

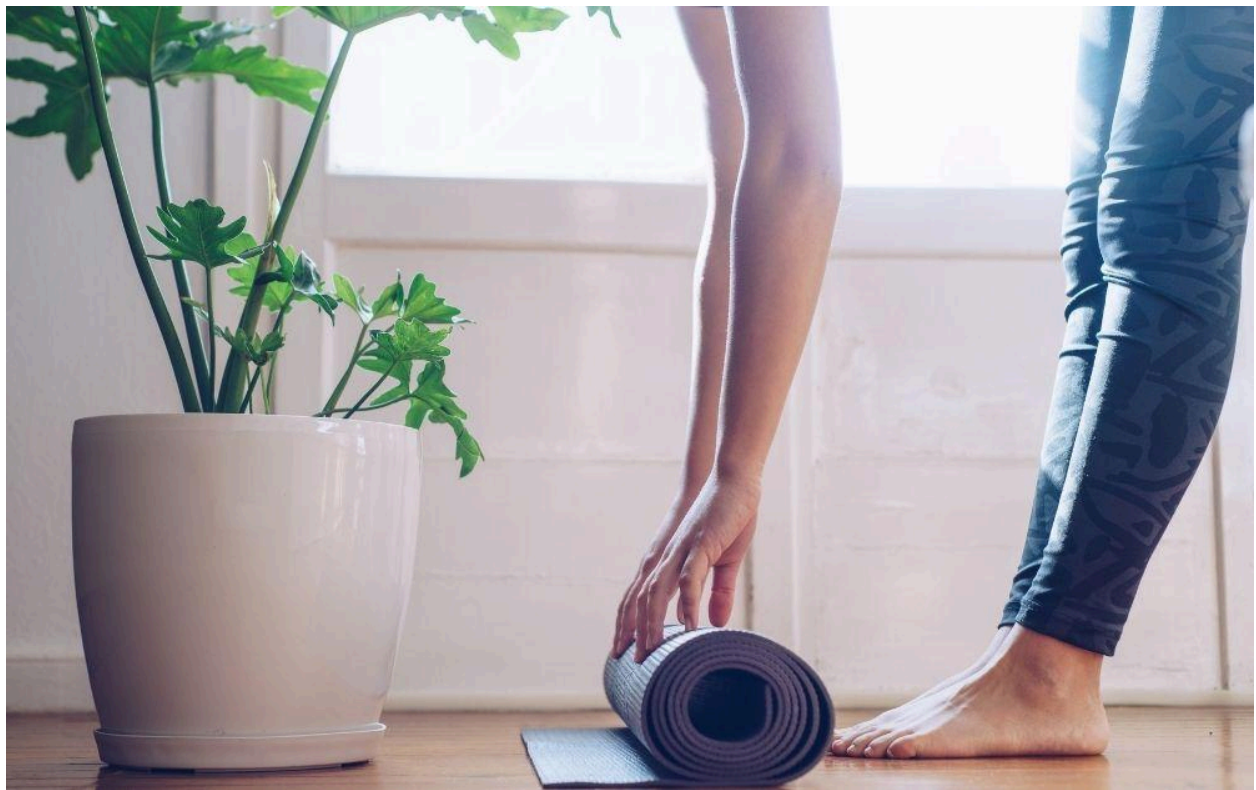
# What is the “SAID Principle” in Pilates?

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It's not what you do. It's *how* you do it. This is the philosophy the **Lee Pilates Method** was founded upon. That's why I recommend that all my clients start with a thorough understanding of the basics and origin of movement. Transforming posture, gaining strength, re-shaping the body, and reducing pain rely on precise movement and proper muscle activation.

That's where the SAID Principle comes in.

## What is the SAID Principle?



SAID stands for **Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demand**. In simple terms that means that the body is designed to always get better at whatever it does.

If you sit at your desk all day hunched over your computer in improper posture – guess what? Your body gets better at sitting in that posture. If you are always holding your shoulders up to your ears or arching your low back in an excessive curve, your body will repeat that behavior. The SAID principle is a philosophy based on this scientific principle of human physiology.

When we train in a way that triggers undesired movement patterns, either because we don't know better or the work is beyond our current fitness level, we are actually *training* our bodies to get stronger using these compensatory movement patterns. We create neural short cuts that fire or turn on the overdominant muscles we habitually use, which inhibits the muscles that we need for more proper and safe movement.

This compensatory movement behavior enforces our bad habits, creating injury and strain. Because of the SAID principle, it becomes easier and more accessible for the body to repeat over and over again.

## Why the SAID principle?

According to Dr. Eric Cobb, a functional neuroscience practitioner and founder of **Z-health Education**, our bodies are designed to move in proper alignment with fluidity through all ranges of motion. But if you don't challenge your body to move correctly in all directions, you will lose those abilities. The nerve activation needed to strengthen the muscles for stability and better quality movement will weaken. The nerve activation that stimulates over-dominant muscles will become stronger, causing imbalance to the body and setting it up for poorer quality movement, injury and pain. "Your body will actually begin to adapt to becoming immobile, stiff and inefficient," says Dr. Cobb.

That is why it is critically important that we never move into pain or undesired movement patterns. It also means that we must learn to be aware of how we move. We must learn to execute our movements with precision and intention if we truly want to change our bodies, avoid injury, and reduce pain.

## The SAID principle in action



I had a private client who for years wanted to tone her arms. She especially wanted to tone her triceps, but could never make any progress (too many women know that struggle). We started to work together, and I saw that her upper shoulder and neck muscles (upper trapezius) took over in almost every movement she did. Even if an exercise was meant to tone her arms, they weren't the ones working. It took months of tiny micro movements to begin to get her to activate the proper muscles

Everything was slow, meticulous, lightweight movement. Eventually she developed a neural connection to those muscles and was able to achieve stability in her shoulder girdle. She also corrected alignment in her shoulder, elbow and wrist joint.

So how did we use the SAID principle in this case? We found and addressed the problem in her body mechanics and reconnected her brain to those underdeveloped muscles.

## When to apply the SAID principle

In short: Consistently! The SAID principle demonstrates the importance of repetition, which is how the brain learns. If we want to get better at something we have to practice it systematically and with precision.

As you practice physical skills, physical changes occur to the structure of the brain as a result. For example, if you spend hours practicing an instrument, you will develop stronger hand coordination. The neurons responsible for the coordinated finger actions will communicate better and faster. And your muscle memory will execute automatically, without any degree of conscious effort or thought.

Thus, if we want to have better posture and alignment, it is vital that we practice. And every time we practice, we will improve our movement and alignment in daily life.

## How you can apply the SAID principle?



Like any body training exercise, we have to practice at a level that is appropriate for our current level of fitness . Or maybe even how we are feeling that day (depending on sleep, sickness, women's cycles and other life stressors).

We have to train under the appropriate amount of stress. We need enough stress to cause an adaptation in our body, but not so much stress that we are creating unwanted movement patterns or worse, getting injured.

So, while I am a believer in robust, athletic training I educate my clients that it must be built on a foundation of movement education and a discipline of meticulous practice and repetition, repetition, repetition.

*Interested in applying the SAID principle in your Pilates practice? Check out my **private training, small group live online classes and my On Demand classes.***