



How learning to dance can prepare you for Marriage

Learning how to dance can have a lifelong impact on your marriage.

As ballroom dancing has become much less prominent in our society, the contribution that it makes to lasting marriages has also declined.

Couples are much less in tune with each other's body language, they don't spend as much time making physical contact and they struggle when facing obstacles.

Of course, being proficient in these relationship skills isn't unique to dancing but, here are 3 ways learning to ballroom dance together can strengthen those areas of your marriage.

1. Better communication.
Ballroom dancing is like a language.

Traditionally, the man leads and woman follows, however, that doesn't mean that the woman doesn't get to make any decisions about the dance but rather it means that a physical connection is established where both people have to understand each other, support each other and trust each other as they move along the floor.

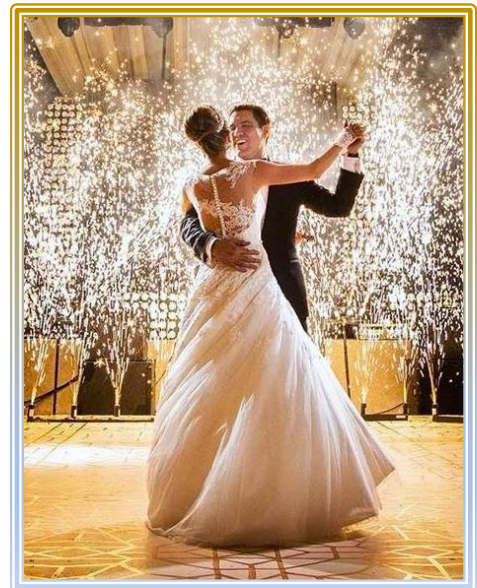
This is similar to marriage. At any given point one person might be more skilled in an area than the other (expressing feelings, for example), but there is an expectation of the more skilled person to be patient with the other during their growth.

Dancing helps to build those skills, as both people meet each other where they are and move forward together.

2. More physical contact.
Sometimes married couples go through emotional challenges and times of misunderstanding.

This can often lead to less physical affection in the relationship.

Sometimes the best thing to do to nurture the emotional frustrations is to reestablish the physical connection, as being physically intimate makes people feel more strongly towards each other. Ballroom dancing is a great way to reestablish that physical connection and get the pheromones interacting again!



3. Overcoming obstacles.

There is no doubt in a marriage that there will be obstacles and, they won't always be easy to overcome.

Sometimes you will feel like giving up, so the more practice you have in sticking with it until you overcome it as a team the more successful your marriage will be.

Learning ballroom dance will be a fun, healthy way for you to overcome obstacles together, and see measurable progress and success as you move forward.

Dance classes are a great activity to do in preparation for your wedding because they bring you closer together and you get to show off your new skills to your wedding guests.

Can I get Good Musicality advice from a Competitive Dancer?



Think about the musicality advice that you may typically get from a dance teacher.

Is it about timing alone or does it expand to picking up in the character of the music and expressing that character?

Good musicality will go well beyond simply being in time.

You do of course need to be in time but, if you want to have really good musicality then you should:

- Sense the emotion of the music and express it.
- Pre-empt the music and dance figures that suit it.
- Play with the music (arrive a touch below maybe or dance between the beats depending upon the style of dance).

Maybe you likely have never been told to do this, or how to do it...nevertheless, it is well worth working on your musicality; as it adds the final element to dancing that really brings it to life.

So, why is it so rarely taught?

It likely gets back to DanceSport or competition dancing.

In DanceSport, the processes are to develop a routine and then dance that routine; in time to whatever music is played; as precisely and technically as possible; and with visual appeal.

While a routine could be tuned to the music that plays, dancers drill the routine for precise movements therefore, the dancer's muscle memory of the routine will likely override any musicality the dancer has.

This is not to say that all competitive dance kills musicality.

Jack and Jill competitions (which I think make probably the best contribution to social dance and is derived from the swing dance community), not only demand good musicality but even promotes lyricism at times and for that, you really need to understand the song you are dancing too.

Nevertheless, the dance competitions that many of us think about or are familiar with are like those in movies such as ‘Shall we Dance?’

These competitions focus more on execution of figures and timing, as opposed to musical interpretation and expression, without preparation, and without thinking too much about how it should be done.

Therefore, you might not get as much help in this area as you might like if your studio is influenced by this approach to dance.

If you do feel that you’re missing it and want a little more, then try going to some dance schools or events that are more focused on the social side of couples dancing.

Keep your ears open for musicality workshops too...just something to think about.

The 3 Types of ‘Swing’

In Standard ballroom style dancing, Swing is what gives a couple strong and fluid movement. There are three types of Swing, and each of them generates movement in a different way.

One of the largest differences between beginner dancers and advanced dancers is their mastery of this key principle in Ballroom dancing, for without Swing, movement looks forced and ‘choppy’.

1. Pendular Swing.

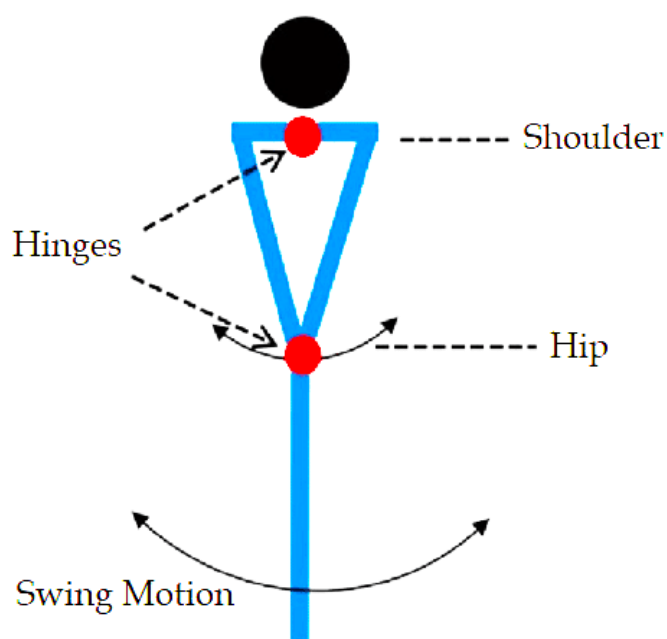
Pendular Swing is the swinging of the leg or the entire body like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, and just like a large pendulum, it is Rise and Fall that produces the Swing.

From a high position, smooth lowering initiates the Swing (often called the Down Swing), from which it is redirected into a driving movement, and then finally the body continues to ride that energy into the next Rise (often called Up Swing).

Both the Up Swing and the Down Swing are equally important but unfortunately, many dancers neglect the Down Swing, which causes them to lack forward drive and makes their Up Swing appear forced and awkward.

Pendular Swing is most characteristic of Waltz, but it also exists in Quickstep.

The Foxtrot used to be danced without much Pendular Swing at all and mostly Rotational Swing but, more and more Pendular Swing is being used in this dance as it evolves.



2. Rotary Swing.

Imagine you are holding a large sledge hammer, and you swing it like a baseball bat. After you finish your swing, the hammer continues to pull you through; this is known in Ballroom as Rotary Swing.

Like all forms of Swing, Rotary Swing is used to generate momentum and progression down the floor so just rotating alone doesn't cut it; instead, you have to rotate and allow that rotation to generate movement.

Foxtrot uses Rotary Swing all over and it is a major source of confusion for beginners learning the Feather Step and the Three Step.

3. Metronomic Swing.

Just as the top of the metronome ticks back and forth while the base stays in place, so does Metronomic Swing affect your body.

If you are standing perfectly straight, you cannot move anywhere; it is Metronomic Swing, a slight tilt of the top half of your body, that initiates all movements and even when you begin to walk from standing still, the first thing that happens is that your body tilts slightly forward.

In this sense, many don't even think about Metronomic Swing as a commencement for all movements but this tilted feeling is used by itself to generate momentum in figures such as the Quickstep 'Six Quick Runs', and all Open Level Quickstep Runs in PP.

Combinations of Swing

Most figures don't use just one type of Swing, but a combination of them, if not all of them.

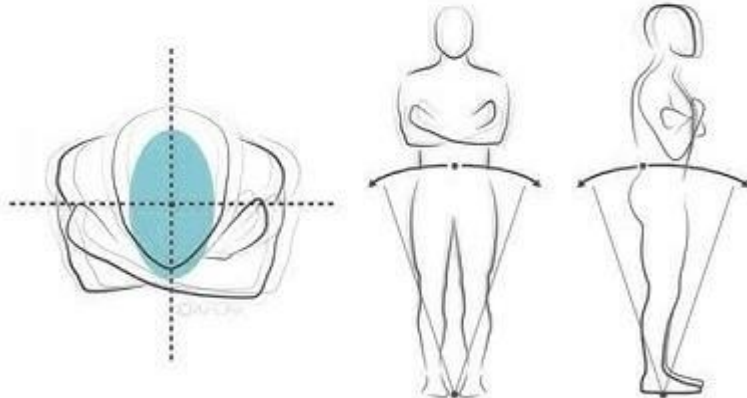
Let's take the Waltz Natural Turn, for example...

To commence movement, Metronomic Sway needs to be employed as the Fall occurs. Then it transitions into the Down Swing of Pendular Swing and the Rotary Swing begins.

The Rotary Swing and Pendular Swing work together to turn the couple as they begin to rise and then the energy of the swing is dissipated through Rise and Sway.

The 3 Types of 'Sway'

Sway is characteristic of good dancing in Standard, so much so that students of dance will try to emulate that one characteristic.



The problem is that the way Sway looks is vastly different from the way Sway feels and a lack of correct understanding of fundamentals will result in broken frame and posture.

1. Technical Sway

When most people talk about Sway, they are talking about Technical Sway, which is a natural inclination of the body away from the direction of movement.

What this means is that if you dancing a Waltz Natural Turn; on step 2, your body should make a line from the LF (Lady's RF) to the top of your head.

Your spine should not be straight up and down in relation to the ground. The reason for this is mechanical: sway kills momentum and allows you to slow down, stop, or change direction.

The faster you are moving, the more momentum you generate and the more Sway you will need to affect that momentum.

This is the same reason motorcycles tilt as they go around corners and the faster they are going, the more they tilt.

In Ballroom Dancing, Technical Sway is just a lean in the direction away from the way you're moving, proportional to your momentum, in order to slow down, stop, or change direction.

It is called Technical Sway because it comes naturally from correct technique and is proportionally a result of your Swing, without having to think about the Sway itself at all.

2. Cosmetic Sway

Okay, here is where things start to get dangerous!

Absolute beginners are told not to think about Sway at all because Technical Sway will come as your movement progresses...however, once dancers begin to master basic Swing and Sway, Cosmetic Sway is added to the mix.



Cosmetic Sway is a slight tilting of the shoulder line in order to amplify shape beyond what Technical Sway allows and make the shape more elegant.

This is achieved by stretching one side upward, while making sure not to crunch the opposite side and this is where things start to get dangerous because when beginners see Sway, they try to copy it by stretching one arm up and crunching the other side but, this will result in an ugly shape and a disruption in balance.

Cosmetic Sway is added on top of Technical Sway, not instead of it!

Once the fundamentals of Technical Sway are achieved, Cosmetic Sway is added as an overlay to achieve a more elegant shape.

The idea of Cosmetic Sway is relatively new in Ballroom Dancing and a few decades ago, it did not exist and shapes were less exaggerated and more controlled.

Look at the difference in dancing between these two Waltzes; one from 2016, the other from 1998.

[WDSF World Open Standard | Final Presentation Waltz | Copenhagen 2016](#)

[Blackpool Championship | Professional Final Waltz | UK 1998](#)

Notice that in the first video, there is extreme Cosmetic Sway everywhere, built strongly on top of Technical Sway. In the second video, while you can notice some Technical Sway, couples seem to float across the floor with their top lines mostly undisturbed and still.

To dance Cosmetic Sway, dance a regular Waltz Natural Turn, with a lot of Swing and therefore a lot of Technical Sway, but additionally, between steps 2 and 3 stretch the left side (Lady right side) upward to the sky as the feet close, without distorting the straight topline from elbow to elbow.

3. Broken Sway

Broken Sway (sometimes called Released Sway) is when the body generates sway from tilting the upper body, and not much happens with the base.

This is different from Cosmetic Sway, which is a slight tilting added on top of Technical Sway and the reason many dance students are told not to use Broken Sway is because they try to use it in moving figures, like Natural Turns, when in fact Broken Sway should only be used on Line Figures, when not moving your feet but shaping, a great example of which is the Oversway, in Tango.

To dance Broken Sway in an Oversway position, stand on the left foot (Lady right foot), with a flexed knee and the free leg extended to the side. Tilt from the hips and shoulders to the right (Lady left), making sure not to crunch the space under your arms. This is a basic Broken Sway.

Broken Sway should never be used as a substitute for Technical Sway, since they are used in completely different situations.

So, there you have it, the three types of Sway: Technical Sway, Cosmetic Sway, and Broken Sway.

Technical Sway is used on all figures that have Swing (i.e.; all moving figures in Waltz, Viennese Waltz, Foxtrot, and Quickstep); Cosmetic Sway can be added on top of it to make a more beautiful shape and, Broken Sway is only used in Line Figures.

