

Jody's Essay

Leaping Off My Left Foot

Having a Hemispherectomy creates many challenges for those who have to live with the partial paralysis on the right or left side of their body. I was only three at the time that I had my surgery and have had years to overcome many challenges put in front of me. One such challenge is being able to leap off of my left foot when I dance. This has taught me that we are people who have challenges to face just like everyone else.

Dance is a wonderful activity to get into. For some people it may just be another activity in their daily lives but to me dancing is a passion. I do it because I want to and love it. After my surgery it was kind of hard for me to get back into the swing of things but dancing was a way to be able to say "hey I did it!" It took awhile for me to master leaping off my left foot because I first had to learn how to balance myself so that I wouldn't fall while performing my movements. This is especially hard for me because I have a tendency to put more weight on my right foot and leg because I know and trust that it will catch me when I fall, but don't quite trust my left leg and foot. The balance for me is something that is hard to control because I know my limits in terms of what I can and can't do but to push myself to stretch above those limits is hard. After thirteen years of dance and practicing how to control my body I finally learned how to leap off my left leg in 2006. To help me get to this point I took a poms class which is a jazz class but with sharper movements in the dance. In this class I had to learn to do leaps and other movements. I would also show my therapist each week and we would make that therapy session about improving my dancing skills and having fun in therapy at the same time. Week after week I would push myself to practice. Motivation overcame me because I didn't want to be the one to mess up the dance when we finally performed it in front of everyone. I kept improving on these movements by going home and practicing them at home by myself. Once I learned how to use the left side of my body in dancing I felt like I was able to conquer anything. This was a challenging obstacle to overcome because of the shorter leg discrepancy. But I was able to make leaps and bounds to pass that obstacle and move on with my life.