Three Reasons for practicing your postural setup and learning to stabilise through pilates.

1. If you hurt your back, it’s catastrophic for your central nervous system (CNS). If you have experienced these injuries you’ll know, disk herniation or facet joint injury are hugely disruptive to your day-to-day movement. Your ability to play, run, lift and move quickly is diminished as your body shuts down to protect the injured site. To protect against pain and injury, posture and your ability to stabilise a healthy position is of paramount importance for your training and day-to-day vitality.

2. Your trunk is your chassis, your hips and your shoulders are your engine. For your engine to be functional you must position and stabilise your chassis/trunk appropriately. A poorly positioned trunk will lead to shoulder and hip dysfunction, pain and greater potential for injury whilst your tying your shoe laces, driving long distances or practicing your chosen sport.

3. Do you feel like you have tight hamstrings? Quite often, what feels like a lack of mobility in the back, hips and hamstring is actually an inability to arrange the spine into a good position. By arranging properly with the sequence below you could see hamstring range increase significantly.

When do you use the 5-Key Elements of postural setup?

Set yourself up with the 5-key elements before every exercise whether your cycling or running, squatting or pressing, this setup is your natural position, you do not want to strengthen around anything else, also, using these techniques, raise your perception of posture through your day, you could be driving, sitting at a desk, working for long periods in one position or playing with your kids- arranging appropriately will keep you healthy and free from discomfort.

The 5-Key Elements
1. Lateral Breathing
2. Centering & Stabilising
3. Ribcage Placement
4. Shoulder Blade Placement
5. Head and Neck Placement
1. Lateral Breathing
Though Pilates you will learn the correct and natural way to breathe which will improve your breath pattern and depth. This is vital in order to get sufficient oxygen to working muscles to rid the body of waste products and delay the onset of fatigue. Many people only use a fraction of their lung volume and deny themselves the benefits of correct and efficient breathing.

Practice:
From a neutral standing position. Place your hands across the lower half of your ribcage with the tips of your fingers slightly interlaced, relax your shoulders. Breathe in and allow your ribs to expand width ways (let your fingertips draw apart). Breathe out and allow your ribcage to sink inwards and downwards (your fingertips may interlace slightly as you empty your lungs).

Focal Point: Imagine the back of your ribcage spreading wide and relaxing on the mat beneath you.
2. Centering and Stabilising

Pilates aims to develop a strong central core of abdominal, lower back and pelvic floor muscles. These postural muscles support the spine, pelvis and abdomino-pelvic organs all day long.

**Practice**

Finding your neutral spine position
In standing. Place you thumbs on your belly button and your fingertips on the pubic bone to make the shape of a 'pelvic diamond'. Now imagine you have placed a marble in this diamond. Tilt your pelvic diamond away from you to exaggerate the curve in your lower back, the marble will drop to the fingers (base of the diamond), then tilt the pelvic diamond towards you to flatten your back (the marble will move to your thumbs). Continue to repeat these gentle tilting movements and settle your position of the pelvic diamond in the middle of these two positions, so the marble rests in the middle of the diamond. This will be your 'neutral spine' position. The point you will begin each exercise from.

Setting your abdominal muscles
Remain in your neutral spine position. Place your fingers on your pelvic bones and now slide your fingers in and downwards ~4cm imagine your deep abdominal muscles forming a natural corset. Breathe in to prepare now as you breathe out slowly and gently draw in the muscular corset below your belly button. Hold your centre and keep breathing normally.

**Focal Point:** You should feel the muscles under your fingertips subtly draw away and firm/tighten.
3. Ribcage Placement

Ideally your ribcage should be aligned directly above your pelvis however many people tend to flare their ribcage forwards or depress the rib cage forwards and down, both lead to poor posture and in time will produce stiffness, muscle tightness and pain.

*Practice*

In standing, find your neutral spine and set your centre. Breathe in to prepare and then breathe out and lift your arms slowly overhead as far as you can while keeping the back of your ribcage flat, see the left hand photo. Common problems with rib cage placement include a flaring of the rib or a depression of the sternum, the right hand photo shows the rib cage/sternum depression.

**Focal Point:** Imagine a set of springs from your ribcage to your pelvic bones, the tension in these springs should remain constant as your raise and lower your arms.
4. Shoulder Blade Placement

We need excellent stability around our shoulder blades for movement of our arms and neck.

**Practice**

In standing, find your neutral spine position and set your centre. Float your arms upwards towards the ceiling imagine you holding helium balloon between your fingertips, allow your arms to lift further upwards and glide your shoulder blades gently apart. Breathe out and gently draw your shoulder blades back together without pinching them together.

**Focal Point:** Imagine your collarbones are opening wide and your shoulder blades are wide and relaxed, the crease at your elbow will be pointing forwards when you get the shoulder blades flat against your back.
5. Head and Neck Placement

Our head and neck experience a lot of strain due to poor posture and placement. We need to be able to relax our deep neck flexors and work on lengthening the muscles at the back of the neck.

**Practice**

In standing, slightly tuck your chin towards your chest to lengthen the back of the neck. In sitting position try for a few moments retracting your chin to make a double chin posture to stretch the muscles at the back of the neck.

**Focal Point**- Imagine you are being gently lengthened upwards from the crown of your head.

“In 10 sessions, you will feel the difference. In 20, you will see the difference. And in 30, you’ll be on your way to having a whole new body.” – Joseph Pilates

**About- Charlotte Roberts, Tribal Resident Pilates Coach**

Charlotte is a thriving health ambassador that has a love & passion for your long-term vitality, why? Because Charlotte believes that everybody has the strength to drive transformative change.

Through her 20’s Charlotte struggled with an autoimmune condition known as Hashimoto’s Thyroiditis, known widely as a chronic and fairly debilitating condition, Charlotte made it her life’s work to understand human health and drive herself from surviving to a thriving, constantly growing example of living positively with Hashimoto’s.

Charlotte became a Pilates coach because she deeply understands the need for restorative exercise, and she practices nutritional therapy because she gets that without addressing the whole organism, it is impossible to affect change.

Charlotte coaches pilates from the Tribal Studio and is featured with the weekly timetable, for more information mail info@tribaltriathlete.com.