

## When Longing Becomes Guidance

*A field note on performance anxiety, healing, and trusting the path*

For much of my life, performance anxiety lived in my body as fear, self-criticism, and a deep urge to disappear. Even when I loved what I was doing, the moment I was being watched, something inside me would tighten and take over.

Throughout my life, I've wanted to take dance classes and dance with confidence. When my daughter was young, I enrolled her in dance classes. I was proud of her and happy for her, bringing her roses after recitals to celebrate her accomplishment, while quietly grieving the part of me that never had that chance.

Years later, a wave of longing returned while watching a ballroom dance exhibition. It felt like intuition speaking through emotion. I listened.

The path that followed wasn't linear or effortless. Ballroom lessons brought joy, frustration, and familiar anxiety. Old patterns surfaced—but so did support. Mindfulness practices helped regulate my nervous system and doing those consistently built confidence. Encouragement from others softened my inner critic. And in a moment that still feels miraculous, my daughter—now grown and creator of guided meditations—felt called to create one specifically for me. It addressed the very fears and wounds beneath my performance anxiety and became an essential part of my healing.

Eventually, I stepped onto the same stage that once stirred tears of longing. This time, I felt present. Grounded. Open. The dance flowed. The audience cheered. And afterward, the daughter I once brought roses to after her childhood recitals, walked up to *me* with flowers in her hands, congratulating *me* on my performance!

Healing performance anxiety isn't about eliminating fear—it's about learning how to stay connected to yourself when fear arises. Longing can be guidance. Support often arrives through relationship and regulation. And when we follow our inner nudges, we may find ourselves living moments we once believed were out of reach.

---

### Coaching Prompts & Journal Reflections

- What longing keeps resurfacing for you, even after you've tried to let it go?
- When have strong emotions turned out to be guidance rather than obstacles?
- How does performance anxiety (or fear of being seen) show up in your body? What does it need in those moments?
- Who or what has helped regulate your nervous system when fear felt overwhelming?
- If fear didn't get the final say, what small step might you allow yourself to take next?

*Sometimes healing isn't about pushing harder—it's about listening more closely.*

**Jennifer English, NBC-HWC**

Integrative Health & Wellness Coach

envisionintegrativecoaching.com | envisionintegrativecoaching@gmail.com