

What is my favorite hobby? A common question asked when meeting someone new. My answer has always been dance, and it probably always will be. Finding something that you like and want to dedicate your time to, gives you a sense of productivity when completing the goals you set for yourself. I was introduced to dance by my mom taking me to my first ballet class in Pre-K, with my little ballet shoes and leotard. I've been dancing for over half of my life. Looking back, it kinda shocks me to realize that I didn't actually fall in love with dance till I was 10. Now that I'm all grown up compared to 15 years ago, I'm so thankful for that one ballet class I took because it led me to where I am now, and made me passionate about dance, to find my specialty as a person.

When I think of dancers, I imagine them having the prettiest battements and leaps. It's really a whole process of finding how confident you can be with your body. Dance isn't just about having pretty costumes and performing on a big stage. Many people never get to experience that backstage life of a dancer, and that's actually the part I value most. Having dance friends, talking with people you don't go to school with, sharing highlights of your week with your teachers when walking into class. Obviously as dancers, we work really hard week after week to reach the goal of performing on the big theater stage at the end of the season. But being able to form good relationships with those I perform with, that's what has made my whole dance experience so much better, because I learned to appreciate sharing the stage with the people I love. I took it to heart because it can be difficult to form strong relationships with people you don't see much.

When I was 10, I went through a significant change in my life. I moved to Japan. Even when I was in a different country, and had trouble communicating with those around me, I felt the need to continue dancing to keep something in my life constant. I was so afraid to talk to anyone in my classes because of my language barrier, and didn't have the courage to stand towards the front of the room. But one day, I took a step outside of my comfort bubble, and next thing you know, I had a group of girls that I would always talk to in and outside of class. They were all older than me but treated me as if I had been their friend for years. Over time, they helped me overcome my fear of letting myself go in front, and I was able to stand in front of the class for the first time. Even my teachers were surprised, and I felt confident and proud of myself.

Since then, I've always tried to push myself to move forward in class, and introduce myself and talk to those around me when we've never met. I will be forever grateful for the girls that helped me grow to enjoy challenging myself, because since then I have taken what they taught me about going out of my comfort bubble, and recently helped people around me to give them a confidence boost. Thanks to my efforts influenced by those around me, I was awarded "Most Supportive Dancer" in my dance program, and I have never felt better receiving that award. It made me realize that I had made an impact on others in a positive way, by being able to share my passion for dance with those around me and doing the things we love as a community, and how they felt my support to help them grow both as dancers and as people.

Now looking back as to how far I've come, it's pretty impressive to realize that I started dancing at such a young age. But I found to recognize that the best part of being a dancer is having relationships separate from those you see on a daily basis, and finding a version of yourself that was nowhere to be found at the start. Making fun out of the time we have together, and treasuring all the memories made in between, I have loved being able to connect dance with my personality.