



step
up

tapping into joy

Taking lessons where her daughters study dance let **Shannon Taylor** fulfill her childhood dream.

AS A LITTLE GIRL, I longed to learn to dance. I loved attending my friend Alexandra's recitals, where I would admire her grace and power, how comfortable she seemed in her own skin. Unfortunately, my family's budget didn't stretch to lessons for me.

When I became a mom, I wanted my kids to have what I didn't. So for the past decade, I've been chauffeuring my daughter Lexie, now age 14, to dance classes (and more recently, Lily, 10); searching for missing ballet shoes; and, with my husband, Tim, proudly clapping after the girls' many performances.

Four years ago, their instructor offered a beginners' tap dancing class for moms. Intrigued, I headed to the first lesson in my brand-new tap shoes—and was immediately intimidated. The Spandex-clad teacher was a former cheerleader

for the Minnesota Vikings. Some of the other mothers had danced as children. And the mirrors! They lined the walls of the practice room, leaving no place to hide. Nervously I waited for the class to start.

I was instantly hooked. The blaring music encouraged me to let loose. Learning the sequences was mentally challenging and a nice aerobic workout, too. Plus, I had a lot of fun with my classmates as we laughed and encouraged each other. I soon looked forward to the weekly practices as a special time to do something just for me.

One day our instructor asked if we wanted to perform in the school's year-end recital. "Are you kidding?" I thought. But not wanting to be the one to chicken out, I told myself, if my children are brave enough to get up onstage, I can be, too.

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Finally, it was recital night. In front of what seemed our entire small town, we moms tapped our way through that eighties classic “Footloose,” decked out in hot pink leggings and sporting *really* big hair. I was afraid I'd forget the routine, but my body took over. I was relaxed and found myself savoring the experience, even hamming it up a little. Go big or go home, I figured. That night, it was my kids' turn to be proud of me.

I'm still tap dancing, getting ready right now for the next recital. Stepping—literally—out of my comfort zone has made me braver in other aspects of my life. And maybe I've shown my four kids how important it is to leave the sidelines and follow a passion, even when it's scary to do so.

My favorite saying is “It's never too late to be who you might have been.” Tap dancing is helping me take the steps to get there.

WANT TO TRY IT?

Many studios offer tap classes for adult beginners. Some schools will lend shoes so that you can try a class without investing in a pair.



Shannon Taylor (far right) and pals in Prescott, Wisconsin.