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## **Meaningful Memories & Community with Dance**

By: Nellie Errett

I have never found a love more meaningful than I have with dance. Imagine the warmth you feel from the sun on your skin, coursing throughout your body with each creative movement. That is how dancing feels to me. The best part about it is, every person feels dancing differently. Everyone has a different description of what it means to them.

The journey started a little after my 6th birthday in my father's computer room. He sat in his office chair with my sister standing behind him. Both of my older sisters had danced for 10+ years, and now it was my turn to do an extra-curricular activity, as my dad believed that it helped you develop real-world skills outside of school. As someone who always admired my sisters, I wanted to dance just like them. The owner of dance studio Chatham Dance Connection and her family were close with my family at this point, and everyone was excited for a new Errett sister to come in. To dip my toes in the water, I signed up for a jazz and tap combo class. At this point, the studio was in a backroom of a restaurant Bella Donna, which is now out of business. I would walk through tables and food being served in my black leotard and pink tights to get to the dance room in the back of the building. This class began my love for dance, and as years went by, it deepened.

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To be simply put, it was fun. I could see my sister, friends, and move my body to music. I was a very hyperactive kid, and still am, so an outlet for my energy was needed. That was actually the reason my oldest sister was put into dance, and it just became tradition for each daughter in the family to join.

After that first class, I joined more classes, and more classes, and begged my dad to let me join the company's competition team when I was 9 years old. He had reservations about me joining something that was stressful at such a young age, but he was eventually convinced by my dance teachers and sisters. At this point and for years after, I was doing around 8+ hours of dance a week. I was at the studio so often I would get rides from the studio owner and my peers became my best friends. Once I hit middle school, I joined the school's dance ensemble. I quit dancing at the studio as soon as high school hit, but instead joined the school's dance team, color guard in the marching band, and was a part of the dance corps for a few of the school musicals. On top of that, I was taking dance classes taught by the school. I graduated high school with a cord for the National Honors Society of Dance Arts, which was achieved by having many logged hours with the high school's dance program.

I loved having something to do, and having a community. I loved having something to strive to be better in. I loved the hard work, creativity, and dedication to an artistic craft. Performing for large audiences always freaked me out, especially when competing with other dance routines, but the adrenaline rush was so satisfying.

Then, in my senior year of high school, I was diagnosed with POTS. Scientifically known as Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. Also known as the end of my more strenuous dance career at the time. This condition causes your heart to beat

much faster while standing, and in summary makes exercise more difficult. I pushed through and kept dancing my senior year of high school as much as I could, but it was not the same. I was so lightheaded all of the time, dancing as little as I could, sitting out of class, not trying my hardest. I hit a low point giving up something I loved so dearly, and took up so much of my time. I thought I would never be able to dance again. I feel like you would never expect a passion you have devoted so much time to completely slip from your grasp. A year later in my freshman year of college, I received POTS treatment, and since then have been following regimens to help symptoms.

I am now a junior in college, and have yet to take classes or be a part of any dance organization, but I have come to terms with it. However, I realized that my love for dance did not have to completely dissipate. I dance to music with friends in the living room, or tap dance in the kitchen with my roommate who is a dancer. The option to dance never left, and can never be taken away from me.

I now see the importance of having a hobby or passion. I understand my dad's want for me and my sisters to have an activity to pour yourself into. Reflection on my history with dance has inspired me to go back into it. I may not be able to do as much intense exercise as before, but I still want to tap into that love whenever I can. I am planning on taking an Adult Tap Class at the dance studio my roommate currently works and takes classes at, and we will see how the future unfolds from there.