

When Bad Things Happen: The Power of Positivity in Action

With pain and suffering across the news everyday, Zoey Trap shows us how to become a force for good in our communities with the power of positivity.

It seems we can't turn on the news without the shock of another disaster hitting us. Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, wild fires in Montana and California, then came the terrible massacre in Las Vegas; it can take the wind out of our sails and make us feel powerless. Yes, bad things happen, and they are – unfortunately – an inevitable part of life.

Years ago, I lived in Connecticut and co-owned the InnerSpace Pilates & Yoga studio with my daughter, Kathryn Coyle. One day, the news came on that a terrible home invasion had occurred. A mother and her two beautiful daughters had been raped and killed, a father and husband left to live with that horror and loss. Students came in truly in shock, outrage, sorrow. We joined as a yoga community to calm ourselves and send love and peace into the universe, healing into the community. Not long after would come the devastation of the massacre at Sandy Hook. How could this be? Again we were together, bound in love, sharing our pain and healing together.

In the years past, I have often pondered how yoga has a natural way of bringing people together in times of difficulty. There are ancient teachings that guide our

reactions and create purpose and those tenants help mold our responses as yogis. But what about the Pilates students I served? What of that community?

Coming Together as a Community

When a dear Pilates student of mine was diagnosed with breast cancer, I was forced to confront this problem. Questions arose of how to support her and how to help the studio community support her. Of course, teaching her was a beautiful journey, and as she expressed her needs and desires, we worked to respond lesson by lesson.

Our community came together in a healing service where all were welcome and to send positive energy to her and her doctors. She has asked to be wrapped in a blanket of love and healing energy, and she reported later that she very much felt that energy surround her and was calm as she went into surgery. Space was created in the studio so that people could come and go and show their support. There was no agenda, no set dogma. Students expressed their feelings in any way they wanted. Some prayed, some shared poems, some sat quietly. All through the surgery, people gathered. It is a powerful memory to this day, as it was the first time we came together as a community for one of our own. And in this instance, the surgery was a success. Love won!

Since then, when bad things happen, we have turned to the power of positivity, focusing on what we can do and not what we cannot. Joseph Pilates talks about the uplifting nature of Pilates. He espouses a healthy mind in a healthy body. When we truly have a balanced mind, body, and uplifted spirit we are more resilient. We are more able to deal with unexpected tragedies and to help others. When we feel strong, we truly have more to give.

Master Classes for Hurricane Relief

In the aftermath of recent tragedies, it has been amazing to watch the outpouring in the Peak Pilates® community as studio after studio ran benefit master classes to benefit survivors and to help others rebuild their lives.

A great example of community joining together comes from Austin. Senior Peak MI and Mentor Nancy Hurd, founder/owner of the Austin Pilates Barn, joined with another Peak Pilates Instructor, Laura Davis, to organize a fundraiser for their neighbors affected by Hurricane Harvey. Both instructors strongly felt the need to do something beyond simply donating money. Students were also asking what they could do to help, looking for an avenue to give back and unite.

The idea was born to do a large outdoor master class open to all Pilates students, teachers, studios in the area. They started with getting a permit to meet in the park, moved to getting local studios to promote the event and found a way of celebrating Texas community. Over 35 students showed up on a gorgeous sunny day to raise money and come together as a community.

How to Put Positivity into Action

Yes, bad things still happen, but people always band together to help. What will you do next time something bad happens in your community? How can you work to spread positivity and give back?

Here are a few tips for organizing successful events:

- Work in a timely fashion while the impact of the event is in the forefront of people's minds.
- Reach beyond your studio to join with others to organize, share the work, and promote the practice. It's benefits are truly for everybody.

- Do something out of the ordinary. Take class outside, offer a candle lit class, move to music, offer a special session such as a circuit—think out of the box.
- Consider how to maximize participation. Mat is very accessible and offers the opportunity to involve the most students at one time. But if you have a large studio, think about having one teacher teach reformer, one leading chair exercises, another on the mat...and rotate every 20 minutes!
- Provide a way for people to donate even if they can't come.
- Send notices to the local media to promote and cover the event.
- Offer a social time afterwards for people to share their worries, their feelings, and just enjoy being together.

How do you stay positive in even the darkest moments? Share your story in the comments or on the [Peak Pilates® Facebook page](#). We'd love to hear from you!