



MOVING BEYOND TECHNIQUE

how to nurture your passion, master your craft,
and create a thriving **PILATES** business



by Chantill Lopez

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PRAISE FOR
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“Refreshingly honest, authentic and inspiring. Chantill, and her ultimate guidance in this powerful book, is the voice that yoga and Pilates teachers have been searching for...even if they didn’t know it. Teachers: For your students and your own inner peace, read (and do) this book. It will make a difference.”

—CORI MARTINEZ, ASHA YOGA OWNER, TEACHER
TRAINER AND INTERNATIONAL RETREAT LEADER

“Transferring educational instinct into workable, measurable progress is something Lopez performs brilliantly. Read this book and improve your Pilates teaching and business acumen no matter where you are in your path.”

—ANNE BISHOP, ED.M. FOUNDER BODY BRAIN CONNECT

“Chantill walks the walk, she is a thoughtful, deeply caring teacher whose insights come from fully facing her own challenges and struggles head on and turning them into victories and growth. I know because I’ve been working beside her for seven years and can’t imagine where I would be in my own teaching evolution without her encouragement to continually reassess and her gentle prodding to step more fully into my potential. As I’ve watched her turn her discoveries into a successful mentoring program and coaching business I’ve witnessed how profoundly she has affected her trainees, setting them far ahead of those who’ve not had the opportunity in their movement training programs to delve into these deeper questions making all the difference in establishing joy and longevity in a fledgling career. Seasoned teachers also reignite passion and cultivate greater satisfaction with Chantill’s guidance. Listen closely, dig deep!”

—KRISTEN IUPPENLATZ GRECH, OWNER PILATES
COLLECTIVE, FOUNDER PILATES HOME PRACTICE

“As a decade-long student of Chantill Lopez, I consider her a world-class Pilates teacher.

As important as that, she is the model of what a teacher should be. Each time I arrive in her studio, I respond to her warmth, her welcome, her “How’s your body today?” She is sensitive to every nuance of how I respond. I always leave feeling better than when I arrived, both physically and emotionally. It’s not just Pilates that accomplishes that—it’s Chantill herself.

As a professional writer, I was surprised that Chantill had written a book about teaching and self-nurturing—and when I read it, I was impressed. I love the way she interweaves her personal struggle so vulnerably with the take-home tips and techniques for staying whole, keeping or rediscovering the passion for teaching, and giving the most to both student and self.

This book would be valuable for any kind of teacher, not just Pilates and not just an exercise modality. I used to teach high school English, and this book has much that would have applied to me then, too.

I applaud Chantill for writing this book, and I hope you’ll read it.”

—JOAN PRICE, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR
AND PILATES ENTHUSIAST

“I have known and worked with Chantill Lopez for over 10 years and can personally testify to her knowledge and mastery not only of Pilates, but of successfully running a thriving Pilates business. She has an enormous amount of integrity and passion for the business, and Pilates business owners around the world are fortunate that she is now documenting her methods and strategies for the benefit of others. These are valuable insights, and this is a must-read if you are in, or considering entering into, the Pilates industry (or any type of fitness/health club or practice, for that matter).”

—SEAN DAILY, AUTHOR AND ENTREPRENEUR

DEDICATION

*To my teachers, all of whom have given me
something memorable and dear in their endless effort
to be better teachers, to shed light on the
potential joy that exists in the body, and
to put something valuable and
meaningful back into the world.*

I am endlessly in their debt.



GET EVEN MORE OUT OF THIS BOOK!

Because I want you to easily and effectively implement the tools and skills I present in this book, I've created a special

Reader's Only *Moving Beyond Technique* companion newsletter and private Facebook Forum.

Receive a Free BONUS with your first issue of the MBT newsletter!

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THERE IS A VITALITY, *a life force, an energy,*
a quickening, that is translated through
you into action, and because there is only one
of you in all time, this expression is unique.

—MARTHA GRAHAM



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1

INTRODUCTION



IN MORE THAN TEN YEARS as a Pilates teacher, and almost as long as a studio owner, I have learned what it means to work toward mastery. It takes skillfulness to create a joyful and sustainable teaching life, and to discover that at the heart of teaching is a craft. But the path to a highly rewarding teaching life isn't necessarily forged with teacher trainings or even continuing education; it's stumbled upon and learned in real-life practice.

In *Moving Beyond Technique: How To Nurture Your Passion, Master Your Craft, and Create a Thriving Pilates Business*, I pick up where teacher trainings leave off and show you how to evaluate your current teaching life, clearly identify goals for developing your craft and achieve these goals in a manageable way that feels authentic to you. I walk you through how to confront feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty in order to ACHIEVE passionate, inspired and meaningful teaching *right now*.

This book is designed to serve as a catalyst for revitalization. It is a chance to seek, question, and look more deeply into the struggles that we all face in our often isolated quest for professional fulfillment. And it's a tool for feeling supported in addressing those struggles, no matter where we are on our teaching path.

In the **Personal Inventory**, **Checklists** and **What to Do** sections, I guide you through how to evolve your teaching and business practices, based on your personal core values. These tools offer digestible, actionable steps, and should be used whenever you're ready and at your own pace.

Personal Inventory sections afford the rare, but essential opportunity to pause and reflect. This feature will help you unearth any fears and motivations that you have in regard to teaching and running different aspects of your business. When completing a personal inventory in this book, do so privately, in your favorite cafe or when you are at rest. The benefits of this are twofold: solace will not only provoke the most thoughtful outcome about who you are and what influences your teaching, but will also demand that you make a concentrated effort to nurture yourself—something we all need from time to time.

What to Do sections are designed to help put your thoughts and any new tools into *action*. In these exercises, you will delve deeper into your personal values, teaching goals, and natural strengths to uncover the steps required to make real change happen, and explore how to enact these changes in your teaching life.

Checklists present new tools, directives, considerations, and ideas for how to get better results for a given goal. These lists will prompt you to parse out a goal into achievable actions. You don't have to do every checklist item in one sitting. Instead, focus on the items which resonate with you most. You will find that different checklist topics will inspire you at different times, so revisit them again and again...and again.

2 HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

YOU CAN CERTAINLY READ *Moving Beyond Technique* all the way through and return to the elements and exercises that feel most relevant to you now. Or you can take a slower pace and explore each section bit by bit. If you take this approach, plan to spend at least two to three weeks on each section. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to really explore each exercise or topic and create a plan for implementing the tools that will make a difference in your teaching and your business NOW.

Inevitably, each section will have more or less relevance for your particular circumstance; you may find that you spend more time on some exercises and less on others. It's all okay—just enjoy the process. And remember every tiny step you take gets you closer to a more uplifting, authentic and successful teaching life.

I am pleased to offer this introduction to achieving teaching mastery in the non-traditional classroom we call “the studio.” And I am excited for what follows...for all of us.

Enjoy!



3

YOU ARE NOT ALONE



YOU ARE NOT ALONE. You stand on the shoulders of every person who has ever influenced you in a positive or negative way—every teacher, friend, or passerby that has inspired you to question, reflect, take action, or change course.

More importantly there are teachers like you who also struggle to find rewarding teaching lives, to nurture and share and guide. There are teachers who have the same amazing successes that you have. They wonder how to maintain their confidence and build community; how to share and be a part of something bigger than themselves and the sweaty gym they teach in. (Don't get me wrong—I love sweaty gyms; they are fraught with lower backs that need our attention!)

In this book, I give you key lessons to help you look at who you are and why you do what you do. These lessons contain the most crucial (and often, overlooked) elements of creating a rewarding and meaningful teaching life. I share hard-earned successes, strategies and experiences, gained through 15 years of teaching and a decade of business ownership. These tools and discoveries have made the biggest impact on me personally and professionally and have led me to a successful, fulfilling, and inspiring career; they are also the ingredients that will keep you, the teacher, stable, focused, and able to deal with the uncertainties of teaching, and of life in general.

So, how do we begin? With a surprisingly simple question—and one that I deeply wish someone would have asked me when I started teaching:

What kind of teacher do you want to be?

Now this vital question never occurred to me when I began teaching Pilates at Spencer Health and Fitness in Hilo, Hawaii. The ancient sweat-box was haphazardly adorned with a coat of cheap paint and a few meager single-pane windows. It was no beauty, but it did the trick as far as gyms went.

My first class. I open the door. Sweat, stale and new, charges the air and hits me like a wall. Walking between rows of Stair Masters, my anonymity makes me feel safe. I can hide behind the veil of having no past and no present with these gym goers, relieved that few look up when I pass them on the treadmills. The students are preoccupied with watching Oprah, clocking calories on their digital screens, or mouthing the words to a favorite song.

I walk to the locker room, more out of not knowing where the classroom is actually located—and trying not to show it—than for any real need of the locker room itself. I set my bag and mat down and look around. I simply stand, feeling my heart thumping, the flurry of moths in my belly, my throat lumpy and hard.

Class starts in 15 minutes. It is enough time to get Room A ready for class, but too much time to have to sit there alone, waiting for students to trickle in.

I am filled with a purposeful, yet false confidence; I am wearing my anticipation like an undergarment in snowy weather,

hidden and tucked away, careful to not let a thread show. The fear lingering is that of the unknown. As students show up—a grumpy old man, a work-worn mother, an eager gym regular—all seemingly curious but dubious about what the next 60 minutes might hold, I wonder, “Will the words come out right? Do I have a right to be taking this place as expert and teacher? Can I make a difference? Will they ‘get it?’” My fear is conjured out of nothingness, like a magical sword with which to arm myself. This is my introduction to teaching.

I had decided, with very little conviction, to be a teacher. I said I would do it, believed in the likelihood of my success and then, at some point, woke up and realized I was doing it. I had become a teacher. But the role and responsibility of being a teacher carried very little weight itself. I wanted to teach Pilates, to move, to share my joy of it with others. I never considered that there might be something more to teaching than simply learning the method and showing up.

I started teaching Pilates as my first real (although self-appointed) role of educator. Today, I teach many things, including dance, yoga, anatomy, meditation, movement awareness, the craft of teaching and reading to my six-year-old son.

I imagine all of us to be teachers at some point, or in some capacity. Perhaps you have experienced the gift of offering and learning as well. Was there a time when you were both the receiver and the conduit of teaching? Was there a moment when you were the supporter and the supported, the questioner and the answerer? Teaching Pilates was my first true experience of performing both roles at once.

My early memories of teaching Pilates are ones of anticipated challenge and unexpected joy. I was endlessly confronted by the inner struggles and questions from my past. Who am I? What gave me the right to be the expert and guide? Why would anyone care about what I was offering? What if I fail, hurt someone, say something wrong? What then? It only took one class, one reality check, before I began to calculate the risks and the possible failures. Soon after, my mind weaved thoughts of grotesque misguidance and ensuing grievances.

It was in my first class in that stale, old gym room, where I was forced to acknowledge the unknown:

Belly down, nose planted into the mat, a student turns to look at me while smashing her cheek to the floor and asks, “What exactly are you asking us to do?” Silence. Um, what? Words lost. What am I asking her to do? With a sudden loss of confidence, I repeat the directions. “What?” she asks again while coming to her knees in order to get a better look at me. I suddenly feel as if I’m sitting bound to a chair in a dark room with a single blaring light on my face as means of intimidation. I would give her what she wanted if I had it to give, but I don’t have the answers, and I can’t say so.

In Buddhism there is a concept called Beginner’s Mind. It is the notion of being able to stay in a humble place of not-knowing, willing to see the open field of possibilities even when they go against what you think you know. In Beginner’s Mind you are not fixed or trapped by what you have learned or what you have not learned. When we choose to be untethered by our beliefs or stories—those questionable truths we tell ourselves to justify,

reconcile and piece together our experiences—and be open to what’s in front of us, there is relief.

An entirely different feeling arises, however, when one is being nudged into this place by someone else. When teaching that first class, my subconscious bodyguard (her name is Ego) had that door bolted and locked. I could not dream of saying, “I do not know.”

Instead, Ms. Ego was saying, “The first thing you must do is express confidence.” Ego crossed her arms firmly and glared. But was I not instilling confidence? Why should I not have all the answers? Was I “allowed” to admit that I did not have all the answers?

So, for the first year of teaching, I simply clutched on to any possible answer whether it was right, semi-right, maybe, sort of right or really stretching it. It was an unsatisfying beginning. Yet, I embraced the reality and moved into the practice of teaching. Swept off my feet like a lustful young lover, I fell completely and blindly into my new craft; I was acutely aware of my lack of mastery but I never stopped to heed it. By a completely selfish impulse, I deemed myself something I had never imagined I would be—a teacher, a guide, an expert.

I have neither an explanation for why I chose to stick with the teaching process, nor will I presume some gifted sense of self-awareness as a reason. While one foot was put in front of the other, trust, faith, and inspiration blossomed under tender ground. And gradually, joy emerged.

For the first few months (and with all honesty into the first several years) there was a constant stream of critical thought, unfamiliar feelings, questions, insights, and intense self-doubt

swirling in my head. I held the responsibility to guide and motivate students who put their bodies and trust in my hands.

Could I do it and would I be successful? Well, some days I was successful, and other days I was not. Every moment in class echoed a scratching, scathing voice (Ego's sister, Self-doubt) repeating, "any second now you'll be found out. Fraud! Fraud!" Some days, as a class would end, I would sink into the floor, beaten by all the answers I did not have, the change I could not affect, the body I could not reveal. On those days, I was determined to do whatever it took to become better and stronger.

Other days I glowed, as evidenced by the students purring after class. What a difference I had made: breakthrough, discovery, ease found and restored. I was their guide and reflection. It was light and shadow, reward and payment.

This was the first reflective glimpse of myself —my first gleam of keen awareness, both of my mind and my behavior. Never had I been so aware of who I was, or what motivated me to say the things I said and act the way I acted. I had stumbled onto a road I knew I wouldn't turn away from. I had a sense of purpose and clarity that made anything but forward motion impossible. I did not always like what I saw, but teaching allowed an understanding that there was more to me than I was used to seeing or being. *That* filled me up and it still does.

Equally matched by my inner experience was an outer experience—the one I shared with my students. Had I ever really looked at someone's body and noticed fear in his or her movement? Had I ever considered a student's motivations for being in class, or examined those motivations? Had I asked

someone to purposefully and intentionally trust me? The answer is, of course, no—never. And I was more frightened by this realization than any other aspect of teaching. How could I ask for the trust of someone else when I did not trust myself?

The answer? I trusted the process of teaching and learning. It revealed my students' abilities to know their bodies and minds more fully. Witnessing their progress and potential was empowering. I could see that people desired change, and I had come to believe that teaching was more than just repetition and dissemination; it was a relationship. That process has helped me fall into a deeper level of teaching. To witness less pain, greater ease, vitality and strength was (and is) a flame, white hot and singularly focused, that makes my teaching more rich. Week after week of practice has not only led to the opening of students' bodies, but to an expansion of their own self-perceptions. Teaching Pilates has become more than just teaching Pilates; teaching Pilates has presented and opened the doors to unanticipated rewards.

And yet, through all of this, discovery of self and finding the power in the teaching process, there is one thing I wish someone, anyone, would have asked me as I embarked upon this profession. It's a question that could have helped to light my path with more clarity, succinctness and purpose from the get go.