

One of my most vivid memories from my childhood was undoubtedly my first dance recital. I anxiously arrived dressed in my turquoise blue tutu, pink tights, and little ballet slippers. My mom pinned a bun directly on top of my head as I carefully smeared lipstick across the lower half of my face, oops! Nerves build as my class enters the stage but lucky for us, we can casually glance to the wings to find our teacher doing the dance too if we forget the steps (the advantages of being three). As we dance, the lights shine brightly and I can spot my whole family, front and center. A minute later, I skip off the stage with a huge grin and an even bigger sense of accomplishment. I cannot wait to run backstage and give my mother a hug as she greets me with flowers. From that moment on, I knew the stage was a place I felt comfortable and powerful, dance was not something like tee-ball or piano, dance was something I'd do forever.

Flash forward just 15 short years and witness a vast transformation. My feet are now pointed, my legs straighter than ever, my ballet shoes now have a split sole, and fortunately for the audience, my lip stick resides on my lips only. My friends and I face quick changes, sometimes painful and tedious hair-dos, and a variety of costumes, ranging from beautiful to highly unusual. Yet some things remain exactly the same after 15 years, I still get nerves, my whole family is still there front and center, and my mom is still the backstage mom, but most notably I still get that brilliant feeling of achievement every time I exit the stage.

This everlasting feeling of happiness and self-satisfaction is something I didn't get from test scores, grades, piano, or tee-ball. This kind of passion and devotion is something I have only found for dance. Through dance, I have learned what it is like to truly love to do something and this desire to work to find the things I love and grow to be successful at those things with aid me far into my future.

There are many common misconceptions about my hobby, and I find myself addressing the public concerning their false notions often. Many ask me, "Don't you wish you played a team sport?" but in fact, I do play team sport. My dance team and I spend nearly all our time together between classes, rehearsals, competitions, and performances. We are a team. We work together to improve each other through the good and bad days, through the fall, winter, spring, and summer. Another misconception, "What's so great about performing anyway? Isn't their too much pressure involved?" Yes, there is pressure involved, but only pressure to do your absolute best. Through dance I've learned to work hard to reach above and beyond the standard. As far as performing, they'll never know the feeling until they do it too, because its one of a kind. Dancing is a very unselfish activity, because as you enjoy the spotlight and grow further in your dance career, you please many audiences along the way. These very important aspects of dance will carry on to facilitate me further in all my life endeavors. I have discovered the importance of a team effort, the benefits of impelling myself to exceed beyond what is expected, and the feeling of working hard, not only for my own personal profit but for that of others too.

As I leave my sacred studio behind this fall and I embark on a new chapter of my life at a University, I am confident that all my years of dancing will only make my new challenges more feasible and my respect for hard work greater. My dreams don't foresee me pursuing dance as my profession, but I know I am more equipped for any professional work force because of dance. People might think that I sound rather silly when I say that, another misconception perhaps? Whether I choose to be a doctor, a writer, or even a carpenter, I am better prepared because I was first a dancer, because I fell in love with an art at the meager age of three.