

What Dance Has Done For Me
by Alyssa Simpson

Thanks to dance, I have conquered the quadruple pirouette, I can now kick myself in the head, and I have had more injuries than I can imagine. Most dancers can say this. It's what happens when you go to dance everyday for sixteen years. But in reality, dance has taught me so much more.

Dance has found me a group of best friends. I am best friends with girls that are different ages than me, that go to different schools than me, and that live in totally different cities than me. If I wouldn't have met these girls at dance, we would never be friends and I would have missed out on all of the ever-lasting memories we have made together. Dance has given us all a common interest and a reason to become friends. We took that and ran with it. I share a bond with these girls that will truly last a lifetime. I couldn't have asked for anything more.

Since my sophomore year in high school, I have been given the opportunity to teach my own classes. I began with the "baby" classes, the three and four year olds. This taught me to have an impeccable amount of patience as well as a tremendous amount of responsibility. Not only did I have to arrive at class on time, but actually manage to keep all of the kids in the room, and try not to let the sneaky ones slip off to the bathroom while I wasn't looking. Then I was given the older kids, ages eight to twelve. I still have to have a ton of patience with them, but for different reasons. These kids think they know everything! They're also very self-conscious. I've learned ways to correct them without making them feel bad about themselves or feeling inferior. Currently, I am teaching two competitive dances. Teaching these this year has truly been an experience and a half for me! I learned when crunch time is. I also learned that when my teachers were yelling and going crazy the weeks before competition, it wasn't because they were actually psycho, or because they hated us, they just cared. Knowing all the weight is on my shoulders is ridiculously nerve-racking. Just this year, I've had lots of problems at competitions. At one competition, my Junior trio's music stopped twice in a row, and when they asked for a representative, I had to find the backup CD and handle the situation! At another time, the competition ran so early that my soloist went onstage almost two hours early. I was stuck on the highway with car trouble and had to find a way to get there to calm her down.

I am the studio owner's daughter. This alone has taught me so much. When walking through the studio, I'm not just another dancer, I'm "Becky's daughter". I am constantly making sure that I'm setting a positive example. My reputation reflects on my mom's reputation, which reflects on the studio's. I'm not always allowed to be in the front row and I'm not allowed to be the spotlight. That's just how it goes and that's how it's always been. My mom is claimed to "pick favorites" if I am. Now that I'm older, I understand and realize I'm lucky to have what I do.

Most of all, dance has given me the opportunity to be close with my mom. Because of dance, we have a common ground and we do everything together. I don't know of many other girls who can say they spend a good five hours every day after school with their moms, but I do, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

Leaving the studio to head off to college this summer is one of the hardest things I'll ever have to do. Dance gives me an incredible sense of passion, friendship, and support, and I don't know what I'll do without it. Even if I am too busy with school and a career, I'll always be a dancer at heart.