



## **Holding Yourself In a New Light**

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During the summer you may feel a little more self-consciousness about your body as the layers of winter clothes shed and lighter, shorter pieces of clothing show a little more of you.

Take a look at yourself in a mirror, just stand there, observe your body, be happy with your body and dig a little deeper to find your true self. What does your body say about you? Look at yourself as if it's the first time you're meeting you.

Are you standing up tall or do your shoulders round toward the front of your body? Everyone has a tendency to slouch during the day, if you notice your back curving and becoming very relaxed, try to straighten your back as soon as you notice yourself relaxing.

Sit in a chair with your feet on the ground hip distance apart, straighten your back sliding your shoulders down toward the ground, keeping your chest lifted. Slowly bring your chin toward your chest to feel a release through your shoulders to your lower back.

The key element of a poor posture is core strength. You don't need to add a hundred crunches into your daily routine, you just need better body awareness. Pilates puts special emphasis on training the deeper abdominal muscles, such as the transverse abdominus and the muscles of the pelvic floor.

Working the pelvic floor muscles is not just for women preparing for or bouncing back from pregnancy. The engagement of the muscles of the pelvic floor is critical to providing a stable base of movement for anyone. You will feel like you are pulling the pelvic floor up and in toward your centerline. One might imagine pulling the sit bones together very similar to the kegel exercises. The only real difference is in the intensity.

Once the pelvic floor is engaged, the actual pull-in begins just above the pubic bone becoming a deep pull-in of the lower abdominals. From there, the pull-in action progresses upwards to pulling the belly button to the spine and then the upper abdominal area.

Your feet also play an important role in maintaining a healthy posture. The arches of your feet help absorb shock, distribute the weight of your body and assist the feet in adapting to surface changes when walking.

Next time you look at yourself, you may find a few of these minor adjustments and some concentration will make all the difference in your self-confidence.