

## Letter of appreciation—do you have a parent like this?

*Asked to write to someone she was grateful for in a writing course, one dance major zeroed in on Dad. Is there someone in YOUR life you'd like to thank?*

January 11, 2022

Dear Dad,

When I think of how far I've come with my dance career, I think about how I couldn't have done this without your love and support. From my first ballet class in Okinawa, to sending me off to college as a dance major, I cannot express how grateful I am to have had you as my mentor and my number one support system.

I remember ballet was something I started with my mom just for fun, but it soon became a huge part of my life. Even as a kindergartener, I already knew my dream was to become a ballerina. I still remember tippy toeing and looking through the window of the older girls in my ballet school and trying to learn their dance. I would then go home and practice those steps in my room as if I had their roles. I was too shy to show the dances I learned on my own to you and Mom when I was little, so I would quietly dance in my room and imagine that my little stuffed animals were real audiences.

I slowly moved my way up in ballet, strong enough to wear pointe shoes. You were right outside the studio when my teacher had just told me the big news, and I remember running into your arms with the biggest smile on my face. When we went to the ballet store together to pick out my very first pointe shoes, I couldn't stop smiling the whole time and kept looking at you to check if this was really happening. Those were the happier times of my ballet career that we got to share.

As I got older ballet became more mentally and physically challenging, there were days when I came home injured or didn't want to speak a word. But you were still always right there for me, bringing me assortments of fresh fruits and an ice pack, cheering me up. Sometimes you would even come after long days of work, pick my brother up from soccer practice, then drive another 40 minutes to pick me up at the end of the day.

As a teenager I used to always say, "Dad you're being too much." You would give me an inspirational speech on the drive back to cheer me up, but sometimes I responded with very few words or didn't show any appreciation. But looking back, I am so grateful to have a dad who supported my passion and pushed me and reassured me when I needed it the most. When I would doubt myself constantly, you always believed in me, and it went a long way. Even after I decided

to become a dance major, which is not a common major that most parents would support, you always told me “to be true to yourself, and keep doing what you love.” Those words have been circulating my mind ever since then, not just making decisions about ballet but also with other aspects of my life.

I’m bringing up all these little anecdotes I remember because through all these small milestones in my ballet career, you have always been right by my side. You never missed any of my practices, my performances, and have been with me through all the emotional roller coasters of my journey as a dancer. I don’t express this enough, so I really want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for making it possible for me to continue my passion for ballet, everything I’ve learned from you will stay with me forever to become the best version of myself.

Love,  
Sena

(Sena Hernandez, University of California, Irvine dance major)

