

Emma Anderson

AGE: 16

Parents: Brian and Jennifer Anderson

Dance Studio: Jamm Dance Co.

*A parent- as defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary is a person who has a child. However, this definition does not do my mother and father justice. My parents and the role they play in my life are so much more than seven meaningless words. Since the day I was born, besides loving me unconditionally, my parents have profoundly impacted me in so many facets of my life, specifically my love for dance. On a day to day basis, I could describe my parents as my teachers, my cheerleaders and overall, my friends.*

*Today, I would never have the knowledge I do without the guidance of my parents. And with this being said, I can say without a doubt that my parents are my teachers. When I say knowledge, I am not necessarily referring to the devil that is my algebra homework, despite the fact that I do have my dad to thank for help on this. I am referring to the knowledge of the world and community around me. While many parents shade their children's eyes from the flaws of this equally beautiful and tragic world we live in, that is simply not the case for me. Throughout my lifetime, my parents have provided me with opportunities to uncover the truths behind reality. Looking back, I have realized that due to the lessons they have given me, I have grown into the confident and mature teenager that I am today. I am determined to make the world a better place. My parents have also taught me everything from job interview tips to my current values. These values include the significance of self motivation, self confidence and most importantly, that hard work can get you to anywhere you want to be. And of course, the attitude that I have towards life can also be applied to my passion for dance. Without my parents instilling these beliefs in me, I would have never had the courage to walk on the stage by myself, and open myself up to the vulnerability of leaving your entity on the stage for an audience to witness. Thanks to them, I know that the scores are not as important as my passion for dance and I know that others opinions will never be as important as the ultimate love for what I do. My parents understand and the significance of and encourage me to be myself and want more than anything for me to show and voice my integrity and sincerity in all aspects of life.*

*After being my teachers, my parents take on the role of being my cheerleaders of course this mean without short skirts and pom poms! Since the day of my existence, they have supported me and encouraged me on this roller coaster journey of life and have never questioned my dreams or long-term goals. I will never be able to show enough appreciation for this quality of my parents. Their encouragement and support is specifically present in my life as a dancer. We all know that dance parents are always a little extra special. Not only is dance an extremely large time commitment for me and my parents but it is often very hard work. However, my parents never back down from this challenge. Dance parents just know...They know the important life lessons dance is teaching. They know that dance will always be an important*

part of our lives. They know the beautiful gifts of confidence and grace dance supplies us with. Even though the temptations to just sit down on the couch after a long and tiring day of work may be great, my parents still choose to strenuously work hard for me. They are in complete support of the busy dance life I lead, but never do they question this. My cheerleaders, not only in dance but in all aspects of life, I will forever be grateful for them.

After being my teachers and cheerleaders throughout a day in my life, my parents are overall my friends. While I may not say it enough, I enjoy my parents company and treasure the time I am able to spend with them. They have built a relationship with me where I am allowed to share any thoughts and feelings I may have. They ultimately, are the most trustworthy people in my life, a quality I value in all of my friends and will always love about them. Of course, good friends have good humor and my parents definitely have that in them! Now although I often deny it-- my parents are very funny! I especially see this quality when they help me laugh off my embarrassing moments or bad days. For example, when first learning how to back out of my driveway, I somehow could not stop the car from backing into my neighbor's yard! Luckily, my mom stopped me before things got out of hand. I have to admit, this was an incredibly embarrassing (and very well hidden) part of my existence, but my parents did help me laugh it off until it wasn't so humiliating anymore! Laughter is said to be the best medicine and my parents know this to be true. But life isn't always a happy journey on cloud nine. After a long day, I will need a shoulder or 4 shoulders to lean on and the shoulders of my parents are always there for me, no matter what.

Overall, I cannot thank my parents enough for the roles they play in my life, whether they are my teachers, cheerleaders, my friends or simply a person who has a child. Although I may never be able to pay my parents back for the sixteen years they have spent at my side- I believe that this essay says everything I have ever wanted to say to them but perhaps have never gotten the chance; that this will somewhat do the partial justice that they truly deserve. Thank you for everything Mom and Dad- I love you more than words can describe and this is a tribute to you!