

# Dancing Helps the Brain Function Better

The role of dancing in cognitive improvement has fascinated the scientific community for a number of years. To satisfy their curiosity, many academicians and researchers have carried out studies discerning dancing's effect on a person's knowledge. 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. The research, in fact, targeted senior citizens to determine which activity reduces the risk of dementia. As per the results, 76% of those who danced frequently exhibited lesser signs of dementia, compared to those who answered crossword puzzles and read often.

## **How Dance Lessons Can Make You Smarter**

Dancing is said to improve a person's cognitive skills since it prepares the brain for prime learning. A vigorous activity such as dancing pumps blood to the brain, giving it the glucose and oxygen it needs to function well. Apart from increasing blood flow to the brain, there is another mechanism that further improves the mental acuity of a dancer or an individual who is learning how to dance. 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.

## **Dancers: Bodily-Kinesthetically Intelligent**



Most people might not consider dancers are intelligent, but they actually are! Remember, there are **actually 9 different types of intelligences according to Howard Gardner**, and bodily-kinesthetically intelligence is one of them. Dancers are just like athletes and surgeons, meaning they are bodily or kinesthetically intelligent. This is one of the nine types of intelligences, as postulated by Harvard University psychologist Howard Gardner. In other words, bodily intelligent individuals have the ability to manipulate objects well with the use of their commendable physical skills – both fine and gross motor movements. They can put things together – and even invent some – with relative ease. They even find it interesting to find out how things and mechanisms work. It can be said that dancers can be likened to inventors and engineers who are actually kinesthetically smart. Apart from the efficient handling and putting together of objects, bodily intelligent individuals are exceptional when it comes to balance, coordination, speed, strength and flexibility. Great dancers are often great athletes – they can easily win a sporting event, even at first try. Best of all, kinesthetically intelligent persons find it easy to convey their feelings and thoughts with the help of bodily movements. According to experts from the Ivy Academy, a Multiple Intelligence Pre-School based in China, bodily intelligent individuals learn easily just by mimicking a certain person's actions. Even with little practice, they do it better than the demonstrator. Hands-on learning is the best way to educate a kinesthetically intelligent individual. They find it easy to demonstrate steps and activities that make use of the body.

## **Other Benefits of Dancing**

Without a doubt, dancing can help you jump your brain to overdrive. Apart from its

cognitive benefits, there are other advantages that come with persistent dance lessons:

- **Depression** and **stress levels** are reduced. Apart from boosting your mental capacities, dancing helps you have a better outlook in life, therefore decreasing your risks of suffering from crippling stress and depression.
- Energy levels are increased because of the constant influx of the hormone serotonin. Dancing ushers a rush of the hormone serotonin, therefore giving you the energy you need to last the entire day. And this is not the crash and burn feeling you get with coffee – nah. The energy you get from dancing will surely last until sundown.
- Strength, flexibility, endurance and balance are improved. Dancing is not only a workout for your brain, it is a great workout for your body as well. Whether you are young or old, you can enjoy improved strength, flexibility, endurance and balance after a few sessions of dancing.
- Improves cardiovascular and bone health. Dancing is like most physical exercises – they can improve your heart and bone health. The thing that makes it better though is that it is social and enjoyable – you can have fun with friends while enhancing your over-all health.

## **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, it cannot be denied that dancing indeed makes you smarter. After all, experts from Stanford University say that dancing is great at involving all the brain functions simultaneously – from musical and kinesthetic, to rational and emotional. To wit, dancing is the perfect activity that increases neural connectivity – therefore making you the smarter person you have always hoped you would be. So how can you improve your mental faculties through dancing? It is not enough that you dance once in a blue moon. Experts suggest attending dancing classes four times a week – or more. With the many studies that prove the cognitive benefits of dancing, it is time to put your dancing shoes on! It does not matter if you are not as gracious as Shakira or Justin Timberlake – just remember: dancing practice makes for perfect choreography, and most prominently, improved mental skills!

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