

# Follow Your Dreams



Jenni is 12 years old. What makes Jenni unusual is that she is enrolled in a high-commitment gymnastics program. She practices 16 hours a week, which means that four times a week, she gets picked up from school at 3:30 PM, heads to gymnastics, and works out until 8 PM. She does her homework in the car on the way to gymnastics or late at night after her training session.

Enrolling in this program was Jenni's choice and not something that her family pushed her into doing. She loves gymnastics and wants to take it as far as she can. For years before enrolling in this intense program, she practiced between four and eight hours a week. She had won a lot of medals and was considered the best gymnast at her level in the area. When she decided that she wanted to earn a gymnastic scholarship for college, she enrolled in this high-commitment program.

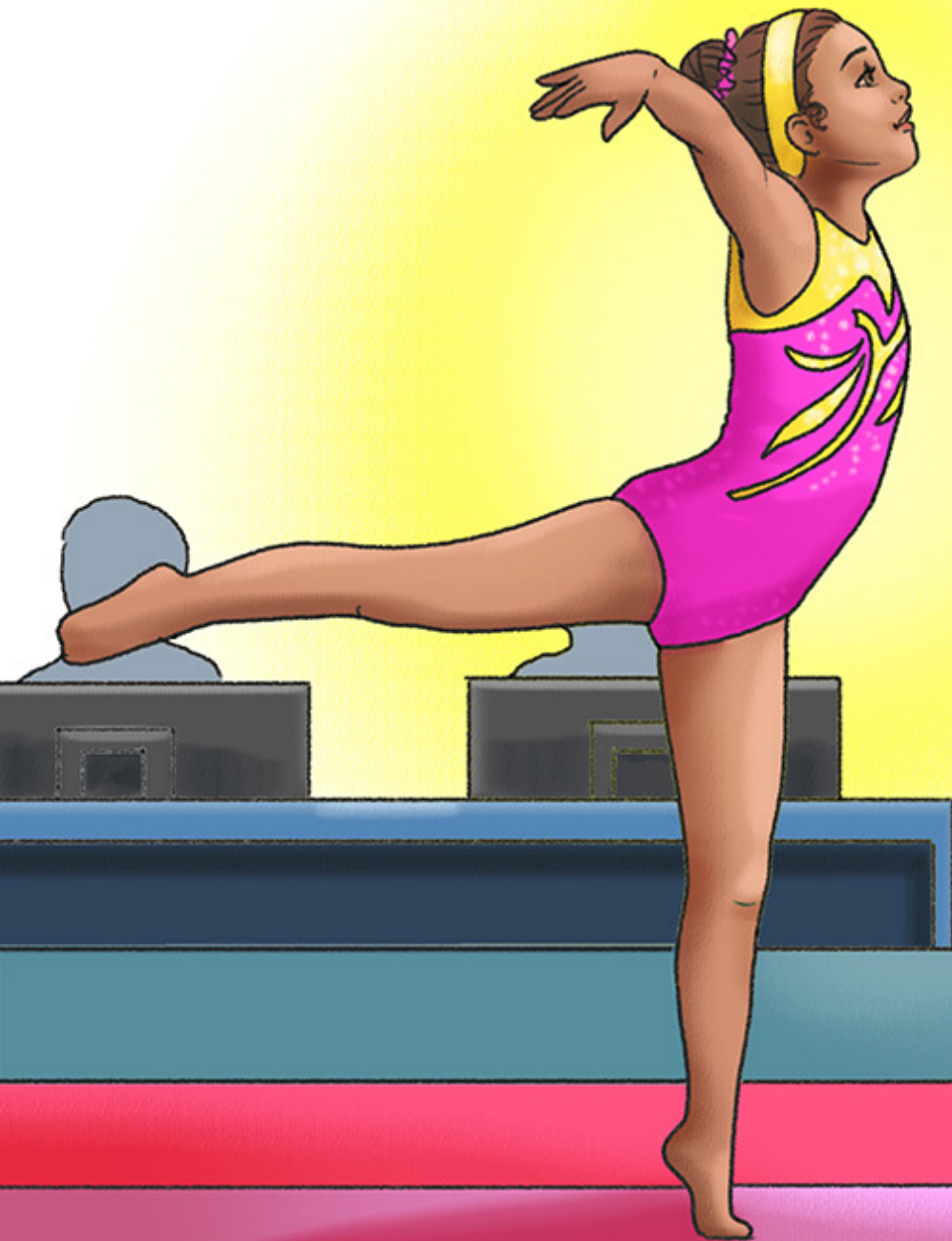


After a few months in the program, she admitted that it was tough. Some days she really just wants to play with her friends like other 12-year-old girls, instead of practicing back walks on the bar over and over. Sometimes she gets frustrated at the combined load of keeping good grades in school as well as progressing in her gymnastics program.

An additional challenge is that she went from being “advanced” in her level to “beginner” in a new level. Her coaches have high expectations and they push her pretty hard. They expect her not to cry from the pain or the coaching, but to persevere. They aren’t just training girls to do cartwheels; they are training athletes to compete and to win!

Why does she do it? It’s because she’s following a dream. She is choosing excellence. She’s taking her talent and developing it into a skill.





A lot of us find it challenging to push ourselves toward excellence. We love the *idea* of something, but the thought of the *commitment, discipline, and hard work* it would take to achieve that idea can sometimes dissuade us from putting in the hard work that's needed to succeed. We talk ourselves away from our dreams and down from our passions, telling ourselves, "It's just too much work!" But the fact is that each of us has the opportunity to develop excellence and skill in our lives, to be the very best we can be, to do the outstanding; we just have to commit to it.

And a talent or skill isn't only partial to a sport or gymnastics. We each have something we can invest in—whether it's being a skilled organizer, being good at learning, being creative, or perhaps even having a good sense of community. Each one of these skills—or whatever skill you may have—needs commitment, discipline, and hard work if we hope to excel in them. Constant effort is what will bring about results.

If you have a talent or skill or an interest that God has given you, invest in it. Grow it for God!

**S&S link:** Character Building: Values and Virtues: Contentment–2c

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