

*Being an aunty can have unexpected rewards, as CAROL GINDEIN discovers...*

Progressing in eighteen months from crying because she couldn't remember the order of her gymnastics routine to receiving five medals in one day surely proves my niece is related to me.

I vividly remember going to dance classes and wanting to kick the teacher then run outside and scream because "I can't get it right and know I never will."

I also remember receiving medals and performing on stage as if those kicking and screaming days never existed.

When I heard the excited and happy voice of my 10-year-old niece on the phone telling me about her medals I smiled at how much she reminds me of me.

Unfortunately I haven't seen much of her since she started her gymnastics adventure.

I decided to follow my dream and travel indefinitely and that meant I couldn't attend her classes or performances. I often wonder if the aunty-time I do manage to spend equates to quality over quantity, and gives her something to value in the future.

As an aunty, I feel almost the same responsibility to be a good influence and friend that I did as a mother to my now adult son.

Now, from a distance I hope my infrequent visits are enough to build relationships that support and encourage my niece and nephews but I'm not always around to see the results.

Once again, it's by phone that I tell her how proud I am of her achievement and I'm surprised when she replies she's proud of me too.

Caught off guard, I ask why.

"Don't you remember when you were at my class and I cried?" she says.

"Then we went home and you said you'd remember my routine for me and we could practice outside until I remembered?"

"And you said you cried when you couldn't remember dances but then you remembered one so you knew you could remember them all?"

I laugh and say yes. "Are you proud of me because I cried too?"

She laughs as if I'm silly. "No," she says, taking a breath.

"It's because if I think I can't remember, I practice outside and think if you were here you'd say, 'it'll be easy in a minute' and then it feels like I know it in a minute. I'm proud of you for that."

My eyes are teary but I'm smiling as I realise my question of quality versus quantity has been answered.