

Waltzing your way to mental fitness

“From a mind-body perspective, anything you do successfully on the physical end will **positively affect** your mental and emotional states.” commented Jenny Susser, Ph.D., a sports psychologist at the [Women's Sports Medicine Center](#) at New York City's Hospital for Special Surgery, a leading center for sports medicine. The article [Dance Your Way To A Better Body](#) goes on to say:

“The social aspects of dance help to make it very attractive for an increasing number of people versus, say, an [elliptical](#) training machine. Scientific studies are now also telling us that many things make dancing an excellent fitness regimen with attractive benefits,” said Polly de Mille, exercise physiologist at the Women's Sports Medicine Center at HSS.

Of course, balanced, targeted gym workouts can provide excellent fitness benefits as well but for some people, the “fun factor” is missing at the gym.

“Those working out in gyms are often plugged into their iPods or their reading material, following their own regimen. Those dancing, however, are often moving in unison, possibly facing one another or touching, and having a communal experience. Connection and cooperation with others is integral to the experience,” she said.

This combination of **physical exercise and social connection** can also be a great [stress reliever](#), another health benefit. But, to continue on to a third out of the four pillars of health (physical fitness, mental fitness, nutritional [diet](#), and stress reduction), dancing can provide you excellent [brain exercise](#) as well. [Dr. Joe Verghese](#) and colleagues at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York [found](#) reading, playing board games, playing musical instruments, and **dancing** were associated with a reduced risk of [dementia](#).

“Besides enticing folks to exercise and socialize, line dancing can also keep the brain active because dancers must learn and remember steps, [Hedy] [McAdams](#) says. It's an appealing message for her students, many of whom are in their 50s, 60s and even 70s.”

In order to learn a dance, you must use your [attention](#), several types of [memory](#), [motor coordination](#), [sensory input](#), and [executive functions](#), like planning. These activities involve the [frontal](#), [temporal](#), [parietal](#), and [occipital](#) lobes as well as the [cerebral cortex](#), [limbic system](#), and [cerebellum](#).

If you need some help figuring out which dance styles to try, check out this post on [Dance Fitness](#) at [Simply Anti-Aging](#) or this [one](#) from [families.com](#). One of them will get you going - whether it's with a partner or without!

Get out there and cut a rug - you won't just dance your way to a better body, you'll dance your way to a better brain!

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