

The Story of Pointing To Recovery

In December 2001, I began inpatient treatment at Remuda Ranch in Wickenburg, Arizona. While there, I was assigned a therapist who worked with me on grieving the loss of dance. Dance had been such a large part of my life, had become who I was, all my value and worth was in being a dancer. I had kept my worn out pointe shoes in a green mesh bag buried in my closet. During a therapy session, the therapist suggested I have my Mom mail me my pointe shoes so I can lay them at the foot of the old wooden cross that stood on the treatment center grounds sheltered by large shade trees. It was a haven to be close to God, a place to bring your pain. I called my Mom and received pointe shoes the following week. After taking them out of the box, and holding the pile in my arms, I walked to the cross. I remember smelling them, taking a deep inhale before I placed them on the ground amid the other clients' sacrifices. I cried tears of remorse and emptiness. Tears of sorrow. I attempted to surrender my dream. Once all my tears ran out, I walked away. I never looked back.

A year later, at an art festival, I came across a black and white photograph of a pile of old worn out pointe shoes. They looked exactly the same as mine. They were even signed as some of mine were. I stopped in front of the picture, and stared. My eyes locked on the image. My heart pounded, and I heard God say "I don't want you to forget." I knew I had to have the picture; the photographer had taken it for me. I went home and hung it by my bed, so I could remember.

Nine years later....In 2010, my bipolar depression had developed to the point where I had been suicidal for almost a year straight, my eating disorder was eating me alive. My back went out in April 2010 and I went back into an MRI machine for the first time since my tragic spinal injury sixteen years prior. My doctor ordered physical therapy, which sent me into a panic; too familiar. I knew I couldn't live another day in this level of agony and no amount of love could penetrate the wall of darkness. One afternoon I attempted to overdose on psychiatric medication which led to an inpatient psychiatric hospital stay for suicidal ideation. It was the darkest I've ever felt. My mind's eye couldn't see a hand in front of it's face. For my aftercare plan, I met with a therapist weekly. An extraordinary woman of God, who happened to have been a Remuda therapist in the past. We worked together for over a year.

In October of 2011, on a Saturday morning, we got on the subject of loss, how it could be contributing to my depression, and what could have triggered my suicidal ideation. That led to talking about dance and ballet. My therapist was very direct, and told me I needed to go back and grieve the loss of dance, I never had. I shared this with my Mom, and it was then she revealed she hadn't given me all the pointe shoes. She kept the last pair I ever wore, and the pair that I never had a chance to wear. She handed over my old dance box, with leotards, tights, dance warm up's and yes, the shoes. I knew once I grieved the loss of dance I could get it back in an entirely new way, I just didn't know what that would look like. The revelation my eating disorder-not my injury- stood between me and dance, opened my eyes. I wrote my eating disorder a

goodbye letter, telling it I didn't need it anymore. Afterward, I picked up the last pair of pointe shoes I ever wore and signed my name and wrote "I chose recovery" on the box. I felt an urge to put them on, see how they felt. They hugged my feet, the old silk ribbons kissed the back of my ankles, my arches curved the shank like they had never been apart. To commemorate the moment, my niece took a photograph. This was 2012, and it was that year I started my nonprofit Dancing With ED, Inc. A year later, I began collecting pointe shoes from dancers who had been, or who were in, eating disorders recovery and supported Dancing With ED's mission. They signed their names and other messages.

That was the start of the Pointing To Recovery Project.

The goal of the project is for every dancer to know, you don't have to dance through this alone.

To donate a pair of shoes please mail them to:

Amy Waddle
1027 Southwood Drive Unit D
San Luis Obispo, Ca. 93401