

The first time I was objectified by a boy was in sixth grade. It was at recess. When I heard what he said, my chest started to burn and my stomach dropped.

“She got a body, but she ain’t got no face.”

For the next two years, all I did was worry about how other people viewed me. Was my hair parted right? Could people see my acne? Did I look fat? I probably would have still have been this person if I had not stumbled upon dance team.

Dance team made me feel valued again. Suddenly, it didn’t matter what I looked like. What mattered was that I could point my toes and kick my face. On my first day of practice, I looked at the captains, and I made a promise to myself: I would become a captain someday, too. And I did. I kept working until I met every single one of my goals. In my four years of dance team, I took back my confidence, and I have not let it go since.

Being on dance team has taught me grit. There is no such thing as “can’t”. There is only “can’t yet”. Becoming a captain proved that to me. It took time, frustration, and a lot of drive to keep that promise to myself, but I did it. It was my mission as a captain to make sure that my teammates believed they were capable of accomplishing their dreams, as well. There will always be people in life that have more natural talent than I do, but I have learned that I cannot use that as an excuse. Hard work and dedication will always succeed in the end- whether that be in dance, in academics, or in life.

Furthermore, being on dance team has taught me one of the most important skills of my life: utilizing my competitive nature outside dance. Every girl on dance team knows what it is like to stand in the chute at Sections. It is nerve-wracking, sweaty, and terrifying, but beneath all of that, it is exciting. I realized that the only way I could cope with those overwhelming thoughts was to think about my competition. My years of dance team experience taught me to love the fight that goes into my dreams. Now, I also fuel my academic and personal dreams with my love for competition. I realized that the feelings of anxiety I get outside dance are the same ones that I get while in the chute, so I handle it the same way: as an exciting competition.

Six years ago, my confidence was shattered by a boy’s words. It was dance team that taught me how to love myself again, and it was dance team that gave me the tools I need to succeed in the future. Now, when I am faced with adversity, I do what I learned from dance team. I put my chin up, roll my shoulders back, and get ready for my fight.

