

Dancing for Your Health

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Maybe it's a Piscean thing, but I have always enjoyed dancing. I have been into different themes: Country Western, Clogging and African. Cuban Salsa saved me at a time when I most needed a life-raft. It remains my favorite dance addiction.

The good news is that the benefits of dancing far exceed putting a smile on one's face and sending weighty worries packing. Mayo clinic researchers report that social dancing reduces stress, increases energy, improves strength, muscle tone and coordination.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute links dancing to a lowered risk of coronary heart disease, decreased blood pressure, assisting in weight management as well as strengthening the bones of your hips and legs.

But wait...there's more!

Depression and loneliness are lifted by the social aspect of dancing.

Brain function is also enhanced, not only by the increased blood flow to the brain, but by the memorizing of steps and working with a dance partner. Of eleven physical activities followed in a 21-year study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, dancing was the only one of the activities to be linked to a reduction in the risk of dementia.

The challenges that dancing provides keeps your brain and body young. I personally have had the experience of feeling my brain work to create new pathways of communication as I learn a new step. Your relationship with your body also changes in dance. You often discover moves and muscles (and smiles I might add) that you didn't even know you had.

The extent of benefit that you get from dancing depends upon the type of dancing you are doing, how strenuous it is, the duration and frequency of your dancing. For those of you that are calorie conscious, the calories burned per hour in a 150 pound person range from 265 calories per hour in Ballroom dancing up to 420 calories plus per hour in Salsa.

If a dance class isn't an option for you, consider 'living room dancing'. It was one of my favorite pleasures as a single woman. I would just turn on music to fit my mood and dance away. I often recommend this sport to my clients. When they just can't seem to find a way or the time to move their bodies throughout the day, living room dancing is a no-brainer. Just put on comfortable clothes, turn on the music and let your body move. I now sneak in my sessions when the house is empty.

Are you looking for a place to dance? There are many opportunities at the Telluride Dance Academy. Also, dance instructor Debbie Reynolds hosts private lessons as well as social dances at the Gallerie Framing studio. I was just in her Salsa class last week. There were plenty of smiles.