



# Letters to a Young Gymnast

By Nadia Comaneci

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In *Letters to a Young Gymnast*, Nadia Comaneci tells how she found the inner strength to become a world-class athlete at such a young age. Now a woman of tremendous poise and self-assurance, she offers unique insights into the mind of a top competitor. From how to live after you've realized your dream to the necessity of “a spirit forged with mettle,” Comaneci's thoughts on athleticism and sacrifice are eye-opening.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Although part of a mentoring series (Letters to a Young Lawyer; Letters to a Young Chef; etc.), this memoir is less about motivating aspiring gymnasts than justifying the author's life choices. Romanian-born Comaneci took the sports world by storm when, at the age of 14, she was the first person in Olympic history to earn a perfect score in gymnastics. At the event she garnered several more medals. When the author recounts her early years with legendary coach Bela Karolyi and details how his intensive training requirements plus her own determination led to her success, the text is engrossing. Comaneci, however, devotes far too much space to discussing the controversies that dogged her career. She refutes the oft-repeated accusation that Karolyi abusively overworked his young gymnasts and further denies that she drank bleach when the Romanian government assigned her to another coach. Although Comaneci's descriptions of her harsh life in Romania (although far easier than most) under dictator Ceausescu are compelling, and her decision to defect in 1989 completely understandable, she does not acknowledge that the man who facilitated her escape, Constantin Panait, was anything other than a personal manager. According to newspaper reports at the time, Panait, married with four children, controlled her life and finances and was responsible for TV bookings where the gymnast appeared overweight and inappropriately dressed. More discussions about the sport and less defensiveness about mostly forgotten gossip would have strengthened this mentoring guide.

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### About the Author

Born in 1961 in Onesti, Romania, **Nadia Comaneci** made sports history during the 1976 Olympic Games by scoring the first perfect "10.00" in a gymnastics competition. Since defecting to the United States in 1989, she is an international spokesman for her sport as well as numerous charities. She lives in Norman, Oklahoma, with her husband, American gymnast Bart Conner.

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