

# Pelvic Floor Guide

## For Women: Volume 1



### 8 Reasons Your Pelvic Floor Is Too Important To Be Neglected!

BY LEIA ERICKSON

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PILATES INSTRUCTOR  
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# Welcome! I am honored to guide you through a deeper understanding of your pelvic floor!

Let's explore together common misconceptions about our pelvic floor, and learn important reasons why pelvic floor health needs to be part of your healthcare routine!



*Unfortunately,*

Women are often silent about their pelvic floor challenges leaving pelvic floor dysfunctions often undiagnosed and untreated.

Women are often unaware of the impact our pelvic floor health has on our whole body.

This has led to an epidemic of silent suffering!

## How common is pelvic floor dysfunction?

1-in-3 women will experience pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) in her lifetime due to weakened pelvic muscles, overly tightened pelvic muscles, or tears in the connective tissue, which may cause pelvic organ prolapse, bladder control problems, bowel control problems, chronic groin, hip or back pain, and decreased sexual pleasure.

Your Pelvic floor health determines your whole woman health!

From physiologic processes such as peeing, pooping, and childbirth, to emotional conditions such as anxiety and depression, to physical states such as pelvic, lower back, hip, neck, or TMJ pain, to your ability to feel pleasure and orgasm.

The pelvic floor is one of the most misunderstood and neglected areas of our body, and yet this group of muscles plays an important role for our physical health, emotional wellbeing and sexuality. Let's explore why the Pelvic floor affects every area of a woman's life.

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## Let me first tell you about myself ...

My name is Leia Erickson. I am a Nationally Certified Pilates Instructor, specializing in Women's Health, Pelvic Floor and Diastasis Recti Recovery. In addition, I am a Labor and Delivery RN, a CAPPa Certified Birth Educator and an LBCLC (Internationally Certified Lactation Consultant).

I am a proud mother of two boys and have 17 years experience empowering women. I am honored to share the knowledge I have gained from some of the finest educators and through my own Pelvic Floor and Diastasis Recti challenges.

I am passionate about empowering women discover their inner strength through Pilates, Mindful Birth Education and Lactation services.

Follow me and reach me at  
[www.slcwomenshealth.com](http://www.slcwomenshealth.com)

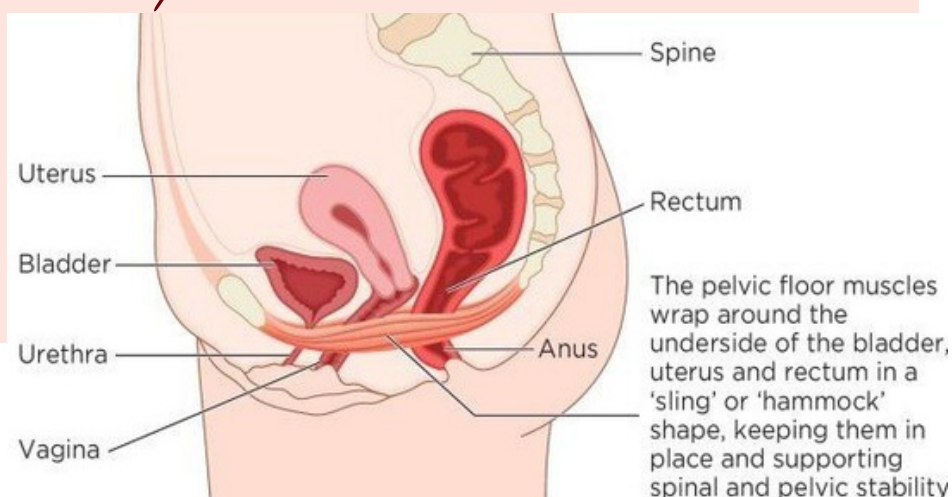


“I began working with Leia when my daughter was 6-months old. I had persistent and debilitating lower back pain and did not feel connected to my body. After a few weeks of deep breathing and slow purposeful motions, I started to reconnect and relearn about my body. I got stronger, my pain went away, and for the first time since pre-pregnancy I was able to feel and control even the smallest of muscles again! To my great surprise and relief I realized that I wouldn't be in pain for the rest of my life and I could reclaim the body I thought I lost. This kickstarted a desire to get back on track with my health and to take good care of my body. It is continuous hard work that feels so good! I am so grateful for Leia helping me see my potential and giving my body back to me!" Annie

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*important tip*

Did you know your Pelvic floor is more like a hammock than a floor?



## 1. Your pelvic muscles form a hammock at the base of your pelvis rather than a floor

Your pelvic floor consists of muscles and ligaments that support your bladder, uterus (womb) and intestinal bowel like a hammock from your pubic bone (at the front) to your tail-bone (at the back) and from your sit bones (side to side).

It can also be thought of as a bowl at the base of your pelvis.

Together, your pelvic floor muscles work like a cylinder of support with help from your deep abdominals, deep back muscles and respiratory diaphragm to stabilize your spine and pelvis.

Your pelvic hammock supports and assists the functions of your pelvic organs (bladder, uterus and bowel), and controls the pressure inside your abdomen (intra-abdominal pressure) that develops when you lift something heavy, strain, cough, jump, or run. In addition, these 3 layers of incredible muscles contribute to your sexual pleasure.

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## 2. Your pelvic floor is regarded as a muscle of emotion

What is the connection between stress, trauma, emotions and pelvic floor health?

The pelvic floor is an emotional storage house causing many women to have overly tightened pelvic muscles. As we experience stress, pain or trauma, the nerves that are connected to our pelvic floor muscles cause them to tense up, shorten and tighten. Common triggers are:

- Anxiety
- Daily stressors
- Unresolved emotions or trauma
- Shame and trauma around our female anatomy
- Societal body shame around image or weight
- Traumas such as rape or abuse
- Birth trauma (Sadly, 1 in 3 women experience birth trauma)

These stressors have been shown to get held within our bodies tissues, and often within the pelvic floor. So if your nervous system is holding tension due to stress (physical, emotional, or energetic) you can have symptoms in these areas associated with pelvic floor tightness. (Think bowel dysfunction: IBS, constipation, loose stools, pain)

Not all stress is bad stress. It is needed for survival and is responsible for the adrenaline rush felt in fight-or-flight situations.

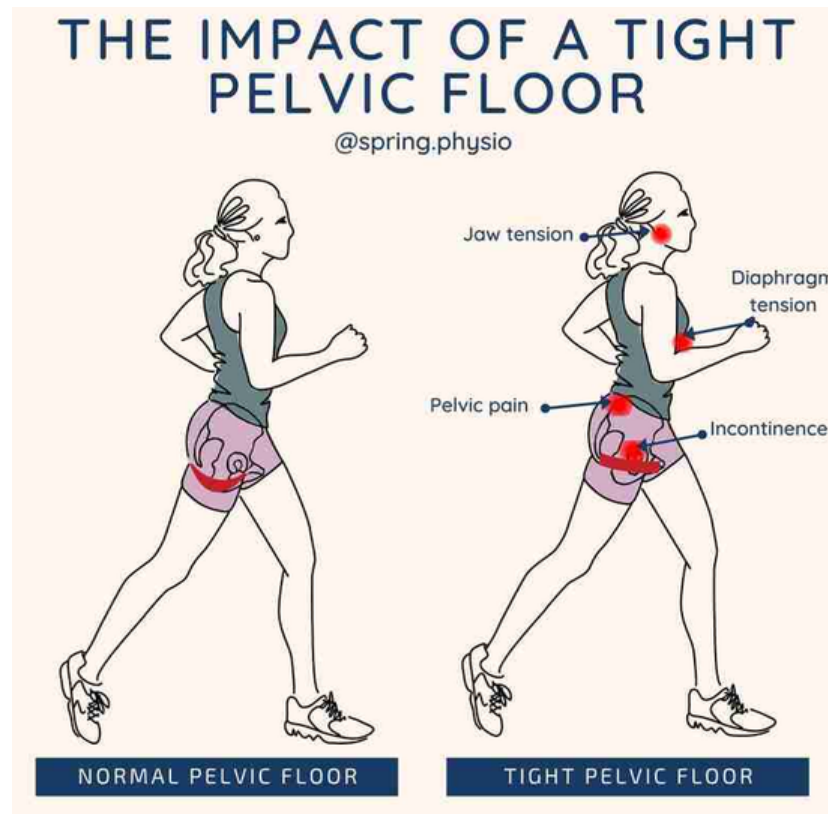
However, not managing our stress well and not taking care to mindfully relax, lengthen and stretch our muscles in between strengthening work contributes to a stressed, weakened and tight pelvic floor.



## 4. A tight pelvic floor can affect our body and negatively impact our life

Stressors and trauma in our lives can cause dysfunctions on our pelvic floor that, if untreated, can lead to :

- urinary leakage
- incomplete emptying of the bladder
- hesitancy
- delayed start of urine stream
- urinary frequency, urgency or pain
- difficult pushing phase in childbirth
- chronic constipation, or incomplete emptying of bowels
- vaginal heaviness or organ prolapse
- low back, hips, tailbone, groin, neck, or jaw pain
- painful sex



### What can we do for an overly tightened pelvic floor?

- Pilates exercises designed to lengthen, relax and stretch the pelvic floor
- pelvic floor muscle relaxation techniques and visualization
- breathing techniques like deep belly breaths (diaphragmatic breathing)
- plenty of sleep, hydration and a well-balanced diet
- minimizing stressors and delegating tasks
- advice on bladder and bowel habits
- pelvic floor and abdominal massage techniques
- pelvic and hip stretches

So go ahead, forget about being superwoman, and give yourself permission to do the best you can.

[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MY 8-WEEK VIRTUAL PELVIC FLOOR PROGRAM](#)



"Kegels are the end all be all for everything pelvic floor related".

This couldn't be more false!!!

## 4. Kegels are not the only way to strengthen

Unfortunately, Kegels can potentially cause more harm than good. How can this be? How can Kegels both help with urinary leakage but also cause urinary leakage? Help with childbirth but also hinder childbirth? Help with pain but also cause pain?

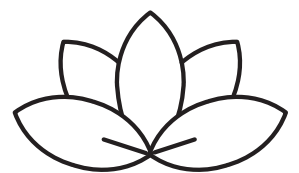
The use of Kegels for pelvic floor muscle strengthening dates back to 1948 when a physician named Arnold Kegel first described the exercise. Kegels involve repetitive contraction and relaxation movements to improve pelvic floor strength and coordination by shortening the muscle fibers. This can be a problem when many women are already walking around with tight pelvic floors.

The pelvic floor needs strength and endurance, but it also, more importantly needs length. As I mentioned before, the ability of the pelvic floor to lengthen and release tension is not just a physical issue, the pelvic floor is intimately connected to our emotional wellness.

If our pelvic floor muscles become shortened or are unable to relax, they do not adequately contract, and will not have the length and endurance they need for optimal health. If you have tried using Kegel exercises and have seen no improvement or worsening symptoms, it is time to act.

### What Do I Do if Kegels Have Not Helped Me?

[Click here to Book a free 30-min discovery call with me](#)



[Click here to learn more about my 8-week virtual Pelvic Floor Health Program](#)

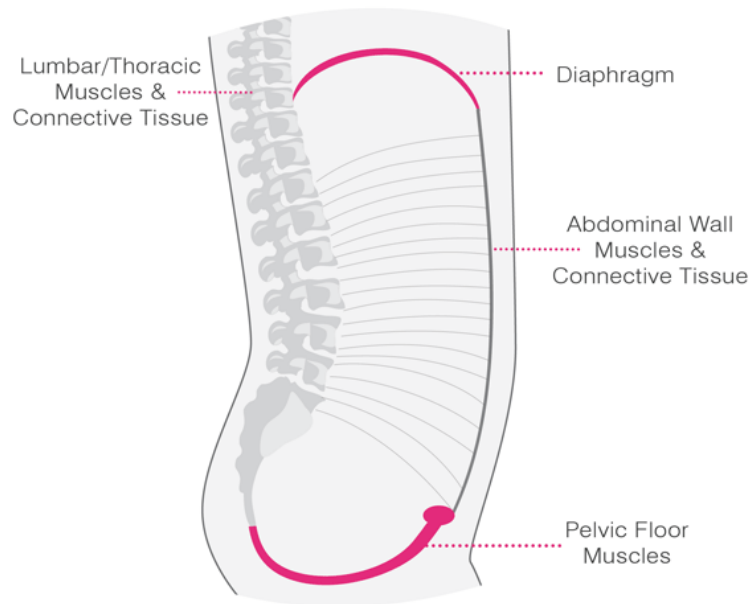
Most importantly, do not give up! And remember, Kegels are not the only answer to healing the symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction.

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## 5. Your pelvic floor cannot reach it's fullest potential without proper breath and the inner core team?

Let's look anatomically how our breath can affect our pelvic floor muscles. Your torso is supported by a group of muscles that together form a cylinder of support as your inner core team, comprised of:

- the (respiratory) diaphragm (at the top)
- the pelvic floor (at the bottom)
- the deep abs (on the front and sides)
- and spinal stabilizers (in the back)



**Core Activation: The 'Expansion and Compression' cycle of the Core driven by the breath**

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When you breathe in, your ribs expand, the diaphragm lowers to make room for air and moves your organs down. Your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles then lengthen and expand to make room for your organs. When you breathe out, your diaphragm lifts and your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles contract and shorten, returning to their resting position.

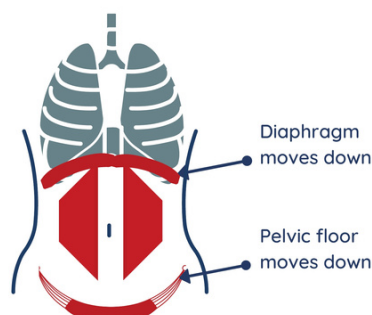
Each part of your core works beautifully as a team. If part of the team is not working correctly because of pain, weakness, tightness, scar tissue, stress, posture, bad habits, or poor breathing techniques — pelvic floor dysfunction can occur.

The relationship between your pelvic floor health and your posture and breath is very important. Coordinating your breath with your muscle control isn't just for Pilates, running, or weight lifting, it's essential to maintaining a healthy pelvic floor...and ultimately a healthy mental well-being.

## BREATH & THE PELVIC FLOOR

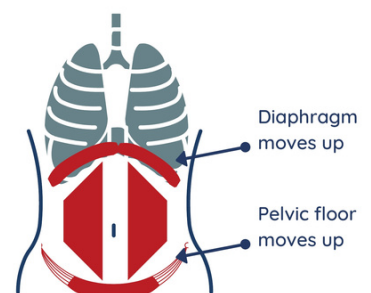
CONTRACT AND RELAX THE PELVIC FLOOR WITH THE NATURAL RHYTHM OF THE BREATH

INHALE



RELAX THE PELVIC FLOOR

EXHALE



CONTRACT THE PELVIC FLOOR

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## 7. Easy Tips to improve your breathing

**RELAX:** Make relaxation a priority for your pelvic floor

**PAY ATTENTION:** How does your breath change throughout the day, or during times of stress or certain emotions?

**TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR BREATH:** After learning your breathing habits, take control of your breath by deepening, relaxing and slowing down your breath to help your body and mind relax.

**BREATHE THROUGH YOUR NOSE:** Inhale through your nose, gently relaxing your tongue and feeling it sitting on the roof of your mouth. Exhale through a relaxed jaw.

**BREATHE WITH YOUR DIAPHRAGM:** Breathe in through your nose all the way down into your belly.

**CHECK YOUR POSTURE:** improving your posture can make a huge impact on your breathing, pelvic floor and core activation and your overall health.

*practice tip*

### Simple breathing with your diaphragm

Known as “belly breathing.” Lay on your back with one hand on your chest and one on your belly. How do you breathe? Where is the air going? Is your top hand on your chest the only hand moving? Do not force the air anywhere but invite it into your lower belly and allow that area to fill up. Building body awareness by checking in and noting if only your chest is moving or if your diaphragm is doing some of the work can really help to improve your breath.

*practice tip*

### Check in on your shoulders throughout the day

by inhaling to pull them up to your ears for the count of three and then breathe out, allowing all of the tension to melt away... letting your shoulders feel heavy and relaxed. Was this where your shoulders started? If so, awesome! If not, maybe keep checking in on them. Less tension means better breathing!

## 8. Sucking in your belly can cause issues!

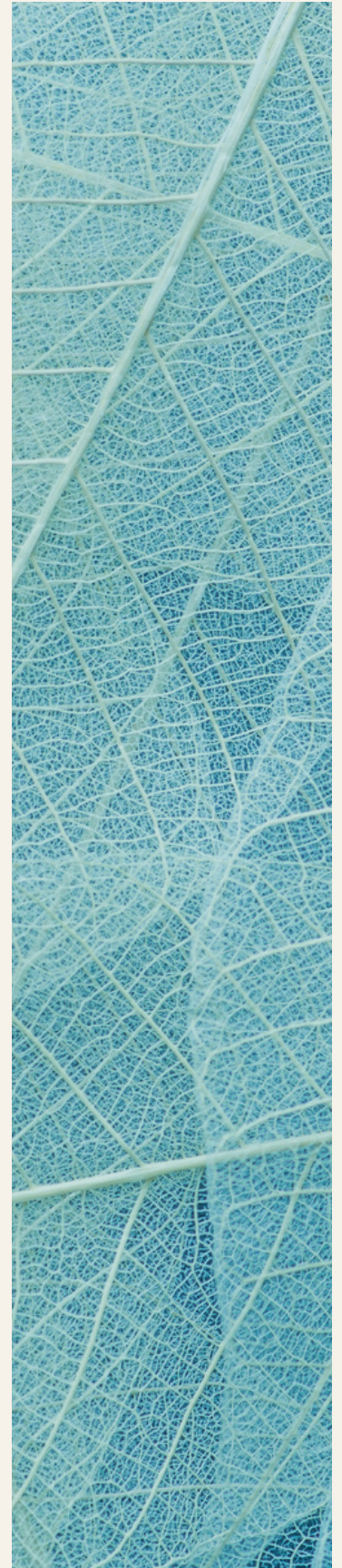
Are you drawing your belly button in all day long to look thinner?

When we pull our belly button in, we restrict breathing and increase the intra-abdominal pressure (pressure within the abdomen that ultimately exerts pressure onto the pelvic floor) causing overly tightened, weak and stressed pelvic floor muscles.

## 7. Tight clothing can also cause issues!

Wearing tight clothing (ex: skinny jeans, high-waisted jeans, tight high-waisted leggings) can negatively impact your pelvic floor in the same way by increasing the intra-pressure exerted onto your pelvic floor

In addition, sucking in your belly or wearing tight waisted clothing can interfere with proper blood flow and nerve conduction, affecting your digestive and pelvic health

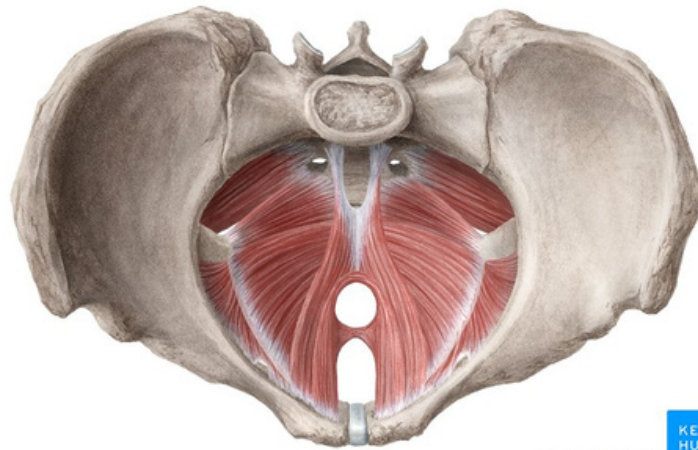


## 8. Building the strength and length with the help of your breath & inner core team is easier than you think!

As we move, breathe and transition through our daily life, our breath and inner core should work together as a team.

It is important to learn and understand how our breath, posture and abdominal activation techniques are the key to strengthening our "cylinder of support" (pelvic floor, diaphragm, deep abs, and back muscles).

My [8-week virtual Pilates Program](#) safely guides women through exercises designed to develop this “cylinder of support”.



Through my deeply rewarding and supportive program, you will embark on a journey towards a stronger and healthier pelvic floor

From the comfort of your home and with the one-on-one guidance from me, you will work through videos (with lifetime access) and educational material to enhance your learning. We will approach the pelvic floor as a muscle of emotion by learning exercises to build compassionate self-love and kindness, self-trust, and confidence. In between learning, my program offers a safe space to discuss and seek answers within a community of women through small group Q&A sessions via zoom.

Make yourself a priority by investing in your body and long-term health & say “Hello” to a leak-free and pain-free active motherhood!

# It's never too late to start improving your Pelvic Floor Health!

It is never too late to start improving the length, strength and function of your pelvic muscles!! As you continue on your pelvic floor recovery journey, it is important that you

- Learn how to protect your pelvic floor while moving, lifting or carrying
- Develop better bathroom habits
- Improve your posture
- Re(learn) to breathe at rest
- Address muscles imbalances
- Learn proper form and breathing techniques to use while exercising
- Learn proper abdominal strengthening exercises to gain strength in your core and better maintain pelvic floor function



I hope this e-book has inspired you to begin or to continue taking control of your pelvic floor health!

It is never too late to improve your:

self-love

self-confidence

abdominal strength

pelvic floor function

back, hip, and groin pain

knowledge about your body

ability to do the things you love to do

sexual pleasure or painful intercourse

leaking when you sneeze, cough, run or jump

chronic constipation, hemorrhoids, bloating or indigestion

In just 8 weeks, let me show you how to achieve this!

## What are clients saying:

*"I found Leia's postpartum Pilates class about a year after I had my second baby. I was still suffering from a birth injury to my pelvic floor that wasn't being resolved entirely through physical therapy. Leia worked in a slow and tender pace, helping me regain my strength, flexibility, and function. Before Pilates, I would be in debilitating pain by noon every day. Through working with Leia consistently, the pain disappeared. It's been 5 years and I still continue to work with Leia because she is an extraordinary and gifted teacher who helps me feel my best. Her Pilates and nursing training help me understand the mechanics of the body to optimize your workout experience." Sarah*

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*"It felt like Leia was the perfect person for me at the perfect time in my life. I was pregnant for the first time, very unaware and pretty nervous about it all. My body felt like not my own, everything was changing and I wasn't sure how to keep it from what felt like, falling apart at times. When I met Leia, I felt a huge sense of relief as I got to know all the years of experience she had with pre and post partum Pilates. Besides that, I felt I could really rely on her expertise because of her own experience with having children and being a nurse. She helped me get more and more comfortable in my changing body, teaching me how to do the right stretches and build the right muscles without being scared I was over doing it or putting the baby in danger. I didn't even realize how much the arm workouts helped until I had to hold the baby and breastfeed so much. After having the baby, she taught me some very valuable pelvic floor workouts that changed everything for me. I am definitely coming back with this second baby on the way!" Irina*

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*"I found Leia right after an emergency abdominal surgery. I had been bedridden for three months during my recovery and was looking for a Pilates instructor with pelvic floor expertise to help me regain balance and strength. Leia was exactly what I needed. She worked closely with me to identify my goals and supported me every step of the way. Leia was knowledgeable, kind, and attentive to my specific recovery needs. If you are looking for an incredible Pilates practitioner, Leia is your gal." Rose*

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*"Leia teaches Pilates with a wonderful combination of challenge and precision. As a student of hers, I've enjoyed and benefited from her attention to the uniqueness of my patterns of movement as well as her conscientiousness, creativity, and downright genuinely warm heart. I don't hesitate to refer clients to her for developing their strength, balance, fluidity and physical integrity." Sarah*

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*"Leia has really helped me get more in tune with all parts of my core. Her knowledge of the body is so impressive, and is the main reason I keep going back to her. There just really isn't a pilates instructor like her, she's the best." Alysia*

[See more testimonials here](#)

IT'S TIME TO...  
LOVE YOURSELF  
RESPECT YOURSELF  
ADMIRE YOURSELF  
FORGIVE YOURSELF  
ACCEPT YOURSELF  
NURTURE YOURSELF  
TODAY IS THE DAY!



*Thank you!*

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Reserve your spot today! Space is limited

BOOK A FREE 30-MIN  
DISCOVERY CALL WITH  
ME BELOW TO DISCUSS  
YOUR PELVIC HEALTH  
GOALS AND HOW MY  
8-WEEK PROGRAM CAN  
WORK FOR YOU!

Leia Erickson

**30 Minute Discovery Call**

30 min

This is a 30 minute discovery session for us to connect and learn more about your health related concerns, your goals and vision in where you are wanting to go, and what's getting in the way.

SHOW MORE

Select a Day

August 2022

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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