

**Learning to walk sets you free. Learning to dance gives you the greatest freedom of all: to express with your whole self the person you are. ~ Melissa Hayden**

**You don't stop dancing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop dancing. ~ Anon.**

**It's never too late to start, and it's always too soon to stop. ~ Walter Bortz**

Dance works in multiple areas on multiple levels... I like to say that dancing changes everything; body, brain, and being.

**Body:**

- Pro-actively fights off bone loss and muscle atrophy
- Pumps blood to the brain, providing necessary glucose and oxygen.
- Builds flexibility that not only effects muscle tissue but the pulmonary system as well
- Builds strength and endurance
- Improves coordination and balance
- Increases and maintains range of movement
- Builds neural-plasticity in the brain

**Brain:**

- Creates new neural pathways
- Enhances memory and creative problem solving skills
- Fights the onset of dementia
- Builds creative thinking skills

**Being:**

- Can build community when dancing with others
- Provides the ability to take some control of some aspects of one's life
- Provides a process of integration for multiple aspects of one's self
- Provides opportunities to explore the power of coupling a lifetime of experience with movement and music, and celebrating those explorations with others

Extra information from the internet, if you would like to explore further:

One of the recent studies that have proven the benefits of dancing on the brain is the one conducted by researchers from the *Albert Einstein College of Medicine*. The study, which was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, shows that dance is the best exercise to improve a person's cognitive skills – whatever age he might be. (<http://socialdance.stanford.edu/syllabi/smarter.htm>)

*From a study by the University of Illinois:* After six months doing their respective new regimes, the volunteers' brains were tested again and, lo and behold, the dancers were a step ahead of the others. While all of the participants' brains did show signs of declining white matter, most probably because of their advancing ages, one group showed an improvement in the health of some of their white matter - the dancers. In fact, they had stronger white matter in the area of their brains linked to processing speed and memory.

(<http://www.prima.co.uk/diet-and-health/news/a38385/dancing-protect-brain-ageing/>)

According to psychiatrist *Dr. Joseph Coyle of the Harvard Medical School*, the hippocampus and the cerebral cortex – both of which play a role in dancing – are rewired and consequently improved with frequent use. The dynamism required in decision-making – for example, what step you need to do next – paves the way for new neural paths that make information transmission faster and better. Such activities also help improve mental capacity since the cognitive processes are exercised in more ways than one.

(<http://examinedexistence.com/dancing-helps-the-brain-function-better/>)