

What To Do When You Think The Class Don't Like You?

OK. So you get the call - "can you cover a class at our gym/studio, the regular Pilates teacher is sick"? It happens often especially if you are new to an area and the bulk of your work is "cover".



You mentally prepare for the session, choose your music, if you use it, then as you travel to the venue go over in your mind the sequence you will use. When you arrive you realise that the class have not been informed their usual teacher is not there that they have you - a stranger, the atmosphere is a little uncomfortable as they talk amongst themselves. You wonder if they are asking where their usual instructor is.

You sense the tension immediately so start to explain that you are only there for one week, they shouldn't worry that their usual teacher will be back for their next session, that you only got the call a few hours ago and wanted to help out. You hope this apology will be enough for them to smile at least!

I have been in this situation many times, it is especially horrible if the teacher you are covering for has been trained in a different style, so you know there will be differences not only in your style, but also in your presentation, cues, voice, choice of movement and tempo, even your music could be a variation the class have an opinion about.

Although you know you may not see this group again you want to present yourself well to give them your best so they enjoy the session leaving with a feeling they have enjoyed their class maybe having experienced something from a different but positive perspective.

So what do you do?

Before you do anything consider this:

Is it all in your head?

Your sensitivity to the group may be just a story you are making up. Your perceived feeling that they will "take against" you could be imagined brought about by your own anxiety. Their talking amongst themselves may be their usual pre-class banter.

Those looks on their faces may just be concentration because things are different and new. Do not allow your imagination to run wild, be yourself and deliver your usual professional session. Try not get overwhelmed with a situation that may not be real. Take a few deep breathes and start your class.

OK. So you are not imagining it!

It's a fact of life. People don't like change. Your feeling of tension is correct. Some, maybe even just one person in the class is certainly unhappy that you are there and not their usual teacher. They are used to them and their presentation, they have had a hard day and in no mood to deal with someone new.

The expression on their face is distracting to say the least plus the fact they keep sighing and stopping to check what is happening in the class is not helpful.

Here are my recommendations

Be Open



Remember the only person you can change is yourself so don't let the negativity in the air effect you. If someone in the group or the group as a whole shows resistant to change - show them that you are a professional secure in your skills. Certainly do not apologise for your presence, remember they may not have had a class if you had not stepped in.

Be open and pleasant although you are helping them out and they are less than grateful do not show your dissatisfaction with the situation.

Know Your Stuff

Use familiar music to present a class that allows those in the group who can, to work hard, whilst those less able people can opt for a less challenging position. Make sure you do not use judgmental cueing to give this permission, you don't want them to feel tested.

Make your cueing conversational and relaxed and offer a basic repertoire that can be adapted for all levels. This is not a time to try to teach a move you are not completely happy with. The idea is for you to be a confident as possible so as to be yourself. In fact teach as usual.

Offer To Return

At the end of the session thank them for their hospitality (no sarcasm!) say how you enjoyed the session and that you will happily fill in again at short notice if you are needed.

You never know they may ask you where you teach or for your contact details. Careful how you deal with this - you don't want their regular teacher accusing you of poaching her clients! That's a whole other article.....

Happy days.

If you have any questions about dealing with difficult situations when you are teaching or have a story about how you dealt with one, I would love to hear from you. Contact me at info@thepilatesconsultant.com

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