**12 Reasons Dancing Your Butt off Is the Most Badass Mind-Body Workout**

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<https://greatist.com/health/benefits-of-dance>

It’s hard not to be happy when you’re dancing. And, it turns out, when you “dip it low, pick it up slow, roll it all around, poke it out, let your back go,” you’re getting a pretty badass workout, too.

The main benefits of dancing for health

* improves agility and flexibility
* improves balance and coordination
* improves cardiovascular health
* improves muscle tone and strength
* maintains and builds bone strength
* aids in weight loss or maintenance
* improves memory and cognition
* improves mood
* reduces stress levels
* provides an opportunity to socialize
* boosts self-esteem
* is easily adaptable to meet your needs

We’ll expand on these below, but it’s a pretty formidable list.

**Why dancing is amazing for you — according to an expert**

“In my opinion, there is no better workout than dance,” says [iFit](https://www.ifit.com/) trainer [Kelsey Sheahan](https://www.instagram.com/sweatden/?hl=en). “You have to use every essence of your body to do it. Dancing is a full-body workout in the truest sense.”

“It helps improve coordination, memorization, endurance, flexibility, and most importantly, it makes your heart happy,” continues Sheahan. “I guarantee you will see a huge difference in your overall mood, decrease stress levels, and have an extra pep in your step.”

**The physical benefits of dance**

If done regularly, dance can do wonders for your bod. Keep in mind that if dance is your only form of exercise, you’ll want to aim for about 30 minutes a day, suggests Sheahan.

Scientists, though not often appreciated for their funky-ass moves, second the benefits of the boogie — and have shown it in the most lit research imaginable.

**1. Better agility and flexibility**

Age, lack of movement — or only performing the same movements — can lead to stiffness and a lack of mobility that primes you for discomfort and injury.

But dance can help.

[One study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16913992/) found that cross-country skiers who received months of dance training showed improvements in joint mobility and muscle flexibility of the spine, as well as their speed and agility.

In [a similar study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15039249/), cross-country skiers who received pre-season dance training had improved range of hip motion, enhanced spine flexibility, and a reduced risk of back pain.

Despite the focus on cross-country skiing in these studies, you don’t need to hit the slopes to reap the agility and flexibility benefits of getting down to music.

**2. Balance and coordination**

While you may feel pretty solid on your feet now, there’s no denying the fact that as we age, balance and coordination seriously deteriorate. It’s one of the reasons that older adults are so prone to falls.

However, the ability of dancing to improve these markers of health in older folks is promising.

[One study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16913992/) on people over the age of 80 years found that social dancing helped improve balance and walking speed, as well as contributing to a more stable walking pattern.

**3. Enhanced cardiovascular health**

Depending on how intensely you jump up, jump up, and get down (jump, jump, jump, jump, etc.), dance can serve as a hardcore workout that’s good for your heart.

[Research has found](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26944521/) that regular moderate-intensity dancing is associated with a reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease. And this benefit is significantly more pronounced for dance than for walking.

Take that, walking, you unfunky fool (we still love you, though).

**4. Improved muscle tone and strength**

Many of our daily movements (walking, climbing stairs, etc) occur in a straight plane. Dance, however, also throws in lateral and rotational movements. Your body is never bored.

This not only improves agility, coordination, and balance, but also strengthens muscles that often get left in the corner of the party, like your abdominals.

**5. Weight loss and maintenance**

Dance is a form of aerobic exercise (especially dancing to the point where you get nice and sweaty, as you would in a good hip-hop class).

According to the American Diabetes Association, aerobic exercise can support weight loss or maintenance. Like you needed further reasons to shake what your mama gave you.

**6. Stronger bones and reduced risk of osteoporosis**

Dance is a form of weight-bearing exercise, which is the gold standard of exercise when it comes to improving bone mass.

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, high-impact, weight-bearing exercises, such as certain forms of dance, can help maintain bone strength and even build new bone mass. This slows the development and progression of osteoporosis.

Not all dance is high-impact (“Baby Shark,” anyone?), but even low-impact dancing can help maintain muscle and bone mass that typically declines with age (maybe not “Baby Shark” though).

**7. It can be gentle or intense — you get to decide**

Dance can be whatever intensity you want it to be, depending on your mood, energy levels, and whether you have injuries. And if you’re bumping *Sexy and I Know It* or not.

That’s one reason it’s so approachable and inclusive. So blast Beyonce’s *“Run The World (Girls)”* and get wild, or flow to a more mellowed out track on T-Swift’s *“Folklore”* album.

**The cognitive (brain-boosting) benefits of dance**

Trouble concentrating? Brain fog? Dance can be just the mental pick-me-up-and-fling-me-around-the-room you need.

**8. Boosts learning, memory, and all-around brain power**

Feeling mentally stuck or indecisive? Shake it out!

One study found that Zumba — the Latin dance-inspired workout — helped improve cognitive skills, like visual recognition and decision making, along with mood.

Other research suggests that dance can help create new connections between brain regions involved in long-term memory and executive function (and you thought the “Macarena” made you lose brain cells).

And some doctors have even [recommended dance and dance-style workouts](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6659195/) to assist in recovery after brain injury.

**9. May reduce dementia risk**

Dance can help ward off more serious memory problems, too. This may be especially true for dancing in a group or with a partner.

[One study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12815136/) found that out of 11 different types of exercise (including dance, swimming, golf, cycling, tennis, and others) dance was the only one associated with a lower risk of dementia for people in the study.

Experts believe the benefit was due to a combo of social interaction and mental focus.

[Another study from 2017](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnagi.2017.00059/full?) found that dance can increase the amount of white matter in the brain. White matter typically breaks down as a person ages, which may contribute to cognitive decline.

**The emotional (feel-good) benefits of dance**

Time to twerk out that pent-up stress! Yes, it’s scientifically possible.

**10. Better mood + less stress**

In a [2015 study](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0122866) examining people’s motivation for dancing, “mood enhancement” ranked top on the list. This could be because dance is expressive and allows you to escape or let loose in a way that’s usually out-of-bounds in adulthood.

Various studies also suggest that dance therapy might also [reduce depression and psychological stress](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0197455612000998?via%3Dihub) in people who have serious illnesses, such as breast cancer or Parkinson’s, as well as in students.

Research from 2014 also found that dance may help your body crank out [feel-good endorphins](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4179700/) (more than other forms of exercise) and reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol — leading to all-around good vibes.

You won’t get a prescription for some “Miami Bounce” any time soon. But, luckily, you don’t need one.

**11. Gives you a chance to socialize**

Dance classes and dance-style workouts often take place in groups, which allows for social bonding in a (typically) really fun, light and breezy environment.

Depending on the specific style of dance you choose (say, salsa or swing dancing), you may even be paired up with a partner every week and become total BFFs.

**12. Boosts self-esteem**

Jumping on a treadmill or elliptical can be great exercise, but also involves running/walking on the spot ad infinitum.

With dance, you’re getting a workout and mastering a new skill. This is can be incredibly rewarding and improve confidence.

Research suggests that any form of exercise can boost self-esteem (and we’d never discourage you from finding what’s best for you). But there’s just something about [mastering new choreography](https://greatist.com/live/why-some-people-say-i-cant-dance#4) or pulling off a new move that makes you feel ultra-ready to take on the world.

(We still remember when we worked out [how to floss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Kj3wWKjMSQ). Great day. Second only to the moment we discovered dabbing.)

**Dance is great, whatever your age (hint: get your kids dancing)**

Dance is obviously great for adults right up the age scale, given all the mind-body perks mentioned above. But it can also be a great creative, energy-burning outlet for kids too — which is much needed in this new era of COVID-19.

If you’ve got little ones at home, consider enrolling them in a dance class, do some online dance videos together as a family after school, or simply blast some tunes and jump around.

It may be a bit of a sh\*t-show at first (watch out for literally anything breakable), but there will inevitably be some ear-to-ear smiles and great physical and mental perks. Plus, it’s fun! Who needs studies proving that?

(We do! Pick us! We love studies!)

Oh, okay then. Research suggests dance may help kiddos develop confidence and self-esteem. Participation in after-school dance programs has also been associated with [reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3897259/).

People with kids should drop what they’re doing and *naynay* *immediately.*

**Is one type of dance better for you than another?**

In general, all dance is pretty freakin’ great. But certain types offer unique benefits. Here are a few types to consider trying.

**Hip-hop**

Hip-hop dancing typically is an energetic form of dance featuring “street-style” movements. You don’t need to master breakdancing to get the most out of it.

If you’re worried about “not being street enough,” whatever that means, watch this [godawful rap/dance/mullet battle from “Teen Witch”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYRM8hfZY5Q) and instantly feel ten times better about your Hip-Hop technique.

Basically, if you dream of mastering Beyonce’s moves in any of her music videos, a Hip-Hop class is a great place to start.

It will offer a pretty great cardio workout and dynamic movements that aid in agility, balance, and strength.

**Belly dancing**

If you want to get good and limber, boost cardio fitness, and improve your posture, but you don’t want to worry about mastering too many specific moves, belly dancing is a great option.

This expressive, rhythmic form of dance originated in Egypt and emphasizes movements of the torso. If you’re looking to engage your core, arms, and hips (and anyone watching), this is for you.

**Pole dancing**

Pole dancing, or pole fitness, is full of acrobatic and dance-inspired moves, and classes focus on strength (especially upper body) and flexibility.

It’s perfectly safe for beginners with no experience. But in time, you’ll be practicing things like inverts (a move in which you lift your butt over your head and stay suspended above ground only by your two hands and the sheer stability of your core).

Ignore the judgy connotations and associations with the noble art of stripping — pole dancing is one heck of a workout.

**Ballet**

Ballet is the foundational style to many forms of dance. It’s classic, graceful, and oh-so-technical. However, you’ll be able to find a class that’s suitable for pretty much any age or skill level.

In ballet, you’ll develop an understanding of timing, turns, specific positions and postures, turns, and timing. You’ll also gain serious flexibility, balance, and core strength.

Pilates and Barre fitness classes both incorporate elements of ballet blended with more traditional fitness moves, and they’re far less technical.

“Both focus on sculpting long, lean muscles and put a strong emphasis on building core strength,” says Sheahan.

**Jazz**

Like ballet, jazz dancing is a little trickier than more casual forms of dance.

It’s a high-energy dance style that usually involves upbeat music with kicks, leaps, and turns. Accordingly, it delivers an intense cardio workout, and can really promote agility, along with strength and flexibility.

As well as a sense of ooh-boop-diddly-boop-woop-a-doo-wop, of course.

**Tap**

Tap is a unique style of dance that involves creating layers of rhythm on top of music with your tap shoes. You are both instrument and dancer. It’s pretty neat.

You can perform tap alone, but doing it in a group adds a percussive heft to the routine that can’t be beat.

In addition to working your brain (those heel-toe combos can be tricky!), it’s also a serious cardio workout.

**Salsa**

Salsa is an energetic style of dance with Caribbean, Latin American, and African influences in which you pair up with a partner. It’s relatively fast-paced and consists of a basic rhythm of 3 steps for every 4 beats of music.

Salsa can be great if you’re looking to bond with your partner or meet new people, and break a bit of a sweat.

**Freestyle dancing in your living room (our fave!)**

Sure, this isn’t an official form of dance, but it’s the one with the fewest barriers to entry. Plus it’s probably the best for stress relief and immediately boosting mood.

It’s kind of like cardio meets therapy. All you have to do is the following:

* Blast some music that best suits your mindset (whether it’s hip hop, pop, f\*ck-you breakup songs, or 90s grunge).
* Jump around.
* Drop it low.
* Twerk/wave your arms like you just don’t care.
* Do literally *anything* that feels good and natural.

“The beauty of dance is you can’t really screw it up,” advises Sheahan. “Dance like nobody’s watching and make it \*big\*. Go full out. I think the best bang for your buck is to drop it low, but not so low that you can’t get back up!”

**So, what’s the best way to get started with dance for newbies?**

Dance can be as [easy or as hard as you want](https://greatist.com/move/dancing-305-fitness#5.-Heel-raises) — depending on your goals and the type of dance you choose.

But rest assured, even if you have two left feet, dance can still play a role in your life. “Dance is like a ‘no excuses’ kind of workout,” says Sheahan. “You don’t need anything but your own body to do it.”

**First, choose a type of dance you want to try**

Remember, you can always just freestyle dance it in your living room if you don’t want to pick a “type.”

If you do want something more structured, just remember: dance is supposed to be fun. So pick a style or two you’re most excited to learn, then do a little research on your options.

A fun way to narrow down your search is thinking about what music you like. Hip-hop heads might get a buzz from… well, a Hip-Hop class. Classical bods might gain more from the finesse of a ballet class.

It’s all about trial, error, and curiosity.

**Check out classes at your local gym or online**

If you have a gym membership, you can almost always find some great Zumba, barre, Pilates, cardio dance, and Hip-Hop classes on the schedule. Those without a membership can typically pay a drop-in fee for a single class.

But since COVID probably isn’t going anywhere soon, take advantage of the many online streaming options at your disposal. And [the lack of people watching](https://youtu.be/S32bgx36G-0) your somewhat carefree moves at home.

“iFit has several really good programs that offer Pilates and Barre inspired workouts,” says Sheahan. “YouTube is also a great resource, as it has SO many options from all levels of dancer with tutorials, follow-along routines, and dance-party workouts.”

**Research nearby studios for specialty classes**

If you’re looking for a tried-and-true dance class (as opposed to a dance-inspired fitness class), you’ll likely have to research dance studios in your area that offer adult classes.

You can get some general instruction online, but for pole dancing, salsa, ballet, jazz, tap, and any form of ballroom dancing, some in-person instruction can be a good idea.

These will be more expensive than dance-inspired workouts, and you’ll probably have to buy a multiple-class package.

Again, services might be limited during the pandemic, but get a taste online and pique your curiosity. Many specialty classes are offering a streaming or subscription format during this time.

It’s no replacement for sweating with other people, but it’s still a great way to connect with music and boost your body and brain.

**Remember, no one cares how bad your dancing is!**

It’s time to pop, lock, and [drop those insecurities](https://greatist.com/grow/shut-down-negative-body-talk#research) (sorry, we couldn’t help ourselves!).

Whether you’re dancing in front of a mirror or in your first hip-hop class, silence that voice in your head that says people are judging you.

“It doesn’t matter what you look like dancing. What matters is how dancing makes you feel. And as with anything, the more you do it, the better you’ll get at it,” says Sheahan.

If Napoleon Dynamite can do this in front of his school, you can do The Robot in front of people you’ve never met.

**Takeaway**

Bottom line: Dance can be an incredible workout that’s easily adaptable to suit your mood, fitness levels, and capabilities.

Beyond that — thanks to a combo of music and movement, and a gradual mastery of new skills — it’s an especially effective way to boost mood and feel like a total badass.

Remember, it doesn’t matter what you look like, and none of the benefits above actually require you to be a “good” dancer. So go blast some Bey, get sweaty, and bask in the rush of those endorphins!

If you’re self-isolating, dancing like nobody’s watching has never been easier.

**More inspiration**

Feeling inspired to start dancing right now? Or maybe you need even more motivation to bust a move? We’ve compiled a few resources and dance-inspired workouts to get you started ASAP!

**Master some basic dance moves:**

[5 Moves So Ridiculously Easy, You’ll Really Believe You Can Dance](https://greatist.com/move/dancing-305-fitness)

**Create a kick-ass dance party playlist:**

[25 Songs to Help You Really Get Your Sweat on This Fall](https://greatist.com/fitness/fall-fitness-playlist#1.-Dont-Start-Now,-Dua-Lipa)

**Get inspired with this woman’s pole dancing journey:**

[“I’m Going to Say It: Pole Dancing Made Me a Better Person”](https://greatist.com/grow/pole-dancing-and-wellness)

Try these upbeat dance-inspired workouts:

[20-Minute Beginner Dance Workout](https://youtu.be/XwIb9knRvRs)

[30-Minute Cardio Latin Dance Workout](https://youtu.be/8DZktowZo_k)

[20-Minute Reggae Dance Workout](https://youtu.be/udVy1orWkVI)

[5-Minute Beyoncé Dance Workout](https://youtu.be/nFfgqvuMjT4)

<https://greatist.com/move/best-free-workout-videos-youtube#on-the-go>