

# MEET THE STRETCH-EZE



Discover newfound connections—and get longer and leaner—with this resistance tool that provides hands-on feedback to beginners and advanced students alike. Eze-y does it!

*By Kimberly Dye • Modeled by Tatiana Trivellato • Edited by Amanda Altman*

Using springy resistance was one of Joseph Pilates' critical preparatory methods for building core strength and body control. While teaching Pilates matwork in health club "no pain, no gain" settings, I often saw people misinterpreting the concept of stability: They would create rigid muscular-holding patterns, instead of achieving dynamic core strength or a "tensegrity of forces," where the pelvis and rib cage are part of a moveable, breathing body of strength. Many students thought performing the Hundred was a feat to accomplish in any way whatsoever, even if that meant poor form due to weak muscles. Tense shoulders, overused hip flexors and general discomfort predominated. But I had an idea...

I found that I was more effective as a teacher when providing tactile cueing and had previous success with several suspension stretch props I designed as a movement therapist. So I wrapped springy resistance fabric around my students' backs and feet to help recreate hands-on feedback for grounding and support. As they gently "met the resistance," while pressing through their feet and widening through their chest and arms, the "light" went on in their eyes! Newfound connections were made as they created counter-tensional pulls for multidirectional movement. With just the right amount of support to relax their hip flexors and shoulders, they could access the more subtle transverse and multifid core muscles. It was thrilling to watch. After five years

of development through teaching, and trial and error with finding the right fabric, the Stretch-eze was born.

In the following mat sequence, I have chosen to share some of my favorite Stretch-eze® wraps that can be done in just 10 minutes. You will be inspired by the way you feel during matwork—and especially the day after. You will walk with more spring, feel more connected through your feet and have more energy throughout your day.

The Stretch-eze is a great tool to give to your clients for homework, or for your mixed-level mat classes, since the beginner receives well-appointed support and the more advanced student can refine their technique even more. Either way, it's the key to your next "aha moment," something that will change your practice forever. **PS**



# STRETCH-EZE SETUP

Here's how to position your body in the band throughout the exercises. The arrows will guide you toward multidirectional movement.

## SHOULDER FOOT WRAP

Lie on your back, with the fabric wrapped completely over your shoulders like a cape, feet placed in the center of the fabric. Press your arms out slightly, imagining that they are enveloped in a hammock.



## INSIDE REINS

Lie on your back, with your feet inside the loop at opposite edges, legs extended toward the ceiling. Grab the middle of the fabric with an underhand grasp, creating a firm counter-resistance between your feet and hands.



## BACK FOOT X-WRAP

Sit tall on your sit bones, with your legs extended hip-width apart. Wrap the fabric around your low and mid-back, making sure it's smooth, not twisted. Cross the fabric, and place your feet in the center. (Make an extra cross if you need more resistance.)



## BACK PACK WRAP

Assume the Shoulder Foot Wrap, and bring your arms down and out of the hammock position, so the shoulder cape is in place. Flip to your stomach, keeping your feet in the fabric, using your arms and hands to assist. Find the arm hammock position; feel free to use a small ball or towel to rest your forehead on the floor.



## HAND FOOT WRAP

From Back Pack Wrap, bend your knees to 90 degrees. Release your arms from the hammock position, and slide your hands, hooking your thumbs along the edge of fabric, until the fabric comes off your shoulders. Plant your elbows on the floor in front of your head.



## WANT A BIGGER STRETCH?

For more ways to use your Stretch-eze, don't miss our upcoming e-newsletter. Sign up for free at [www.pilatesstyle.com](http://www.pilatesstyle.com).



# WHY THE STRETCH-EZE WORKS

**It promotes dynamic stretch and stability.** The wraps create a closed kinetic chain, making movements involving the hips and shoulder joints more stable and less prone to injury. By meeting the resistance in the seated exercises, you create a dynamic relationship between the feet, inner thighs, hips, spine and low back, creating more space between your pelvis and ribs. This strengthens and grounds the lower half while you get longer through the spine!

**It makes it harder to cheat.** For example, during Shoulder Bridge, you'll be less likely to overshoot the Bridge, since the flexible but strong pressure helps to define the perimeter and angle of the movement. As your hips elevate, the springy fabric on your hips and thighs gently compresses. Instead

of overarching and letting your knees separate, the band provides the right amount of resistance for tactile cueing.

**It helps correct structural or muscular imbalances.** In Roll-Up, for instance, the wrapping facilitates even pressure between your right and left sides, revealing and allowing for self-correcting asymmetries between your pelvis and rib cage, or right hip/left hip.

**It promotes multidimensional movement.** The tactile input envelops the total-body perimeter—from the bottom of the feet to the legs, arms and back. It supports our growth into fascial consciousness as we learn about the importance of spreading the load of forces.

## HAMSTRING STRETCH



**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Shoulder Foot Wrap  
**PURPOSE:** dynamically stretches the hamstrings and calves; creates dynamic scapular/pelvic stability; isolates the leg/hip action; strengthens and creates more space in the hip joint  
**SETUP:** Release your left foot from the fabric, sliding it along the floor. Reach your straight arms for the fabric, placing your palms on top of it, hooking your thumb underneath for more hand control.

1. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, lifting your right leg toward the ceiling, foot flexed and covered by fabric.
2. Expand your body into the stretch for 4 deep breaths. Repeat on your other side.

**TIPS:** Use the resistance of the fabric to isolate the leg action deep in your hip. Bring awareness to the equal and opposite energetic pulls. Keep your leg on the floor active by energizing through your foot, imagining that it's an extension of your spine.

**MODIFICATIONS:** If you have tight hamstrings, bend the knee outside of the fabric, foot flat on the floor. For those with extreme lordosis, keep your back flat.

## STRAIGHT-LEG EXCHANGE

**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Inside Reins  
**PURPOSE:** increases hip stability and range of motion; strengthens the hips, hamstrings, biceps and deltoids; dynamically stretches the hamstrings and calves  
**SETUP:** Stay in the Inside Reins position.

1. Exhale, bringing your left leg toward your head as you press your right leg toward the floor, shifting your hand hold to an overhand grip and applying slight pressure of your hands toward your navel.
2. Inhale, moving your legs through center, keeping your feet in the fabric, returning your hands to the overhand grip positioning. Repeat on your other side. Do 6–10 sets.

**TIPS:** Keep your legs parallel. Feel equal compression and extension in your ball-and-socket joint. Practice hand changing with the least amount of effort and no wrist torsion. Keep widening across your back.

**MODIFICATIONS:** If you have neck tension, rest your head on the floor or on a rolled towel. Keep your shoulders and lower back planted as you switch legs.





## SPINE STRETCH

**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Back Foot X-Wrap

**PURPOSE:** emphasizes dynamic stability in the legs, pelvis and low back; promotes tactile feedback to prevent overflexing

**SETUP:** Lift your arms slightly above your head.

1. Inhale, engaging your abdominals by lifting, scooping and widening back into the resistance of the fabric. Activate your legs by pressing your feet slightly apart into the band, sitting tall on your sit bones.

2. Exhale, reaching your arms forward as you deepen your scoop and widen your back more into the resistance of the band, keeping your legs active.

3. Inhale, hold the position, energizing throughout your body.

4. Exhale, stacking each vertebra to return to the starting position. Do 4–6 reps.

**TIPS:** Use the tactile feedback from the band to maintain the opposing tensional forces: Reach forward and scoop your abdominals, while you widen your back into the band.

**VARIATION:** Do Side Stretch: Reach toward the left, keeping your right hip stable and side energized into the band. Repeat to your right side.



## USING SPRINGY RESISTANCE WAS ONE OF JOSEPH PILATES' CRITICAL PREPARATORY METHODS FOR BUILDING CORE STRENGTH AND BODY CONTROL.

### SWAN PREP I

**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Back Pack Wrap

**PURPOSE:** increases spinal flexibility and assists the spine into extension; strengthens the spine extensors; lengthens the shoulders down for cervical decompression

**SETUP:** Inhale, pressing your pubic bone into the floor.

1. Exhale, slowly evening out the pressure on the band as you lengthen and lift your chest and legs, and press your legs and press your legs into the resistance. Expand your arms into the resistance, widening your back.

2. Inhale, then exhale, expanding into the position, keeping energized throughout your body.

3. Inhale, then exhale, slowly returning to the starting position. Do 4 reps.

**TIPS:** Keep your pubic bone anchored, and focus on keeping your head and neck in alignment. Feel the increased space between your shoulders and ears.





**THE STRETCH-EZE IS A GREAT TOOL TO GIVE TO YOUR CLIENTS FOR HOMEWORK, OR FOR YOUR MIXED-LEVEL MAT CLASSES, SINCE THE BEGINNER RECEIVES WELL-APPOINTED SUPPORT AND THE MORE ADVANCED STUDENT CAN REFINE THEIR TECHNIQUE EVEN MORE.**

## SWAN PREP II

**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Hand Foot Wrap

**PURPOSE:** increases spinal flexibility; strengthens the spine extensors; promotes coordination between the upper and lower body; corrects right/left side imbalances

**SETUP:** Inhale, then exhale, planting your pubic bone, quads and elbows into the floor.

1. Inhale, slowly evening out the pressure on the band as you lengthen and lift your legs, and press your arms forward, lifting your sternum.
2. Exhale, energizing throughout your body, feeling all the oppositional pulls.
3. Inhale, slowly bending your elbows and knees to return to the starting position. Do 3 reps.

**TIPS:** Feel the action of your legs and arms, imagining that they are part of the same line extending in opposite directions. Keep grounding through your pubic bone into the floor. Try to adjust your hand and/or foot resistance to compensate for any imbalance you may notice.

**ADVANCED:** Add a forward and backward rock.

## DOUBLE-LEG ROCKER

**STRETCH-EZE SETUP:** Shoulder Foot Wrap

**PURPOSE:** assists with balance and maintaining posture during the roll; relaxes the hip flexors to allow for core work; teaches dynamic movement

**SETUP:** Get into a Teaser position, with your legs open in a V shape, thumbs hooked under the fabric.

1. Inhale, then exhale, engaging your core, and even out the resistance, pressing your back, arms, hands and feet into the band.
2. Inhale and initiating from your core, roll back, keeping your head off the floor, then roll forward to return to the starting position.

**TIPS:** Maintain even pressure on the band between your back, legs and arms as you roll. Focus on maintaining core engagement. Press your hands/arms out and forward while rolling up. Keep your shoulders and scapulae low and wide.



STRETCH-EZE SETUP



## GEAR GUIDE

**Stretch-eze®** is available in five sizes, from extra-small to extra-tall (\$30–\$44; [www.dyenamicmovement.com](http://www.dyenamicmovement.com)).



**KIMBERLY DYE**, MS, BC-DMT, is a former professional dancer, licensed movement therapist and Balanced Body–certified mat instructor. She's the CEO of Dye-namic Movement Products and the creator of the Stretch-eze®, "The Ultimate Full Body Resistance Band." Her movement therapy and fitness products have won Parent's Choice Gold, Early Childhood Director's Choice and ShapeYou.com best travel awards, for their unique contribution to movement education. Dye has also created and starred in five training DVDs, and enjoys collaborating on educational projects that expand the applications of whole-body resistance and suspension. For more information, or to purchase the DVDs, visit [www.dyenamicmovement.com](http://www.dyenamicmovement.com).

**TATIANA TRIVELLATO** holds a graduate degree in sports physical therapy and business administration. She hails from Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where she owned and managed a Pilates/physical therapy studio for seven years. Trivellato, PMA®-CPT, is a Polestar Pilates instructor and Lolita San Miguel Pilates Master. She received her Stretch-eze training from Katherine and Kimberly Corp at Pilates on Fifth, and is responsible for introducing Stretch-eze trainings and workshops in eight different Brazilian states. Trivellato also offers training and consulting for Pilates studios, and teaches team management for Pilates entrepreneurs.

### GET CERTIFIED IN STRETCH!

Upcoming Stretch-eze trainings are available at Pilates on Fifth with Katherine and Kimberly Corp; Pilates Center of Austin with Wendy Leblanc-Arbuckle; Rolates Pilates of New York with Roberta Kirschenbaum; and Pilates with Teresa in Mountain View, CA. For more information, visit [www.dyenamicmovement.com](http://www.dyenamicmovement.com).