

# I'd of had to miss the dance

by **Connie Brisson**

It was suppose to be fun. Or that's what I always thought it would be like.

I remember being very envious of my cousin, Valerie, for being able to go to ballet dance classes when we were just kids. She was perfect in her little pink dance tights, tutu and ballet shoes. I use to wish that I could go to those dance classes too and be one of 'those' girls.

Many years later when my daughter Gabrielle was three, I enrolled her in dance classes and she's been in dance ever since. She loves to dance and I love to watch her dance. Sometimes, when I watch her, I still wonder what it would be like to dance myself.

So when I got an email about an adult jazz class here, I was quite excited and a little scared. At 48, I've never taken a professional dance class, and although I was interested in the exercise part of it, part of me felt like that little girl in me would finally get to dance.

Days later I walked into the dance studio and nervously joined nine other women in the class. After a few stretches, we did some simple dance steps and I mastered those easily. But then it quickly got more complicated and I began to panic. While all the steps were so easy for the other ladies, I just could not keep up.

As the minutes passed, my anxiety grew. Over half way through the class, I went to a corner and decided to watch to try memorize the steps as I was just getting in their way. But, every few minutes, a new step was added and before long, all of these women knew a complete dance routine to one song! The end of this class could not come soon enough for me. I felt like I was in grade 1, the stupid kid in the corner.

Finally, it was over. I walked over to the instructor and began to tell her that I would need to pull out of the class as it was way over my level, when (\*damn-it!\*) the tears involuntarily started streaming down my face. The other women were still there and I was trying so hard to act 48, but emotionally I was just a little girl inside. Not only could I not dance like the rest of them, I also couldn't control the overwhelming feelings I was having.

The dance instructor was wonderful (bless her) and said that the other ladies had even surprised her with their dance

experience and this was NOT a beginners dance class. She was trying to make me feel better but something bigger had been triggered for me - that feeling of shame that I was somehow not quite good enough. It's such an old feeling, this murky shadow that sometimes still pops up out of nowhere and clouds my way.

I drove home, sobbing. It was like a flood gate had opened up - like every memory I'd ever had about not feeling good enough had converged into this one moment. I was even surprised myself at how emotional I was.

When Gabrielle greeted me to see how my dance class had gone, she saw my face and knew. My eyes were red and swollen and I wept again in embarrassment as I told her what occurred in my first dance class.

Then the most wonderful thing happened that I did not expect. She came over and held me. She told me that everything was okay, that she loved me and that she was proud of me - over

and over, with a pureness and intensity that I actually felt enter into me.

An amazing peace came over me and then I was struck by a profound realization that here was my daughter doing something for me that I could not recall my mother ever doing. I know my Mom loved me but facing emotions (hers or mine) was very difficult for her and she would just automatically 'shut down'. Consequently my daughter's spontaneous comforting was emotional bliss for me.

So halleluia, honestly, for that dance class because my 11-year-old daughter healed some old wounded part of me that night. And that was worth that dance class and every other 'dance' I've ever done where I didn't feel good enough.

There's that Garth Brooke's song that says: "I could have missed the pain but I'd of had to miss the dance." It was one of the songs we had at my brother Gene's funeral. I love that song. It reminds me that pain and joy are both part of the package, sometimes bittersweet, but often creating incredible moments that change us forever.

I have had many dances in my life, but the dance I have with my daughter is the one that continues to both stretch and heal me... She is the greatest dancer and teacher I've ever had.

*Connie*



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