



## *A Note From Ms. Lenny*

Hello Danzone Family,

I hope you and your families continue to be well. These past few months have been so difficult for so many reasons, and you and your children have been in my thoughts.

I shared some news on social media on 9/30, with regards to the studio. I know some of you don't have social media, so I'll try to recap my 25 minute speech in this email and keep it as short as possible.

It is a bittersweet time here at Danzone, as we reach 13 years of service in the city of San Fernando, and also permanently close our doors for business. Let me share with you that inside of 13 years, I've been through some tough times, like a hard pregnancy during my first few months open for business, recovery of a C-section, a hair line fracture on my foot, a divorce, working 2 jobs to keep the doors open and the lights on, and trying to stay sane enough to be a present mother and raise 2 boys to be descent human beings. So getting knocked down is nothing new to me, but let me tell you that the last 6 months have been some of the hardest in those 13 years.

Like many of you, I've been on and off of what I best describe as an emotional roller coaster. Naturally, having the studio closed for this long has weighed very heavy on me both financially and emotionally. I did receive some PPP money and an SBA loan, which along with unemployment and a few of our students and community who've donated money and purchased classes for future use, have allowed me to pay instructors and staff, keep utilities on, pay some rent here some at home, put gas in my car and buy groceries. Some of my students have done in-person private lessons, joined the in-person streaming of our virtual classes, and took virtual classes... I can't thank you enough! You've not only kept the lights on in the studio, but in my spirit as well.

As I've sat in reflection of the past 13 years, I am so overwhelmed and filled with joy for everything I've been able to achieve inside and outside of these doors. What was just an idea to open up a dance studio and teach people how to dance Salsa, became a space for creatives to create and where individuals could evolve.

Please know my landlord has been an amazing human being these past 13 years, and if it wasn't in great part for his generosity, Danzone would not have made it to year 13.

In the beginning, Our tagline started as "Evolution...One step at a time". I knew that what would happen here would be more than just dancing, but I never imagined just how much that would be, and what it would grow to mean to me, my boys, and so many of you who have stepped foot on our dance floor.

Later, our tagline evolved into a mission, and became "Live – Dance – Inspire". It has been my purpose, to help people live the best version of their lives. To help them discover and explore the possibilities of that life through dance, and as they go about the business of living their "best life", full of joy, laughter and love, inspire others to do the same.

Let me walk you through some of the achievements of the last 13 years, and please celebrate this with me.

- Danzone has been a supporter of The American Cancer Society through involvement with Relay for Life since 2008.
- Danzone has hosted several fundraisers and food and clothing drives for non-profit organizations like MEND, and we've had a long-standing partnership with "El Nido" and "GRYD" running programs for gang prevention for at risk youth.
- I was Responsible for "Salsa at the Plaza", first in partnership with (what used to be) "House of Brews", and later became known as "Tacos and Salsa" when we partnered with "Papa Juan's"
- I sat on the committee for the "San Fernando Bridal Expo"
- I sat on the planning committee for the "Chile Festival" on year 2, when we saw one of the biggest turn outs to a street festival (Since the days of the Menudo Festival) and was responsible for the "Dancing with the Community Stars" portion of the event which brought great excitement amongst residents, and a huge crowd to the event during the dance contest which also raised funds for a non-profit.
- I sat on the Board of the San Fernando Chamber of Commerce as Secretary and then Vice President, where alongside a committed group of individuals and business owners, grew the chambers' membership to a record number in years, co-created the "Best of San Fernando" contest, and lead the production of the Chamber's Awards Gala event, where many local businesses were recognized for their labor of love in this city.
- I played a role in connecting local businesses with the "San Fernando Street Festival", in 2018, where in partnership with the city and Metro, San Fernando saw some of its largest street closures and community participation.
- We grew the production and attendance of our Children's dance recitals to over 400 people in attendance.
- I co-hosted the O'Lounge (a Salsa night experience in our city) in partnership with the Odd Fellows of San Fernando.
- Within the last couple of years when we experienced great fire devastation in near by cities, Danzone opened its doors to receive donations of food and water for those affected families.

It has been such a wonderful journey for 13 years and I hope you can celebrate all the *LIFE* I and Danzone have given to this community!

It has been an absolute pleasure, honor, joy, and work of much dedicated love, to see this mission come to life in each one of my students. It is from this place of **JOY, LOVE** and **HOPE**, that I have decided to, AFTER 13 YEARS of service, close these doors and this chapter for DANZONE.

Once again, I could not have imagined where this journey would go and everything I would learn and the many ways in which I would grow in the process.

I've learned that it doesn't matter who you are and where you "stack up" on the social hierarchy, everyone is looking for the same thing... I've taught teachers, doctors, lawyers, celebrities, government officials, business owners, politicians, mothers, husbands, wives, sisters, cousins, la comadre, your neighbor, a 3 year old, an 83 year old, and everyone in between... everyone wants the same thing. To connect, find joy, be seen, validated and loved.

Danzone is now in the fabric of so many of your origin stories. When you're out with friends and family, people will ask "how did you meet?" and you will say "at a dance class at Danzone". I have been witness to lifetime friendships created, love found, couples married, new passions discovered, troubled marriages made it through bumps on the road, and broken hearts and spirits made whole again.

Hundreds of quinceañeras have danced their vals here, and couples getting married have taken their first steps as husband and wife through this dance floor. Families have been born here! I've had a couple meet in dance class, have a baby, and years later their child has taken classes here too! A quinceañera from around 2008, will be getting married next year, and I will be her wedding coordinator.

Some of what you can expect within the next few weeks and months is laid out on our website, as we now look to what's next in the evolution for me and Danzone.

So long term, what will happen with me and Danzone? The short answer is I don't know. But whatever it is, I am excited to welcome it into my life. I just know this next chapter is going to be amazing!

As I was putting final touches on this letter for you, I thought about my life before Danzone, and thought to share some things with you because I need you to send me good vibes of joy and abundance as I transition into this new chapter.

Prior to 2007 ...

- I coached cheer at my old junior high
- Then Grew a non-existent cheer program at a junior high in Huntington Park from ZERO to over 100 members.
- I had a career as a professional Salsa dancer
- I taught and performed at some of the most popular venues in the city, like The Mayan and the Conga Room.
- I appeared in film, TV, commercials, and toured the country with different artists.
- I built a career in marketing and advertising, and when I left the boutique agency I worked for, I held the position of National Director of Operations
- I got married on Sabado Gigante, had a gorgeous 3<sup>rd</sup> wedding (to the same man) in Mexico, and birthed my 1<sup>st</sup> son when I thought I could not have any children
- THEN...I opened a business with a baby I didn't know was growing in my belly.

All that before I was 30!

So naturally, as I was feeling sorry for myself about closing the studio and was super sad and I cried A LOT. But I was like WAIT A MINUTE... I have LIVED through and accomplished quite a lot, I have DANCED more than most, and I know I've INSPIRED some people along the way. My parents insured I became a citizen, I've contributed to my communities, owned a home, AND paid my taxes!! I'd say that's not too shabby for an immigrant, little girl from El Salvador, for whom English is her second language.

BUT...I have not gotten this far by myself, and I will not achieve my lofty plans without your continued support! So... How can you help? Continue to follow me on social. Once I've got my passion projects up and going, I'll let you know so you can follow those as well. Take classes this October [HERE](#) and where I go teach after, and purchase a Danzone T-shirt if you can.

As I mentioned, I have a couple passion projects I want to continue to inspire people through, and I trust that a career will grow there somewhere to take me through my 40's and into this next chapter of my life. In reflection of the past 20+ years, I looked at all the life lived, and realized I have sacrificed quite a bit in my personal life along the way, as I gave of myself to others. The joy and love I helped create for so many, is missing in my own life, and as I look to the future, I want to create that for myself, and find a life partner to

share that life with – because even after a lot of heart break, I’m a hopeless romantic, and I want that kind of love in my life just like anyone else. So wish me luck there too!

Although we’re closing operations at this location, know that I AM DANZONE and I’m not going ANYWHERE! Each of you who have taken classes here or attended one of our events, make Danzone what it is. We all carry a piece of this place in our heart, and if God, the Universe, Budahh, La Virgen Maria, or whomever you pray to (or not) will allow it, those pieces will soon come together under one roof again! AND If not under one roof, remember that this world is our dance floor, and I most definitely plan to continue to dance my way through it!

I hope I’ve inspired you to take action toward those things you’ve held as just thoughts in your mind. There is so much power in an idea that is backed by ACTION! As we look at the world today, it feels like such a daunting thing to do, to make any type of difference, when so much is broken and continues to break around us. Please don’t give up! Your voice matters, YOU matter. If you feel you don’t have a loud enough voice, join others that speak your same truths, that fight your kind of battle, and support people and causes which align with your beliefs and values, however you can. Vote, shop local, campaign, pray, protest, donate, advocate for yourselves and ALL of our children, including those teenagers who seem so angry all the time, LOVE them - all the time.

I’m Sending you all a big hug full of LOVE. This is not a good bye, but an “I’ll see you around town”.

I hope you are inspired to continue to dream lofty dreams, live boldly, hope faithfully, love deeply and take a chance and have that dance!

As always, I hope your heart continues to beat as strong as the Congas in some of my favorite songs.

-Ms.Lenny