

What Teaching Zenergy® has taught me



A conversation with Lisa Morrison, founder of Infusion Wellness

*Lisa Morrison has been a professional fitness consultant, yoga teacher and entrepreneur for over 20 years. Lisa founded **Infusion Wellness** in 2001, with the goal of making wellness more accessible by bringing the benefits of yoga to people of all ages and all walks of life. She always believed that her approach could help address the alarming fitness and self-esteem issues facing kids in our public schools. Utilizing her child development credentials from UCLA, six years ago she began developing and creating the yoga-based kids' program called Zenergy®. The Zenergy program currently reaches over 8,000 children in after-school programs throughout California including the Santa Monica and LA Unified school districts. Lisa lives in Los Angeles with her husband, three stepchildren and two-year-old baby boy.*



What inspired you to create the Zenergy program? I had been practicing and teaching the principles of yoga for close to 20 years. So, I loved the thought of bringing something that transformed my own life and offering it to kids. I was really looking forward to bringing them all the benefits, and I believed, of course, that they would love it too. After a semester of classes with a group of 4 to 11-year-olds, however, I had to seriously reevaluate my materials and my approach. I found that kids were not that excited about doing their mom's yoga class. The parents naturally loved the concept, but the children definitely wanted something different. Something created just for them that they could take ownership of. So when I started to rethink how I was presenting the program to

them, I began to tune into how the kids were instructing me to instruct them. We then began to co-create the classes together. By bringing the ideas of superheroes and superpowers into the mix, the kids became much more engaged and excited about the classes and had more ownership of the program. I remember producing our first Zenergy® game wheel and cards and wondering if the kids would like the characters and illustrations. Happily, I was completely mobbed by all kinds of kids the first day I walked across the campus carrying the materials. Each kid was so excited about the prospect of being one of the superheroes. And I thought, YES! They love it!



Do you have to be a yoga expert to teach Zenergy?



You don't have to be a yoga expert to teach Zenergy, and you don't have to be an expert to benefit from the principles of yoga. One of the most

rewarding experiences for me is conducting the teacher training. 98% of the teachers that I have worked with have never even experienced yoga. The teachers, in most cases, live in the community that they work in. They are role models for the kids, but working with kids can be a stressful, sometimes thankless job. It is essential, in teaching the staff the Zenergy program, to incorporate techniques that they can use themselves, such as stress management, fitness, and well-being. The true reward for me from the teacher training is to help them take care of themselves so they can better take care of the kids.

What is the most important lesson for teaching Zenergy?

Zenergy is not about getting it right. The games are for fun and the poses are for energy. I have seen all shapes and sizes of kids participating in Zenergy,® all having a sense of accomplishment and having a great time.

How do you help your teachers find their inner child?

After six years of teaching Zenergy, I have learned to let go of being uptight or stiff with expectations. Zenergy emphasizes that newness or sense



of fun we seem to lose as we grow older. At one point I even taught Zenergy for a group of executives on a corporate retreat and was able to have them loosen up and find their inner child. As a Zenergy teacher you have to be the silliest person in the room. By letting go, you give the kids freedom to let go and be really creative and silly in the games without judgment from others.

What is the most important thing that your teachers communicate to their students?

As a teacher, what you say and how you say it is one of the most important aspects of education. As Dale Carnegie once said,

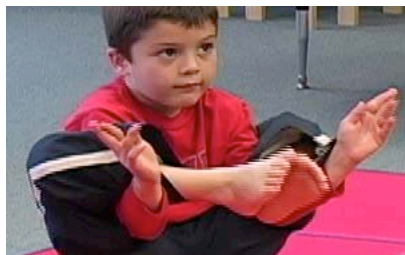


"Perhaps you will forget tomorrow the kind words you say today, but the recipient may cherish them over a lifetime." As teachers we may work with a lot of kids, but we must remember to never lose sight of the impact our kind words of encouragement have on each kid and how that could, in some cases, change the trajectory of his or her life.



What gives you insight into the kids' individual needs?

The idea of always asking open-ended questions in class is a real priority in Zenergy. The kids need to express themselves and be heard. For example, when



we were doing the butterfly pose, I would ask "What color is your butterfly?" The question was a simple one, but held a more complex meaning to me after I began teaching at a variety of public schools in LA. The question was easy but the answers coming from the students were a lot more revealing. The more colorful and elaborate the butterfly, the more it seemed to be in line with maybe more parent participation or perhaps a higher socio-economic factor. The Zenergy program is designed to help kids from all kinds of backgrounds to aspire to new heights by developing their own personal superpower.



Do the kids believe that they have superpowers?



Asking the question can a kid be a hero opens up all kinds of possibilities and opportunities for kids and essentially makes them more thoughtful and reflective human beings. When I ask the kids, “did you know that you each have superpowers?” They consistently say no. I had a

young boy recently who said that everyone in class had a power except him. But he excitedly became more convinced of his own superpowers during class and proudly announced after class, “I have the Power!”

How do they use their superpowers?



One thing that is consistent and that resonates in all Zenergy classes is the concept of five wishes. This is at the end of class where the

kids hold up their five fingers as candles and blow out each finger as an imaginary candle after making a wish. Regardless of where the school is located, or if I am teaching younger kids or older kids, I find this part of class always to be completely silent because of their deep respect for their wishes. This part of the class has become really beautiful for me as I look at all of their little faces that are full of hopes and dreams. It is a particularly moving moment because it is the end of the class when they will take those wishes out into the world and hopefully fulfill them with a renewed energy and belief in themselves.



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