



At Dragonfly, we truly care about our students and want them to succeed. This is why we invest in getting to know them. Asking questions and being aware to look for physical and personality indicators can help us plan their aerial journey more efficiently. If you want to become the best aerial teacher you can be, you need to take into consideration the student as an individual so you can plan the most effective course of action. We want to encourage and empower our students, not leave them feeling defeated.

Things to Remember: A new student can usually only retain 4 steps to a skill at a time. Remember, "Baby Bites". Don't be pressured to move students to fast, (especially not by their parents). At the same time, if we get to know them well enough we can keep them challenged with a sense of accomplishment by confidently planning curriculum which progresses in line with that students potential. These are things that even I need to be reminded of after many years of teaching!

First Things First....		Notes
1)	Ask about medications or injuries/conditions	If a student is pregnant or on a medication that could affect their balance, spacial awareness or cause nausea or vertigo, they must clear this activity with their doctor first. The same approach should be considered with knee injuries or Diastasis recti , etc... Don't take chances, get a doctors clearance.
2)	Ask students about prior sports/fitness/dance/experience	Knowing the background of your student will help you in determining where their strengths and weaknesses may lie. For instance, many dancers are uber flexible but may not have the strength to support the flexibility in the air which could expose them to a risk of injury. Many times we need to slow them down. On the other hand, you may have a cross-fit queen who is uber strong and thinks she is invincible but then pulls a hamstring attempting an inverted straddle the first day.
3)	Watch for indicators during warm-up	Noticing where students are flexible or constrained will help you in determining the route you take in teaching this student. Pay special attention to rotator, back and hamstring flexibility and plan curriculum accordingly.
4)	Explain our method	Fabric is just as much theory and mechanics as brute force. Students need to understand they will be expected to "listen and watch" just as much as we ask them to "get up and do". Students who may be advanced in other subjects such as gymnastics or dance may assume they can skip progressions in aerial. Aerial is a different skill set and students need to understand they must travel through proper progressions despite what other activities they do. Some students may have difficulty with this due to personality or attention deficit disorders that simply remove their ability to patiently wade through theory and this can be dealt with usually by assigning them a benign physical skill to practice while teaching theory. In other words, use them as the model!
5)	Have Adequate Mats in Place and your Rescue Exit Planned	...just be prepared.

6)	Consider spotting method per student	If the student requires heavy spotting they are most likely not ready for the skill. When injuries occur during an assisted skill, it is normally the spotter that is hurt, not the student. Don't take chances.
7)	Command classroom environment	Encourage students to support and encourage each other. There is nothing like peer support to progress students farther! At the same time, make sure that you are facilitating the class and that the class does not run away without you. Poor classroom management is the fastest way to expose students to injuries and lose student interest through chaos. Students will not feel secure if they do not feel you have control.
8)	Do Not Allow Negativity	Negativity is Contagious. Do not allow it. This includes negative self-talk to ones self. Teach the Power of "YET" and keep the rest of the Drama out of the class. Adult students, especially, come to a class like ours to decompress and escape, keep it a magical escape! In contrast, if a students dog just died, make sure they feel cared for and supported and have them bring their emotion to the silk. Our art provides a great and healthy release and this may be just what they need.
9)	Start with teaching how to fall	Grab some squishy mats, show them chin-to-chest and have them fall properly. Safely falling helps take the brain away...and the fear. Fall Safety practice also makes OSHA very happy!
10)	OK, actually, start with lifted hangs	If the student can't hang, then they probably can't fall. Nonetheless, without proper shoulder placement we have NO Foundation for our art. Like going back to the Barre....always have students start with a Lifted Hang.