

Experiences from My Mentors

Teachers and mentors play an important role in our journey through life. I have been fortunate enough to have several mentors who have left me with healing life lessons, lasting impressions and tools I still use today. Here is a brief synopsis and the teachings they have shared with me.

Perhaps the most profound mentors were my **parents, John and Andrena Pacholyk**. They took the time to teach us beneficial lessons each day. They nurtured and **taught with love. It was their greatest tool**. They would teach by example and give love along the way. Discipline was inevitable when my brother and I were very young and, in many ways, I think it instilled a strong work ethic in us both. My brother and I were highly involved in sports, music groups and many extra-curricular activities. They always taught us that we could achieve anything we put our minds to. That ultimate love and attention is why I honor my parents. For their lessons and discipline, I am truly and unconditionally grateful!

Steven Pacholyk is an esteemed and respected man. He also happens to be my brother. Growing up, it seemed that I was always the one protecting him, watching over him (and taunting him, of course). Now, as adults, it is completely opposite. **He is my guide and protector**. An impressive business man at age 8, Steven created an opportunity to supplement his allowance by selling ice cream to our neighbors down the road! Dad turned our little red wagon into an ice cream “truck” and Steven’s entrepreneurial spirit was born! His love and devotion (and quite frankly, his reincarnated spirit) connecting him to Gettysburg and the Civil War, lead him to be the youngest National Park’s Guide in Gettysburg history! Steven, you are my **guiding light**.

Diana Banks was my dance teacher in my early and formative years at college. She was my ballet and jazz teacher. She stood about 4 feet tall and was in her late 60’s yet she was a powerhouse of energy, insight, and wisdom. **She taught by positive reinforcement**. She encouraged us every day to be the best that we could be. She would always bring out the best in each individual. She was able to read each person’s weakness and strengths. She would then encourage our strengths as she gently modified our weak points. She would merely point out, in a very private way, what we needed to work harder at. Diana was an accomplished dancer, actress, and performer who shared with us her greatest **pearls of wisdom**, for which I am eternally grateful. She was an amazing woman.

Dr, Gloria Bonali was another dance teacher who taught choreography, modern dance, and jazz. She was equally amazing but in her own special way. **Her teaching method was to encourage by rewarding you** when you did something right. She was sparing with the compliments, but when she did praise you, either with kind words, or by offering you a dance to choreograph, you knew you did something right! I am grateful for her encouragement of my career.

David Howard was my greatest ballet teacher in New York City. A master teacher for some of the most renowned ballerinas of our time, he was the head of his own company and school. Mr. Howard **taught by example**. He rarely gave compliments, yet there was something in his teachings that wanted you to do better. I believe it was my desire to “please the master” or show him that I understood what he was trying to convey. His method of the ballet was easy on the body. His teaching technique took the natural approach to working with the strengths you had and not forcing your weak points. He taught how to disguise these weaknesses by not bringing to much attention to them. For example, my strength as a dancer was through my expression from the waist up. I was not so much a technical dancer with a perfect turn out, so therefore he would help me to disguise the fact that my feet were not perfect and helped me to bring people’s attention to my persona or how I would relate to the audience. He was a master of his craft. I am grateful the Universe led me to him!

Martha Graham was by far the toughest teacher I have ever had. She gave very little encouragement, was a strict teacher and used the teaching method of **making an example out of your weaknesses**. For instance, one day we were doing a floor exercise where we are seated on the floor with our legs bent, one in front and one behind. The exercise was a series of contractions from your center, which would slightly turn your body so that you were free to lift either the front or back leg off the floor. As I was going through the routine, Martha was not happy with the lack of distance I was unable to achieve with my knee coming off the floor. So, she proceeded to place a lighter under my knee so that the flame would allow my front knee to lift off the floor higher. As I struggled to contract and lift my knee higher I could smell the hairs burning on my leg as she continued to hold the flame there and lecture as to how the knee should be higher off the floor in the contraction. Although this was one of the most memorable incidents I took with me, it truly allowed me to ‘turn a corner’ in my dancing and made me even stronger and more accomplished. Though it was hard for me to handle at the time, the overall experience made me a greater dancer.

Deva Inglesia Germana was my great yoga teacher. **She taught by expression of the greatest good and would constantly move you out of your comfort zone**. What served you the best is what she brought out in you! She worked on developing the successes of your body and how to express it, not only in movement but also through words. She would teach us to know the same movement either by doing it, saying it in different ways or chanting it, in order to achieve the same end results. She was a disciplinarian who would physically manipulate your body into the proper postures in order to “feel what was the correct posture.” Whether it felt bad or not, it was important to her that you knew what ‘felt correct’. She took my discipline as a yogi to a new level.

James Palacio AKA Fiona St. James, is my fearless and wonderful best friend. They say that people come into our lives for a reason. With James, I can give you 35 years’ worth of reasons. **Friends have to make an effort to be friends**. James has truly been that person. Many of my dear “friends” have come and gone, but James and I have been through life’s ups and downs and we have faced them like two troopers going off to win the battles and enjoy the spoils, together. Friendships are most likely taken for granted, but when someone actually works at being your friend, may they bless your life always. James, thank you!

Zachary Selig gave me great insight into the world of metaphysics. Through his sweeping teachings of the Chakra, the aura, crystals, and the metaphysics of light, sea, and sky, his knowledge shared as a painter, helped me to grasp great insight into a broad spectrum through his “**teaching by example**”. He would share with me that **there is very little ‘right or wrong’** rather just varying degrees of the truth. I was lucky enough to become his friend in the mid 90’s in Miami Beach, where we were able to live freely and ‘*run about as children*’ learning from the great gifts of nature, which Miami still gives. I learned from Zachary how color and light bring about energies that continue to enlighten his work as a world-renowned painter, Santero, author, designer, and metaphysician. For his teachings, I am truly grateful, for they allowed me to ‘turn yet another corner’ as I continue growing as a human being!

Dr. Carl Miller was one of my greatest teachers of medicine. He is a Gastroenterologist and internal medicine specialist, as well as the president of my graduate school and head of New York Presbyterian Hospital in New York. **He taught by allowing you to discover and explore ~ layer by layer**. He was famous for giving you a packet of information, usually a list of words, and sending you on your way to discover each and every meaning. He would encourage you to use these words in context and in examples that were new, and then quiz you on this same information. Therefore, the effort you put into the work was the result you got out of it! If you didn’t put much effort into the work that week, you would surely get a failing grade on the quiz. He taught me how **going back and reviewing what you’ve learned** over a course of a few lessons, really enforced what you retained (and what you did not). I use this method in all the courses I offer, today. Thanks to him, I become a specialist in my field of medicine.

Tonio Ruiz (Tonito) has been my mentor for over 30 years. He has a special teaching method of **combining love with subtle discipline**. He has given me some of my greatest lessons in humility, tolerance, self-respect and learning how to love. He has given me a deeper comprehension of spirituality through understanding. He has shown me how to face my fears. He has given me support and unconditional love for most of my adult life. These are lessons we all continue to struggle with, yet Tonito has made them attainable through patience, understanding, and by **setting the example**. He taught me how **action speaks volumes, while words mean nothing!** Everyone's actions determine who they are, NOT what they *say they are* or what they're *going* to do. He has shown me that people's reactions come from their present or past circumstances and should not be taken personally. He makes you face what your most afraid of by encouragement and understanding. Next to my parents, there has been no greater teacher than Tonito in my life. As a great psychic once told me, Tonito has been with me through many lives, most often in the same role. How blessed I have been to find someone to follow me through the ages.

Perhaps there has been someone in your life that has been a great teacher or has followed you through many incarnations. Look closely; you may be very surprised to still find this mentor in your life today.

Try This Practical Exercise

1. I encourage you to make a list of your mentors throughout your life.
2. Write out their name and who they were/are to you.
3. Express their teaching methods and how it helped to form who you are today
4. What did you like about their teaching methods?
5. What did you dislike about their teaching methods?
6. Good or bad, did it ultimately help you to learn?
7. Think through your life. When I made this list, I realize I had more teachers than I thought I had. All of which made lasting impressions.

Excerpt from *Lead Us To A Place ~ your spiritual journey through life's seasons*
the exciting, new book by Andrew Pacholyk MS L.Ac.

Available at all book retailers and Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and retail gift shops.