



Photos courtesy of Dance with Miss Alice

The Power of Consistency

BY ALICE FITZGERALD

You may have heard: Consistency gives children a sense of security. True, but what else does it do? The power of consistency in activities like dance, has the ability to let a child's confidence soar.

Meet Mila, age 3. Mila first came to my ballet class last September excited, shy and a little introverted. Although Mila was happy about ballet, she was hesitant to join in with any part of class. Every attempt made by myself or her parents was met with total pushback. Her sweet mom, Susan, was beside herself with embarrassment — Susan came to me, visibly upset after class.

Susan: "I remember feeling so embarrassed and anxious after that first class. I think as parents we put so much pressure on ourselves and we never want to be the ones with the kid who "misbehaves."

Hugging Susan, I reassured her it was normal for children who have expressed interest in dance to be scared of new situations and the best thing she could do was keep coming to class! Even if that meant sitting and watching for a month, which is exactly what Mila did.

Susan: "We would ask Mila every week if she wanted to continue with ballet and she did. Ultimately we had to be patient and work with her until she felt comfortable."

Step by step, Mila transitioned from audience member, to part-time ballet participant, to full-time ballet participant.

Mila's confidence blossomed so much that come early December, not only did she willingly step on-stage in public, at the Main Street Santa Monica Farmers Market, she performed a *Nutcracker* dance with flair, grace and poise. Other parents couldn't believe it was the same, shy little girl they saw in class only a few months earlier.

Susan: "I think this experience will absolutely serve Mila in the future. She went from being so shy about ballet and then participating in a performance months later. It was a complete 180. Mila has gained so much confidence, and this will teach her to not give up in future situations."

Creating consistency can require patience from the parent, child and teacher, but with perseverance comes opportunity. Giving children the space to move at their own pace creates strong self-esteem and confidence, which will only benefit them throughout their life.

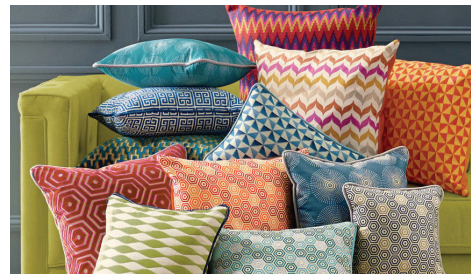
Alice Fitzgerald is founder of Dance with Miss Alice.

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