

Making the Journey from Mentee to Mentor

By Carla Vercoe, Master Instructor

Are you considering becoming a [Peak Pilates® Master Instructor?](#) If so, you might be surprised to know that my transition from a student to becoming an MI myself was a challenging one, but not for the reasons you would think. Yes, the learning and training is intense, but I was prepared for that. What I wasn't prepared for was the psychological journey, which was just as intense as the physical one.

Here are a few lessons I learned on my path to becoming a master instructor in the hopes that they would encourage you on your journey.

Even though I had been teaching for about seven or eight years, I still thought of myself as a new teacher when the invitation to an MI came. To say that I was honored is an understatement. I was a member of the Pilates Method Alliance® and attended their conference each year as well as took and hosted many continuing education workshops annually. But the thought of becoming someone who taught teachers was both exciting and, quite frankly, a little bit nerve-racking.

After attending the Peak Pilates MI Camp, which was probably the most intensive training I had ever endured, the first step on my pathway was to observe each level of the Peak Pilates comprehensive program. In the midst of it all, I realized it was hard for me to know who or what I was while observing the modules. I was observing the Peak Pilates protocol and technique and learning how to instruct teachers all at the same time. On some days, I was the observer. On others, I was the student, acting as the body for the trainees or joining them in workshops. And on other days, I was helping teachers.

I was hard-wired one way, but I had to constantly switch roles and flow in ways that were new to me.

If you're considering becoming a master instructor, prepare to step outside of your comfort zone! The bottom line is you'll be wearing many hats, and not all of them will fit the way you'd like them to. Know that it's part of the process and you'll grow more comfortable over time as you assume new roles.

After observing each level, my next step was to co-teach each level. The entire process took two years. It was a long journey with many ups and downs, but it was also very rewarding, more rewarding than anything I had ever done before (at least professionally).

When you are the co-teacher, you work closely with your mentor in training. You're not yet a master instructor and are constantly receiving guidance and feedback, both good and bad. Sometimes the bad comes to the forefront of your mind. For me, those are the things I remember most, but I try my best to never make the same mistake twice.

Before entering the program, I think it helps to know what to expect. In this stage, expect to adjust to different personalities and styles of teaching and receive feedback, both good and bad, in the attitude of a learner. Your mentors want you to be the best master instructor you can be, and honest critique is necessary for you to grow as an instructor and strengthen areas that are weak.

To students, I was a teacher. But in my head, I was still the student, learning the Peak Pilates way. It was hard to be an authority figure while dealing with my insecurities and feeling unprepared to teach on my own.

But this is where the Peak Pilates Master Instructor program excels. Peak Pilates has a protocol in place for mentoring, and it works. The mentors are exceptional, and you will take

away something different from each one.

My first mentor was (and still is) Connie Borho, who is the founder, owner, and director of Balance Pilates and Yoga Centers located in Bradenton, Florida, as well as a Pilates Anytime instructor. She knows all the ins and outs of Pilates and by her own admission is an anatomy geek. Connie is direct and gets things done, while being friendly and approachable to her students.

I have also had the pleasure of being mentored by Kathryn Coyle. What I value most about Kathryn is her Pilates vocabulary and her treasure trove of cuing. Her voice leads her students like a song; it's very easy to follow. It is Kathryn's voice I carry in my head as I teach my clients.

Working with two different mentors was another hard transition, but ultimately, it was even more rewarding than working with one. When you have the opportunity to work closely with two experienced master instructors, you gain an appreciation for different styles of teaching, some of which you will likely include in your own teaching program.

While attending the MI reunion in 2014, Zoey Trap said something I will never forget. She said "Don't try to be like your mentor. You will never be your mentor." I walked away realizing I could never be another Connie or Kathryn, but I can be Carla Vercoe and appreciated for who I am and my contributions to the Pilates community.

The truth is for today, and every day, that is enough.

We want to be apart of your story as you continue your journey as a Peak Pilates Certified Instructor. [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter for more instructor tips!