

Inside the Actors Gymnasium with the Totally Awesome Awards 2016

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The Actors Gymnasium just won a **Totally Awesome Award for Most Stellar Sports Class in Chicago**. We recently spoke to them about their experience as a business owner, the best advice they've ever received and more. Hear what they have to say below!

Red Tricycle: Your community recently voted you "Most Stellar Sports Class" – what do your customers value most about your business?

The Actors Gymnasium: It's a safe place to learn and to grow and to fail with each other. Our community is amazing in that they create this space for each other where everyone can be open and vulnerable and fail in a safe place, which isn't something that exists in most places for kids and adults. In the process of growing and learning there's such a strong focus on achievement that sometimes we forget how important failing is. By providing a safe and happy space for others, you provide a safe and happy space for yourself.



RT: What do you want people to know about your business that they don't already know?

AG: Actors Gym is for everyone. In Circus, everyone can find something they're really good at, whether that be juggling, walking on a globe, climbing a rope, or tumbling.

RT: How did your business get started and what was the motivation?

AG: Our business started in 1995, we were wanting to offer more training to actors. More physical staff training, offering gymnastics and circus arts, dance and other physical movement classes that weren't regularly offered anywhere else. I grew up in the circus and it was my playground, and being able to offer it to everyone, regardless of their background, (because it used to be that you could only do it if you were born into it) has brought me so much joy.

RT: Tell us, what do you start your morning with: 1. coffee 2. tea 3. mimosa 4. water 5. all of the above.

AG: Juice and Coffee.

RT: What is the most awesome thing a customer has ever done for you?

AG: Every holiday season we're lucky that surprise gifts show up from various families, gifts of chocolates and teas, chocolate covered strawberries have been one of my personal favorites. And just recently we had a local chiropractor who came in and gave free massages to the staff and our pro-training systems which was delightful.

RT: What is your biggest pet peeve as a business owner?

AG: Not being able to make everybody happy. It seems like there's always someone saying I'd like you to do this and then we do that and then somebody else will come in and say well, we'd like you not to do that. It's not so much people wanting things, or not wanting things, it's that sometimes people want totally opposite things. You just can't please everybody.

RT: How do you keep your stress levels down?

AG: I meditate, not every day but most days. It's important to make time for stillness.

RT: What's your secret superhero power as a business owner?

AG: I have quick instincts... my son has told me I have a great Anti-Hero vibe going on.

RT: Tell us, what is the best piece of advice you've ever received (as a parent or business owner)?

AG: It's not really advice but rather an example that I got from a teacher when I was in first grade; I was very, very shy and I went to school and every day I cried. And every day my first grade teacher, Mrs. Halfcauck, would bring me up and let me sit by her desk. She would let me sit on her lap until I calmed down and then I would go to my desk and I would complete my day, and after a while she would say, now it's time for you to sit at your desk... A couple years ago I had a little girl come into my class and she was really shy every time she came into class, and every single day I sat with her on the bench for at least five to ten minutes (because I had another teacher that could teach the class). And I would talk to her and then when she felt comfortable I would let her go into class. One day I said it's time to go straight into class, and she did. That is maybe my favorite thing that I've brought from my childhood into my teaching. Because the kids that are the shyest, and the quietest and the scariest need these classes the most. In order to grow you must have patience.

RT: How about the worst piece of advice you've ever received?

AG: The worst piece of advice I've gotten as a parent was to not let your child sleep in your room. That was the worst piece of advice because it is the loveliest memory that I have. Everybody told me he's never going to learn how to fall asleep by himself but I stuck to my guns. That was the worst piece of advice I received as a parent. People work in different ways and I refuse to be something that I am not. I've ran my company with this mentality for 21 years and it's worked so far.

RT: Is there a special offer you'd like to include for Red Tricycle readers?

AG: Absolutely! We would love to offer \$25 off any one of our classes when you use the code Red Tricycle.

Check out their website [here](#).

Photo Credit: The Actors Gymnasium



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