

Keeping the “Positive” in Pilates

By Zoey Trap

Pilates can be fun, powerful and helpful in healing. And sometimes, it can bring out a student’s inner critic. “I can’t do this”, “I’ll never get it” and “I know that was wrong” are just some of the phrases that are likely running through your students head when they are trying a movement for the first time. What’s a teacher to do? Now that we’ve hit 2016, work to keep Pilates fun and focused on the positive.

When working with discouraged or self-critical students, we may be working with someone who is lacking confidence, may be a perfectionist, or just feeling out of their element. This is why it is so important to manage your expectations and help them manage theirs. With beginners, start with the Level I order so they can be successful and build a good foundation. As you add-in exercises, start by selecting what you are confident they can do and will like.

When students say “I can’t,” tell them as Romana did: “Today you can’t, tomorrow you will.”

Remind them that learning Pilates is not a race, but like learning to play an instrument. Only the instrument is your body, and you get better one day at a time. We make all mistakes, stumble over notes, hesitate in our scales, start with easy melodies before getting to complex arpeggios! And because our instrument changes, we must tune it daily.

Some ideas for silencing the inner critic:

Choose a focus for the session or class and stick

with it.

Work on one thing all hour so that the concept or skill is ingrained, understood and improved upon.

Don't sweat the small stuff!

With beginners, work on big picture items like the Powerhouse, centerline and gross movement patterns. As the [instructor](#), you need to remember their stage of learning and keep your student safe and moving.

Be genuine in your compliments.

Saying "good" over and over again is not the best compliment; it's a checklist and has little meaning. When you reserve the word "good" for something that is good, improved upon or what you want out of the movement, then it has much more meaning.

Celebrate!

The first Roll Up, Teaser and Short Spine Massage are reasons to do a little happy dance. Light up and share the excitement! There are mile markers all along the way, not just for exercises, but physical improvements such as better posture, rolling evenly or staying square. But if you don't look for them, they may go unnoticed, so be sure to always point out improvements and celebrate them.

Watch your students face and body language for signs of frustration.

Students who are frustrated and feel they are not progressing are students who will not stay with Pilates.

Value your students, each and every one.

All bodies are beautiful, and all people are really vulnerable beings on some level. It is essential to appreciate your students. Show them you care by being on time, planning your lessons, remembering details of their practice and life and

introducing them to one and another. Don't assume; tell them "I really appreciate your trust in me as your [instructor](#) and I love teaching you."

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