back placing the balls of the feet on the mat. Rock the spine forward and back 3 times keeping the breath smooth and regular.



Part 3: Stop in a neutral plank position to lift one leg up maintaining a stable pelvis. Rock 3 times forward and back keeping the breath smooth and regular. Lower the foot, lift the opposite leg and repeat on the other side.



Goals

Before you begin: What are your goals, what do you expect from this challenge and/or what do you hope to accomplish?

Excercise Log

Day	Time	Place	Comments
Monday 1			
Tuesday 2			
Wednesday 3			
Thursday 4			
Friday 5			
Saturday 6			
Sunday 7			
Monday 8			
Tuesday 9			
Wednesday 10			
Thursday 11			
Friday 12			
Saturday 13			
Sunday 14			
Monday 15			
Tuesday 16			
Wednesday 17			
Thursday 18			
Friday 19			
Saturday 20			
Sunday 21			
Monday 22			
Tuesday 23			
Wednesday 24			
Thursday 25			
Friday 26			
Saturday 27			
Sunday 28			
Monday 29			
Tuesday 30			
Wednesday 31			

31 Days Later...: How do you feel? Did you meet your objectives? What did you learn? Would you do the same challenge again?

