Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Pull up, turn out, head erect, toes pointed. Counts and corrections have always been a significant factor in my life. Rather than running and playing with my friends at the playground, I chose to spend the majority of my time in dance class. Dancing to me was more valuable than playing hop-scotch with friends on the sidewalk; it was pure enjoyment, even at four years old. Unfortunately, what every dancer must learn cannot be comprehended from a textbook; it is gained through experience and struggles. Imagine dance as a colossal obstacle course. This helps to illustrate how I have navigated dead ends and wrong turns. I have learned that in order to become what I strive to be; trust, commitment, and passion must lead the way.

In life, “Success is not final…” in the dance world, success is never final. Aspects of an individual’s life are constantly changing. I have been dancing at my studio for thirteen years and during that time I grew into a confident dancer. I did not see myself as the best dancer, because I always knew there was room for improvement and growth. The feeling that I could go anywhere and be in any company I wanted was building up. For thirteen years I have been working hard to reach my full potential, and I am not planning on stopping anytime soon. Blood still soaks into my newly washed tights, sweat slowly drips down my cheek bones, and challenges are still presented to me. Nevertheless, I am determined and confident I can become the professional dancer I envision in my future. However, the successes I enjoyed in dance were once called into question.

“…failure is not fatal…” I believe it can only survive on the power and energy one continues to provide it with. I realized this during my summer intensive spent studying at Alvin Ailey in 2009. Seeing the other dancers sharing the same dream as myself was comforting, until the placement classes began. I became absorbed by the perfect bodies, flawless lines, and mesmerizing feet. My sense of self worth was shaken and I felt completely defeated. I was thankful and happy that I had an opportunity like this, but overwhelmed and frustrated at the same time. I did not feel that I was good enough. Once I returned home from Alvin Ailey, I was ready to give up on dancing all together. However, for thirteen years I essentially lived at my dance studio, giving up on my dream and moving on to something else, something totally different, would have been the hardest thing because dance is all I have ever known.

My continued love and passion for dance shows me that I have the courage to face challenges, no matter how difficult the situation may be. I have realized there will always be brick walls along my journey. It is my tenacity to climb over these brick walls that got me where I am today. Dance will always be a part of my life. I have learned that the art of dance is more beautiful than there are words to describe it. Although there was a time when intimidation got the best of me, I recovered in time to see that the bond I share with dance can never be broken. I will always strive to be the professional dancer I envision. As I reflect back on where I began as a young dancer, I am completely in love with the idea of dancing for the rest of my life. Without trust from within, becoming a professional dancer would be next to impossible. I’ve come to realize that although everyone has weak moments in their lives, what makes one better is to learn from what it is that brought you down. I have done just that. I vow that, perfect turnout, feet, and extensions will no longer cause me to feel worthless and defeated, but rather challenge me to improve and grow. Winston Churchill said it perfectly, “Success is not final, failure is not fatal; it is the courage to continue that counts.” I will continue reaching for my dream. Five, six, seven, eight!