

Local Angle

TANYA BARRIENTOS

Janeen Galati

Don't think. Breathe. Don't strain. Transcend. Janeen Galati is working you out. Lie down on the contraption that looks like a rowing machine missing oars and put your head in the space between the padded shoulder rests. Place your feet on the blond wood frame, angled like birds' toes.

Stretch and listen to the springs underneath you yawn. "Pull through your pelvic center," Galati says, coaching you through the motions of this not-so-distant cousin to yoga.

"Anchor your ribs," she suggests. "Scoop."

It's called Pilates, and it's made Galati's body slinky and strong. "I'm working with your circuitry in *here*," she says, pointing to her head. "Your spine is your mind, you know that, right? Your brain is your body." Yep, you're thinking Pilates is some newfangled exercise regime, some infomercial-driven gadget-of-the-month trend.

But Pilates (say it *pih-LAH-tees*) has been around since just after World War II, when

its German-born founder, Joseph Pilates, melded together bits of yoga with pieces of Zen and tidbits of dance to create the movements that, Galati says, won the hearts of Katharine Hepburn, Martha Graham and George Balanchine.

Galati — who at 38 looks an entire decade younger — says yoga and Pilates are the only exercises she does anymore. And that's saying plenty because she was once a professional ballet dancer and then a professional trainer for the 1992 U.S. Olympic rowing team, and a competitive rower herself.

She was buff, brawny and tight. So tight she couldn't touch her toes anymore. So tight she got a lumbar injury and couldn't run because of the pain. Her body was fighting her every step of the way.

"Pilates changed my whole body," she says, sitting like a Buddha on the floor of her second-floor studio at 2016 Walnut.

"Almost everybody who comes here has the same story. Pounding their body down," she says of her 100 clients. "This helps open up the body again. We don't work to muscle fatigue. It's restorative.

"Stop thinking and feel your breath. Feel the integration." □

TANYA BARRIENTOS is an Inquirer staff writer.

The route
to a new
body starts
in your
head.