

My Favorite Move Ever: Pilates Low Back/Core Activation, from Kimberly Dye

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If you hate to exercise the last thing you want to do are exercises that are 1) boring and 2) don't really do much for you. That's why ih8exercise.com has asked some top trainers and coaches to share their absolute favorite move ever for beginners (or the one they're just really digging right now).

Kimberly Dye is a dance/movement therapist, Pilates mat instructor, and creator of the "Ultimate Pilates with Stretch-eze featuring Katherine and Kimberly Corps of Pilates on Fifth" DVD.

Pilates is a type of movement created by Joseph Pilates in the early 20th century. Pilates focuses primarily on the core, low back, and center of the body, including hips and butt, as well as the importance of breath and the alignment of the spine. There are lots of variations on Pilates, including classes that feature machines, those done on mats, and hybrid classes, like ones that combine vigorous cardio exercise with Pilates moves.

Kimberly's favorite move uses a looped band, called Stretch-eze, to create resistance. "Using the support and resistance of the Stretch-eze actually feels *good*," says Kimberly, "while it creates a cleaner access to the deeper abdominal and low-back muscles."

Name of Move: Pilates Low Back/Core Activation using a Stretch-eze band

Why She Likes It: This move allows you to strengthen your **transverse abdominal muscles** and low back, improving pelvic stability and core strength. It will also help improve joint stability, hip strength, and range of motion.

Body Parts It Works: low back, abdominals, hip flexors

You will need a Stretch-eze band to do this move, and you'll first need to get into the band in a double-fold, back knee wrap. Here's how:







Here's how to do the Low Back/Core Activation with the Stretch-eze band:

1. Inhale and exhale for four breaths. Send your breath into your back, side, and lower ribs without lifting your shoulders. Press your back and knees slightly into the resistance of the band to feel back expansion and leg/hip stability.



2. Roll down to a supine position (on your back) and feel the length of your low back on the floor as you keep resistance between the leg and knee in the band. Find a neutral low-back spine position where your back is not arched and your pelvis is not tucked, but your back is lengthened, maintaining a natural low-back curve.



3. Maintaining that position, bring your right leg to tabletop position (knee bent at hip level, lower leg and foot pointing forward). Feel the relationship between your low back and your abdominals as you lift your right leg.



4. Lower your right leg to the floor and lift your left leg to tabletop position. Alternate legs, continuing for eight to 16 reps (one rep equals moving both legs). Finish with both legs in tabletop position.



Photos courtesy of Ken Shintaku, Dye-namic Movement Products.

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