



Competitive Dance: Planning for Butterflies to Soar like an Eagle

Suzanne Blake

Gerety:

Good afternoon, everyone. This is Suzanne Blake Gerety from DanceStudioOwner.com. I'm really excited to welcome Chantale Lussier as our guest for this month's member teleseminar. She and I connected through social media. Is that right, Chantale? I think that we connected over Twitter.

Chantale

Lussier:

That's right. It's been an incredible thing.

Suzanne:

It has been. It's one of the really positive sides of social media. I try to express that to people. You never know the connections that you're going to make around the world.

I loved your background and was really intrigued by everything that you were saying. I wanted to have this opportunity to bring you to our members. They span the globe and have a variety of different studio setups. Some are very competitive, large dance studios with different types of teams. Others are just getting started and are small. They may not know where to begin.

You are a sport psychology and performance enhancement consultant based out of Ottawa. I love your background. Can you tell us a little bit about that and then we can get into the topic today. You creatively titled it, "Competitive Dance: Planning for Butterflies to Soar like an Eagle."

Chantale:

Yes. In a nutshell, my background is like many of you. I've danced most of my life. I predominantly focused on ballet. Eventually as part of my training I got to train at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. It was in their professional division.

Like most athletes and dancers, sooner or later I encountered various obstacles. A major injury ended up being a turning point in my life. I then ended up deciding to go into teaching and pursued the teacher's

program at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. I was able to enjoy a 12 year ballet and teaching career. I also had my own studio for six years.

Suzanne: Great.

Chantale: I learned a whole lot in all of that experience. In the midst of that I decided to start going back to university. I kind of tripped into sport psychology.

During that time I thought, “Wow. I really wish that as dancers we had access in all of these resources that athletes have.” I know in my own experiences I could have used that information. Slowly but surely I ended up pursuing sport and performance psychology. I’m back now in the dance studio teaching ballet. I combine that with some consultation work with athletes and dancers.

Suzanne: That’s awesome. I think those are the strives that we’ve been making, Chantale. For example, there is So You Think You can Dance in Canada and the U.S.

Chantale: Yes.

Suzanne: I’m thrilled that in their marketing Gatorade is featuring Lauren Froderman who won this past season as an athlete. I think it’s so important to have that healthy balance.

Like you, I’ve played college athletics. Even at a division three level you have access to things. It’s a whole world of support.

That brings us to today. There are so many levels of performance and competition in dance. I look forward to hearing what you’re going to teach us today.

Chantale: As you said, regardless of the level that people are preparing to perform at, I think everybody at every single level is going to experience nervousness. This is true whether or not it’s a very high elite, intensive competition the dancers are preparing for or whether it’s their year-end recital. These dancers are definitely going to experience butterflies in their tummies and probably some cognitive nervousness, too. We really have to figure out how to help them to know what to do with that.

Suzanne: Absolutely. In the techniques, tips, and information that you’re going to share do you find that this maps on well to dancers of all ages? Can you adapt it? What age group do you find this most fits with?

Chantale: I had an interesting experience the summer a year ago. I was asked to give a workshop to 50 dancers all at one time. In that one room I had dancers ranging in ages from seven years old all the way to 17 and 18 years olds and their teachers.

At first I was excited but I thought, “Wow. How am I going to make this information meaningful to everybody?” It was fascinating to see how everybody in the room could relate.

This is where I like to start talking about nerves. We experience nerves as a physiological thing. It’s something that’s happening in our bodies. I think if we start the conversation there, everyone from a 17 year old all the way down to a six and seven year old will know what it feels like to be nervous. I think that if we start with the body it’s a good place to make it relatable for everybody.

Suzanne: Absolutely. It’s like you said, the nervousness that affects you is a real physiological experience. My daughter is almost four. Her first performance was this past year at our recital. Honestly, in so many ways, the ignorance is bliss sort of thing – now she knows. You never know what’s going to happen with a child the first time at any level or age.

It’s like you said in the description that you sent to me and we talked about. There might be some unknown things going on. Even as dance teachers or studio owners working with the parents and the students themselves, we have no idea what has been going on.

Chantale: Exactly. I think this is where it’s so important to open up that conversation in our dance classes and rehearsals, whether it’s preparing for that year and recital or for a big time competition. It can be something as simple as, at one point, sitting them down in a circle and taking five or ten minutes to say, “Okay. Everyone here has probably been nervous at one point. Maybe it’s show and tell at school, having to stand up on stage to do something, or maybe it’s while taking a test at school.”

As soon as you mention that you have kids raising their hands and saying, “I remember doing this.”

Just by asking that question to students – whether they’re six and seven years old or teens who have been dancing for years – if you actually bring up the subject of performance anxiety and nerves, kids and students will have had experiences whether in dance or otherwise. They can describe what being nervous felt like to them.

One child might describe it as saying, “I felt like I had butterflies in my stomach. It felt like I was going to be sick.”

Of course sooner or later you have dancers who say, “I always have to go pee. I always have to go to the bathroom before a show.”

You may have other kids who will say, “I get the giggles. I have to talk it out and keep it light and playful.”

As teachers I think that it’s a great learning thing. They will be able to tell us how they have responded to stress and pressure in the past. Then we can help know how to prepare them for potential stress and performance anxiety in the future. Just asking that question about their past experiences is a great way to open the topic with your students.

Suzanne: Awesome. What it sounds like I hear you saying is an interesting thing: it’s good as studio owners and teachers to actually bring forth the dialog of being nervous, anxious, and experiencing stage fright so that you can get it out of their bodies. You can get them to verbalize it.

Chantale: Exactly. Literally that’s what I like to do. Once I have it out there and they realize, “Wait a minute I’m not the only one that gets nervous. Everyone has experienced it sooner or later.” Then we can bring about a little conversation. We don’t need to go into great theoretical detail, but this is linked to our bodies fight or flight response. We literally all have it. It’s right there in our DNA at the cellular level.

If we link it to stage fright then we have to readdress and say, “Okay, wait a minute. My body has this thing in itself to protect me. It allows me to assess my environment and to go, ‘Where’s the threat?’ and ‘How do I respond to it?’”

If we go back to a dance show we can say, “Okay wait a minute. Is there a threat?” Of course not. It’s actually something super exciting that’s about to happen. Then we can pay attention to the feeling that we’re having in our bodies. We can cognitively give it a different meaning. Instead of seeing it as a threat we can then reframe it into something that’s exciting and positive. Right there we’ve taken one big step forward towards conquering that stage fright.

Suzanne: You’ve worked with elite athletes, professionals, et cetera. If a studio owner has never thought of this or a teacher has said, “Geez, everybody just have fun with it.” Can you tell us what can happen if you don’t address this with your dancers, no matter what the age or level of experience?

Chantale:

Certainly in the sports literature there is the term, “choking.” It means that sooner or later athletes are going to choke. In dance we often talk about drawing a blank. All of a sudden you’re on a stage and you have a terrible moment when your mind just goes blank. Those are the most extreme cases of what can happen if we’re not properly prepared to handle a moment of more pressure in a performance context.

The other thing I think that you alluded to very well from a teacher’s perspective is that we could end up having various students in our teams and classes that are going to respond in ways that we weren’t prepared for. We had no idea. On the one hand we have the person who gets super quiet, nervous, and feels sick. Within that same group we have the giggler who needs to talk it out.

If we haven’t talked about these things we might have chaos in the backstage area. So I definitely encourage people to bring it out. Then it normalizes this thing that we’re all going to experience. Then we can actually take it one step forward. We can have concrete strategies as to, “Okay. How are we going to handle these different experiences that we’re having?”

Suzanne:

Right. It’s preparing them for the nerves that are normal. My husband speaks professionally for a living. He has done this for 18 years. He’s spoken to groups of teenagers as large as 6,000. He is a talker. Even to this day, after thousands and thousands of paid programs, people will say, “Do you get nervous?” Of course he does. That’s his body’s normal response to getting up and performing.

I’m expecting a phone call from him five minutes before he speaks. He has nervous energy that he has to get out. He has to talk to me. It’s the thing that brings him focus.

Like you said, the giggler, right? Doesn’t every studio owner have one of them that is the giggler or the talker? We might see that as a disruption. However if you see it as that’s their outlet for their nerves, it will be better. That’s interesting.

Chantale:

To me you just said a keyword. You said, “Energy.” In these discussions that I have with athletes and artists I like to remind all of them that we actually experience our emotions at the level of the body. If we do, then we realize that the same experiences in our bodies that we might label as nervousness, we can label as excitement, anticipation, or looking forward to. At the end of the day all of these emotions are raw energy.

Of course then if you ask young dancers, “Do we want to have good energy when we’re on stage?”

Of course they’ll all say, “Yes.”

They want to be physically activated and psychologically activated. Then it becomes about directing the energy instead of trying to block it.

I think that that’s where people get into a lot of trouble sometimes with anxiety. Instead of accepting that it’s there, they try to deny it. They try to block it. As you said, Suzanne, it is such a normal response to our body that blocking it is actually impossible.

If instead we take the approach of, “Let’s accept it, use it, and direct it” then I think we have the potential for some really outstanding, energized performances.

Suzanne: Let’s say that you’ve done that with your dancers. What is the next thing that you work on in terms of an exercise, tip, or technique?

Chantale: Through these conversations about talking about fight or flight and how it feels in our bodies and all of that, and trying to assess what the threat is, what the fear is. I think that one of the things that the dance teachers will likely hear from many of their students is a lot of myths about fear of failure, what is failure, and the fear of mistakes.

I think the big myth of perfection versus excellence will probably come out in some way, shape, or form. That might be another theme at one point that you should explore. “Are we working towards this idea of perfection?” That could be a talk in and of itself.

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: Perfection is mostly focused on outcomes, on the result of a performance or competition. However if we instead refocus our energies, and potentially our nervous energies, towards effort, then we can really focus on excellence. Why? Because excellence is more about the process in how we approach a performance rather than the outcome of it. That would probably be my second step in a conversation with dancers.

The third one would really be getting into, “What do we do about it?” This will include the concrete strategies. I’m not sure if you want me to dive into that now?

Suzanne: Sure. I want to dive into those strategies. I think that's really great. What comes to my mind is when do you suggest the teachers or the studio owners who are teaching the classes have these conversations or to explore them? Is it months before performances, days before, or an ongoing conversation?

Chantale: That's a great question. In part it depends on each of your own studios, schedules, and how often you see the kids. If we're talking about kids that are getting ready for a year-end recital, are in a recreational program, and you only see them once or twice a week, I would say that you want to have five minute little powwows here and there. You're really trying to notice where the learning opportunity is, the teachable moment to address these nerves. Just keep an eye out for when those opportunities come up. I would definitely do that throughout the year.

If you do, however, have a dance team that you see many times a week in technique classes and rehearsal, you might want to dedicate a 30 minute or one hour chat one day that's actually meant specifically to address these topics of performance preparation.

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: I wouldn't do it the week before the show. I would definitely try to integrate these ideas a few months before the show so that they can then be revisited as needed.

Suzanne: Great. In going back to the strategies, I think that the distinction for me and what I love about what you do is that it is normal and accepted. It's part of the process of being a performing artist or anyone who gets up on stage. These are normal experiences. I think that it's so easy to say, "Oh, I don't get nervous. I'm fine." That's where the problem is: not addressing it. I'm excited to hear some of your strategies.

Chantale: Yes. The interesting thing is, as you were suggesting earlier, with all of the social media. We certainly get to hear from dancers and various kinds of performers all over the world.

For example, a little while ago it was all over the news that the famous actor, Hugh Grant, as well as singer, Colbie Caillat, publicly talked about how they still experience a lot of performance anxiety and stage fright. They are both fantastic artists in their fields. So it is something that's normal. I think the more that we can talk about it the better equipped our dancers will be to know how to focus their energies in a positive way.

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: When getting into strategies, one of the big things that I think is easy to talk through with our dancers, to help them recognize, is about their past experiences. Do they tend to process their nerves better by activating their bodies: in other words by using strategies that help them to really process the butterflies and that energy. We're talking things like literally running around the studio, doing a few sprints around the room. Another is skipping rope. Both are to get that excess adrenaline out of their systems.

On the opposite end we talk about dancers who find that they process their nerves better with a quieter moment. These are the dancers that have realized that they feel better after they do some quiet stretching or meditation. They may just focus on deep and slow breathing.

I think that that's the first step that you want to take with your dancers: realizing when they need to activate. To activate means to do something that is quite active that's going to get their heart rate elevated. It helps them to get rid of extra energy. Or those dancers that actually do better by relaxation strategies. These are the things that will help them calm down their heart rate. Either strategy is effective in getting your dancers back to an optimal level. However it will vary from dancer to dancer.

Suzanne: Neat. You also have blow bubbles on the list. They say that blowing bubbles is one of the most relaxing things a person can do. I'm more of the nerve-need-to-calm-down types. I might put some bubbles on my desk.

Chantale: It's funny that you say that, Suzanne. As we speak I have a bottle of bubbles in front of me to remind me to talk about that. In that workshop that I was mentioning to you where I had such a range of ages – I said, "Okay. Perhaps with 16, 18, or 19 year old dancers we can talk about specific meditative strategies." We can talk about mindful breathing: taking a nice, large breath in with four counts, holding for two, and breathing out for four, et cetera. That can be very, very simple and effective.

Of course I thought, "What's another way to make this fun for younger kids?" That's where the bubbles came in.

I thought, "Wow."

We tested it out. If you take the wand and dip it into the soap, if you blow really, really hard you don't really get a nice bubble. You need to actually have that nice and deep exhalation.

The physiological or somatic response to your body when you're blowing bubbles is the same as if you were actually doing mindful breathing.

Suzanne: That's really great. That's what you meant by actually, physically taking those nerves and doing something productive with them. What's next after that?

Chantale: Once you have been able to identify with each of your dancers: are they a dancer that needs to activate or do they need to address more relaxation strategies? Then you can start talking about having a little pre-performance routine. By the way, I have seen dancers who need a little bit of both types of strategies.

So, for example, if we're talking about young dancers, a lot of times backstage we keep them occupied with crayons or hula hoops. Hula hoops are another very fun, active thing to do. Then maybe you go to blowing the bubbles as a way to relax them. You use visualization. You get them to close their eyes and listen to some soothing music. Kids of all ages really enjoy that.

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: Of course if we're talking about something like blowing the bubbles, hula hoops, or certain strategies like that, you definitely want to consider doing those things before they get into costume.

Suzanne: Right.

Chantale: Remember the days of being backstage? We don't want to get those costumes all dirty.

Suzanne: Exactly.

Chantale: Then we want to talk about, "Okay, how early before I get on stage do I need to use these activation or relaxation strategies?" Is it an hour before? Is it half an hour before?

Then you figure out when your stretching is going to come into play. You might want to figure out, "Okay, am I a dancer that needs to go through my dances before going on stage? Or does that actually make me more nervous?"

It's kind of like before a test at school. You have the students who like to review all of their notes right before the exam. Or you have the student who prefers to just chat about everything but the exam.

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: In terms of performance preparation, it's the same thing here. I think that we need to get our dancers to actively think about that. "Do I feel better when I run through my dance or does it actually make me more nervous?"

Suzanne: Sure.

Chantale: "Do I feel better if I lie down and visualize my dance?"

Suzanne: Right.

Chantale: Or again, "Am I someone who needs to physically mark through my dance?"

Again we have two preparation strategies that are both equally effective in working through our nerves. However one is getting us to be more physically active and the other is more of a relaxation strategy.

Suzanne: Neat. Then you talk about some things about the thinking realm. Is that correct?

Chantale: Yes. I think that something else that can be, again, very, very simple and can be done so quickly is if you're starting to get stressed out before a big competition, for example. You've worked for months, if not years, getting ready for this one big day. It's so easy to lose perspective.

Even as teachers I think that we have to also try to practice what we preach. We put so much effort into all of this. We might be communicating some stress to our dancers without even meaning to. I think, again, just asking simple questions to ourselves and all of our dancers: "Why do we dance? Why are we here? Why is this important to us?"

I think by asking those questions we'll realize, "Sure, winning is a great, fun thing to aim for." However there are probably all kinds of other very meaningful reasons as to why your dancers are willing to show up day in and day out. I think that in and of itself can be a very grounding thing for our dancers to remember.

Let's go back to the butterflies. If we remember why we dance they may not feel so important anymore. They may not have to do with anything as to why we're there dancing in the first place.

Suzanne: Absolutely. That's really great. It's true.

I want to make sure that I open it up to questions for anyone on the call. These are great tips and I think that people will get a lot out of this call. I want to ask one more question first.

I think what we do as our own teachers is that we tend to push everyone down our learning style. We may say, "It's not okay to be chatty and nervous before a performance."

We think, "Shhh."

However we need to know that we have to cover the spectrum. We need to find out from each individual how they process their nerves.

You've seen dancers at the very highest level. Do you find that those who are performing at their best and are professionals, or even dancers who are competitive team girls that are winning and achieving their excellence, are they doing this process? Do they have more of a routine?

Can you please tell us what are some of the positive things, and some of the negative things that you've seen happen from not processing the anxiety?

Chantale: I think many of these artists who are exceeding have been through a process of trial and error. They have figured out, "Okay, when I put on my makeup that's a really important part of my performance preparation. I have to put it on anyway, but I like to have this as a quiet moment."

Maybe some of them put on their iPods. In that moment they know, "Okay, that's where I'm putting on my performance face. I'm getting into a focused kind of energy."

Other dancers, of course, might want to be the chatty ones who are laughing while they're putting on their makeup.

Unfortunately I find that if this isn't addressed in a group setting, especially with older dancers, they won't necessarily know what their friends and teammates need.

The positive thing that I've experienced by having this out in the open is that not only do they recognize what they personally need, but they start to recognize what other people need. They know, "Okay, Chantale likes to be quiet when she puts her makeup on. Maybe I'll chat with her after she's done that. Then she's ready to chat. However so-and-so loves to have chatty time during makeup time."

They start to recognize each other's needs. I find that from a collective perspective there is a lot more unity in terms of performance preparation.

Suzanne: I like that. That's really great. Good point.

If you're on the call you are welcome to un-mute your line. It's *6, if you are muted. If you have any questions now is a great time to ask Chantale. She's a wealth of information.

Kathy: Having put thousands and thousands of all ages of kids on stage, what I have found to be my greatest problem is the parent. I've never had a child have fear of performance anxiety without a parent who is actually having the performance anxiety. They are constantly saying to the child, "Don't get nervous. If you get nervous...."

I will notice this. I speak to the parents. I tell them, "For children, a lot of times they don't know what they're getting into. They're excited."

I try to use the "excited" word. Excited is that physical sensation. I try to coach my parents to not talk about it or make a bit deal about it.

However what I find is that every single child that's ever laid down and cried during the whole performance or wouldn't go on, was because there was someone in the wings causing a lot of anxiety for them.

It's sort of like taking a child on a car trip and saying, "If you feel sick, tell mommy." The child wouldn't even think of getting sick if it weren't for the power of suggestion.

What would you suggest to do in those situations? These have been my problem.

I loved what you said about respecting each person's style, et cetera. I think what you had to say was awesome. It does need to be addressed. I try to address it with my parents without sounding like I'm scolding them.

Chantale:

I think that you make a great point. As Suzanne said earlier, you're right. Ignorance is bliss. At first kids actually don't know that this is a situation where they're "supposed" to be nervous. That's something that comes from experience.

All of a sudden, somewhere along the lines we realize, "Oh wait a minute. I'm going to stand in front of a whole bunch of people who may or may not judge me. They may or may not clap for me. I guess I'm supposed to be nervous." I'm going to the extreme with the vocabulary that I'm using right now but I think that's kind of what happens.

I think it's a wonderful strategy that you've been using. I anticipate that it's been immensely successful for you to refrain from any hint of fear or physiological experience that the kids are having and just choosing a different vocabulary.

Of course if they are hearing that vocabulary coming from their parents, then you're right. As educators – and this is something that I have slowly but surely learned – we're not always just educating kids. We often have to educate parents as well because they may or may not have had performing experiences. They may or may not have had positive performing experiences.

Yes, sometimes this means that we have to remind parents in terms of how to approach kids and how to support their child in their performance preparation. It could be something as simple as adding a little note about these things in a newsletter that goes home before a show or competition.

Kathy:

Right. Then the other thing that I find I have a lot of issues with, besides the actual performing for an outside group or competition is that we have auditions in our studio for our different dance teams, et cetera.

Dealing with the post traumatic stress syndrome of first they're so nervous going into the audition. Then they are so devastated when they don't "make it" or they lose.

You said we had to educate ourselves sometimes. I have a Master's Degree in psychology. I have those advantages in that I have a sensitivity to the psychological impact of these particular processes.

What I do is to have a whole page of what to expect from the audition. This is a time for assessment. I honor their courage and what it takes. I

talk about what it takes to put yourself on the line, to be adjudicated. I talk about the fact that how to deal with disappointments. It's an opportunity to educate.

Then the parents are able to know, "All right. We're going to tell you what was missing. We'll tell you what's coming next." This is a great way to learn how to assess your own work and plan your program.

I made the mistake years ago of just doing an audition. Then I had the tears, hysteria, and carrying on. It's sort of like taking a child on an airplane. If you tell people what to expect and what the process is going to be, I think that that's a huge way for studio owners to be successful in dealing with these things.

Chantale: Absolutely. I'm thrilled to hear how you've approached that entire process.

I do feel that as dance educators we have a responsibility to teach kids and, of course, their parents as well. We need to teach them what these processes are like. Let's face it. If our kids are going to have success in dance, sooner or later they will be auditioning for different things. They will be having more and more performance opportunities, especially if they're gearing themselves towards a career in dance.

We want them to be well equipped with the psychological tools so that they know how to use auditions as a learning opportunity.

Again, I think that if we go back to our classes, you can see if kids feel bad. Maybe they didn't do their pirouettes really well or maybe they messed up a jumping exercise. It's a great learning moment to say, "Listen, that doesn't make you a failure. A failure is just a mistake; and, at the end of the day, a mistake is just an opportunity to learn."

If we can just constantly infuse our classes with that kind of perspective I think that then when our students have opportunities to test themselves – like an audition – then they are that much better equipped.

I love that you've taken the audition process as an opportunity to educate your students and to also give a tool to the parents to know how to broach these conversations with their kids.

Suzanne: Right.

Kathy: Suzanne played sports in school. What's awesome about sports is that it teaches such character. You win some, you lose some. With dancing

I think that we all take it more personally. We're not trying to get a ball over a net. We're trying to do something with our own bodies, personality, mind, and soul. I think that dancing is much more sensitive. We are the game we're playing.

Even if we're in a group situation...I can miss a shot or get tackled, but somehow playing sports is just a little bit more distant from our own individual participation. This is in my estimation.

Chantale: You make a very, very good point. I think that this is where, psychologically, it is tricky for dancers to know how to separate. Cognitively it's easy to say, "Okay. Yes, I won't take it personally" but it doesn't feel that way. Yes, it's our body, and it's our body's unique way of moving. This feels very personal. There are some things within that that are within our control and some things that are beyond our control.

I think this is where trying to nurture a healthy perspective, trying to make sure that kids know also who is unconditionally on their team. I think that that's another thing that as teachers and parents that we can continue to make sure kids are aware of. They need to know who is there at the end of the audition and who loves them unconditionally, no matter the win or lose.

Then all of a sudden they realize, "Oh, wait a minute. Mom and Dad love me no matter what. My teachers care for me no matter what. My siblings or my best friends, et cetera." Again, I think that that just helps them process the lessons from these challenges a little bit better.

You bring up a great point. It is more difficult to make that separation psychologically, emotionally, and physically.

Suzanne: Absolutely. Chantale, I have about five more minutes. I want to be respectful of the time.

This is a great conversation. I love it. I think this is just the starting of it. I love that about our teleseminars. They bring up new topics.

I did want to add that even as a mom of a kindergartener and preschooler I think that we are socially trained to try to hide our emotions. Socially we don't ever want to look nervous or scared. This opens up a dialog so that you don't blank out on stage and forget the choreography.

We watched it while we were at class this morning. Some kids will lay down on the stage in panic. Most of it is stemming back to a parent

having anxiety. Maybe we could dialog at the studio before the recital for the parents who have never had a child go on stage. We could ask the parent, “What are you nervous about?” It’s the unknown. Something is always harder the first time that you do it. That’s really great.

Chantale: You were talking about some of the takeaways. Each studio, each teacher is going to address this differently. It could be as simple a thing as having that chat at the dress rehearsal before the big show.

If you tend to do a full warm-up on the stage with all of the dancers and the parents are out in the audience, maybe you could have everyone get up on their feet. You get them to do a couple of things to activate and then a couple of things to relax. Then they can see how they can self regulate their own response to that little moment of pressure, excitement, of “something is about to happen.” All of a sudden everybody learns. They all feel great in the process of learning that.

Suzanne: That’s awesome. Are there any other questions before we wrap up? I’m sure that there will be, Chantale. I know that this is great information. I’ll post the transcript and your notes about some ways to activate or relax.

Chantale: Wonderful.

Suzanne: Is there anything else that you want to add to wrap up? Kathy, was there anything else that you wanted to say?

Kathy: I just think that it’s something that is sometimes overlooked. It’s a great subject to be talking about and finding a way. In life we don’t always get what we want. We can work hard towards something. It’s learning how to deal with disappointment. You can have a disappointment but not become discouraged.

What we want is for children to love the magic of live performing, the thrill of holding yourself accountable to a worthy goal. This is what competition is all about. We want them to have their dreams come true.

I’m sure that there is many a child not dancing or pushing themselves because of some trauma in an early anxiety experience. We remember those things far more than anything positive.

As studio owners, I think that we all have an obligation to educate, support, train, and nurture the process of getting back on the floors and

trying again. It's so exciting to put yourself on the line. You always get to be a better person for it.

Suzanne: Awesome. Chantale, is there anything that you want to say to wrap up?

Chantale: That was very well said. I couldn't agree more. I think that it does go back to the attitudes that we bring to our classes all of the time. If they're equipped with those skills, then gradually as the challenges and opportunities get bigger, by the time that there is real, legitimate, high pressure, I think that our dancers will know who they are. They will know their strengths. They will be aware of some of their weaknesses but they will know how to process them.

As I tell a lot of my dancers and athletes, "When it comes to all of the emotional stuff, especially with nerves, just notice it. Then accept it. After that, direct it." As we said earlier in the conversation, it's just energy. We need lots of energy to dance. Let's direct it.

Suzanne: Yes. That's awesome.

Chantale, you've been lovely. We've been blessed to have you on this call. I will make sure that everyone has links to your Web site so that they can access more of your information and learn more about you. It's been a real gift to have you here. Thank you so much.

Chantale: Thanks to all of you for the opportunity to connect, share, and learn. I appreciate it.

Suzanne: Wonderful. You have a great day.

Chantale: You, too. Bye.