

Miss Lindsey Hadley

My mom tells me I started dancing as soon as I could walk. I would dance in the kitchen (the best place to dance in my opinion!), down the hallway, in the backyard, and anywhere else where there was enough space to move. So, like many parents out there, she enrolled me in a dance class at a local studio. To nobody's surprise, I absolutely LOVED it! The music, the dance shoes, the costume, and the stage were all incredible! One of my earliest memories is actually of dress rehearsal for Recital when I was just 4 years old. On stage one of my classmates stepped on my hand as we were exiting and we had to go straight to take our picture afterward. Waiting in line to take my picture, I was crying from the pain of being stepped on. I remember my mom wiping the tears off my face so my makeup wouldn't run, and she told me I am strong and I could do this. I realized she was right and pulled myself together. I ended up taking a great picture with a huge smile and no evidence of tears. You can even see for yourself the next time you are at the studio. Just look at the portrait hanging next to the



front door! That experience taught me early what it means to be strong and also that the show must go on! Unfortunately, that studio moved after that year causing me to take a break from dancing for a while, however, the experiences I had that year would stay with me for many years to come.

Fast forward several years when I was 11 years old and going into the 6th grade. My neighbor was attending an Open House at a local dance studio and I BEGGED my parents for days to let me go too. I'm pretty relentless, so needless to say I made it to that Open House and was signed up for ballet and jazz classes before we walked out the door.

I was so nervous and so excited that first day. It had been so long since I took a dance class and of course, I didn't remember much of it. I had wanted so badly to do well, but I was totally lost in the ballet class. It was filled with girls my own age who had been dancing for many more years than I, which was very intimidating! It was really hard, but I had already fallen in love with dance and wasn't going to give up. My teacher pulled me and two other girls out of the class for a few months to catch us up on terminology. By January I was back in the class with my peers and able to hold my own. When it came time to perform in Recital, I do remember the nerves, but I more so remember the pure joy of sharing something I love and worked so hard on with hundreds of audience members. When I was in the wings waiting to perform, watching the older girls was awe-inspiring and motivating. I wanted so badly to be as good as them one day!

Then when I was a freshman in high school, things took a turn. My father's company closed and he was laid off. I was determined to continue dancing though, so I took on a babysitting job in order to pay for my ballet and jazz classes. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to make enough to pay for the whole year and I had to switch studios mid-year. The new studio was able to offer me apprenticing hours to help pay for tuition, but still had to cut back to one class a week. In hindsight, however, this turn of events turned into an incredible opportunity as this is how I discovered my love for teaching!

Next came Junior year in high school when the adults in your life really begin asking, "What do you want to do with your life?" Whenever I tried to answer this question, I could only think of one thing that I was truly passionate about- my love for dance and sharing it with others through teaching. I knew then that I wanted to teach dance and one day own my own studio.

My love for dance led me to the University of New Hampshire where I could continue studying jazz, tap, ballet, pointe and eventually aerial dance. Going into college, I didn't have near as much experience as most other dancers in the program and knew that I needed to train hard to catch up. My freshman year I took 9 hours of ballet and pointe classes each week during the day with dance company rehearsals in the evenings. Even though I lacked the years of training that others had, I auditioned for the Dance Company anyway. I didn't make it into the company that first year as a performer, but I accepted the position of understudy and became a puppeteer for a giant horse for Sleepy Hollow. As long as I was dancing, I didn't care what part I played!

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In the next couple of years, I trained hard and took as many classes as I could. Then at the end of my Junior year, came a fateful day when I sat behind a classmate while tying my Pointe shoes. I happened to overhear her mentioning to her friend that she didn't have time to teach next year and she needed someone to take over her classes. I immediately turned around, pronouncing that I would be more than happy to teach her classes. It just so happens that the studio she taught at was Joy of Dance!

When I met Linda in the summer of 2005, we hit it off right away. She ran the studio out of her house, in a converted two-car garage. Her driveway doubled as the parking lot and the bathroom was inside her house. The little waiting room was made up of the bench that sits under the cubbies in our current studio! The one-room studio felt warm and inviting from the start, and it didn't take long before it felt like a second home.

Even though it felt so natural to step right into the studio and become part of the dance family Linda created, I was extremely nervous the first day! I remember having to repeat my ballet combination several times before I got it right. Eventually, I got into the groove and ended up with a great first year at Joy of Dance. After Recital that year, Linda pulled me aside and told me that whenever she retired, she would consider herself lucky if I were to be the one to take over the studio!

I felt honored but overwhelmed by that idea. When the time came, would I be prepared to carry on the amazing legacy that Linda had built? Could I do it justice? Would I be able to add my own spin on things successfully? There were many fears thinking about the huge responsibility that goes with the title of "Studio Owner", but in the end, I couldn't picture myself doing anything else. Plus, I felt a huge pull to continue the work the Linda had started with Joy of Dance.

The day of Linda's last Recital in 2011, we had 50 current and past students on stage as a tribute to all the joy she has brought to so many lives. It was a special moment, but also bittersweet. As the dream of my mentor, friend, and adopted family member (my kids call her Grammy Linda!) was coming to a close, mine dream was about to begin. I am so thankful to have had her guidance, but I was ready to step out on my own!

In the search for a new space, I was so excited to find a great place located in Barrington, that not only had a waiting room but also TWO studios plus central AC! I felt like I hit the jackpot. It was a great starter studio for Joy of Dance, however, after a few short years, I quickly realized we were outgrowing the space. We would need to find a new home soon in order to grow into the vision I had for the studio.

After 3 years of searching, I finally found our new home. It was May of 2017 when I received an email that a space in Lee was up for sale. Immediately upon looking at the picture in my email, I turned to my husband Brian and said "This is it! This is our new home!" He thought it would be a good idea to see it first though!

The moment I walked in, I felt a great energy from the space but was overwhelmed by the amount of renovations it needed. The walls and roof were good but it needed pretty much everything else updated! We decided in the end, all the renovations were going to be worth it in order to grow and share in the joy of dance with as many people as possible. We were so lucky to have many of our families give their time to help us with the revocations. We moved in January 2018 and I couldn't be happier with the warm, inviting space we have created.

I often think of the day I sat behind that girl in pointe class and first heard about Joy of Dance. It was lucky that I was sitting where I was when I did, but it was my hard work, passion and core values mixing so well with what Linda had envisioned for Joy of Dance that really led me to where I am today. I truly believe that dance changes lives and I feel extremely blessed and thankful that I get to continue and further grow Linda's original vision of bringing the JOY of dance to as many people as possible.

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We had so much fun at our reimagine outdoor Recital in 2021. It felt great to be back dancing on a real stage again!



In the Spring of 2019 we traveled to dance in Disney! It was a incredible and unforgettable experience.



My Family! My amazing husband, Brian, two handsome boys, Sawyer and Logan at Recital 2021



Miss Linda and I onstage in 2019 to celebrate 30 years of JOY! We surprised her with many incredible JoD alumni who came back for Recital to honor our founder!



I love this candid shot a dance mom took of my team embracing me after putting on a fantastic performance. I was so proud!