



Confessions of a TAGteacher

By Beth Wheeler

I've been here before. 10 years ago in fact. A seasoned dance teacher I find myself indescribably frustrated in class. I can hear it in my voice, see it on my face in that huge mirror we stand in front of all day, and heart wrenchingly feel it to my core as I witness the deflated body language of the kids I adore as they physically respond to my nagging. "I know you can do better, I've seen it!" "I've told you four times to stop talking!" "You can't peek at the person next to you to figure out the steps in the middle of your performance!" "WHY aren't you stretching your feet?!" Oh, I try to make it humorous by adding silly voices and ending the phrases with Chicky or Sweetie Pie. But, come on, who am I kidding – no one. I am frustrated, they know it, and it's inhibiting the progress we are all committed to achieve. Oh yeah, and it plain isn't fun. Wanna know what's worse? I'm not only a TAGteacher. I'm one of the co-founders.

So, yes, I was here before. 10 years ago when on the phone with one of my dearest longtime friends, Theresa McKeon, I first learned of operant conditioning, positive reinforcement, and the seeds that were to be TAGteach. I immediately saw how remarkably this process would change my teaching for the better and jumped in both pointed feet first. Together with Theresa and our third partner, scientist Joan Orr, we hatched TAGteach. We wrote the curriculum, drafted and presented seminars and enthusiastically shared this amazing methodology worldwide. Back at the studio my classes thrived. My teaching and my dancers were not only joyous; we were progressing technically more rapidly than I had ever seen in my then 20+ years of teaching.

Clearly, as I hear my recent negative phraseology, I mean it when I say - I know better. I have fallen off the path I know to be better for my learners, for myself and for my business. Why? I am human. I have allowed financial and personal pressure to pull me backwards. I was trained in this art form by classically strident voices. I hear them in my ear throughout my day every day - all of the shoulds – all of the why aren't yous. I have let the stress of recent months invite those voices to be larger, louder and



truthfully infectious. I haven't used the filters I helped design. I have to say, my dancers have progressed. In fact they are achieving impressive ranking and look stunning. Yet my heart hurts knowing full well things could be far, far better. The good news? I know the secret to change. I've been here before.



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Why am I sharing this story with you? Because I want you to know I understand the challenge of looking at your teaching and realizing something needs to change – again. I want you to know there is an answer and it does work. For those of you who find looking at things positively not always as naturally at your fingertips as you may wish, I'd like you to know you are not alone. While we all want to do and be better teachers, moms, coaches, bosses, we have days, months, years where we fall short of our own expectations. I want you to know that while the thought of change may feel enormous; picking up this thing called a Tagger is, practically speaking, really pretty darn simple. And I wish more than anything you could have seen the look of relief and enthusiasm on my dancers' faces when I reached in the drawer this week and pulled out a pile of taggers and tagulators. In a literal moment the air in the room changed, we got a TON done technically speaking and we had a blast. For the first time in months I can't wait to get back in to the studio. THIS is why I got involved in TAGteach in the first place and this is why I encourage any of you who may have let it slide a bit yourselves to go ahead, grab your tagger and watch your learners light up. While you're at it, check out your own face in the mirror – bet you'll see someone familiar smiling back.



www.tagteach.com

www.tagdance.net

www.adancersdream.net