

Walk, Stretch or Dance? Dancing May Be Best for the Brain

www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/well/walk-stretch-or-dance-dancing-may-be-best-for-the-brain.html

Could learning to dance the minuet or fandango help to protect our brains from aging?

A new study that compared the neurological effects of country dancing with those of walking and other activities suggests that there may be something unique about learning a social dance. The demands it places on the mind and body could make it unusually potent at slowing some of the changes inside our skulls that seem otherwise inevitable with aging.

CNN Article: 5 reasons why dancing is good for your health

www.cnn.com/2017/06/08/health/health-benefits-of-dancing/index.html

Dancing is often considered a recreational activity and all too often overlooked for the positive physical, mental and social health qualities.



Communities
strengthened by
dancing, singing, and
making music together

An introduction to the benefits of our shared traditions:

As we all know - the benefits of traditional dance, music, and song are extensive! The challenge is that many benefits are difficult to consciously identify by participants or measure by researchers. The CDSS surveys of Canadian and US organizers (2016 and 2018) as well as the 2019 survey of CDSS Affiliates gave us some insight into the benefits as identified by the traditional dance music and song community.

Benefits to individuals:

- **Physical health** (e.g., a generally active lifestyle; specific benefits such as heart health)
- **Cognitive benefits** (e.g., playing music supports the development of children's reading skills)
- **Psychological/emotional health** (e.g., brings happiness/joy; strengthens a positive sense of self-identity; builds self esteem and empowers people; is helpful during times of personal challenge)
- **As a source of social life/relationships** (e.g., events are a place to socialize, meet new friends or a life partner; events help people feel like they are part of a community; events provide a rare opportunity for socializing across generations)
- **Building skills** (e.g., participants can learn how to play an instrument or develop social skills)
- **Strengthening families** (e.g., activities are a positive social space for parents and children to connect within community)
- **Provides a connection to heritage and histories** (e.g., participation creates a sense of grounding with the past)
- **Transformative** (i.e., changing the direction of one's life such as defining a new career path)
- **Other benefits to individuals** (e.g., ways for individuals to connect across generations)

Benefits to the local community and wider society:

- **Builds a sense of community** and place locally (e.g., adds to the identity of a place)
- **Creates an opportunity to build an inclusive** community as well as social cohesion in a broad sense (i.e., the activities can cross barriers such as race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, background, ability, religion, and politics). They also build social cohesion by challenging more of the virtual/consumer-driven approaches to life.
- **Financial impact** (e.g., hall rentals support local facilities; events attract residents and visitors; healthier citizens lessen the impact on the health system)
- **Increases civic participation** (i.e., our activities require volunteer energy and therefore create an entry point to further civic engagement)
- **Adds to the cultural diversity within society**

Title	More information
Making the World a More Beautiful Place	CDSS Blog: June 2016 Chris Ricciotti Through this CDSS blog post, Chris describes how traditional dance can be a very positive community space for members of the LGBTQ community.
Math, Music and Contra Dance	CDSS Blog: December 2014 Lena Erickson This article looks at the connection between mathematics and contra, and what the dancing means to one mathematician.
Connecting and Letting Go and the Yin-Yang of Contra	CDSS News: Spring 2017 Lisa Marie Lunt An article talking about the links between contra and mindfulness including the notion of connecting and letting go and how contra dance provides opportunities for meaningful connection. Also the connection between mind and body.
News from Canada: Finding My Tribe and Bringing It Home	CDSS News: Winter 2013-14 Janice Ferri A first-person story about stepping out of one’s comfort zone to try contra dance, loving it and then starting their own series. Includes a brief reflection on why they love the dancing in terms of a sense of belonging.
“Don’t Stop Dancing,” author tells symposium	CDSS Blog: April 2012 Judy Chaves Judy describes how she demonstrated English country dance to Vermont’s annual Gerontology Symposium as a way to support older adults
Dancing the Dance, an essay	CDSS News: Winter 2012-13 Tom Webb This article includes reflections on the how the repetitive nature of the dance allows for exploration of the moves over time, build connection with the other dancers, and shift dancing depending on the other dancers.
Hands Four	CDSS News: Jan/Feb 2003 Greg Rohde This article describes many of the positive aspects to contra dance including its simplicity, everyone dancing together, the playfulness, welcoming and patient nature of dancers and more. It also reflects on how contra dance is a positive space for people who are single, how the dance itself encourages connection, and how the dance encourage the state of flow.

<p><u>Stories of Dancing with Veterans with PTSD or TBI</u></p>	<p>CDSS Blog: December 2012 Deborah Denenfeld Deborah describes the positive impact of traditional dance on two veterans that she's worked with.</p>
<p><u>What Dancing Taught Me</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Fall 2016 Laurel Owen A first person account of how dancing taught the author much about life including how interact with others, how to develop meaningful connections, how to embody grace, deal with change and more.</p>
<p><u>News from Canada - An Imposter at Puttin' On the Dance 2</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Summer 2015 Siri Paulson A first person account of how the traditional dance community (especially around organizing) can be a place of belonging and healing for individual and provide positive personal growth.</p>
<p><u>Community Dance Works Wonders for Veterans with PTSD and Brain Injuries</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Winter 2014-15 Deborah Denenfeld & Jean Borger As the title describes - an article describing how community dance supports veterans. This includes joy, a sense of belonging, improved mood and memory, decreased anxiety, decreased pain and more.</p>
<p><u>"More Dancing!"</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Winter 2012 Lynn Unger A first-person account at 'choosing joy' by keeping a new years resolution to do 'more dancing'.</p>
<p><u>Dance Local!</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Spring 2012 Dragan Gill The article advocates for dancers to 'dance local'. The article addresses the advantages for supporting the local economy, community relationships more broadly, keeping dances accessible geographically, spreading dancers over various communities, and supporting learning and stewardship.</p>
<p><u>News from Canada - Mayne, the Little Island that Dances</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Winter 2012 Lael Whitehead This article describes how country dance added to community life on a small island and the benefits of country dance (e.g., connection; inclusivity; joy; life-affirming; community-strengthening).</p>
<p><u>Traditional Dance for Soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Summer 2011 Deborah Denenfeld This article describes the positive impact of traditional dance on soldiers who have PTSD and/or brain injuries. Benefits include improved mood, group functioning, the opportunity for informal group support, socializing, improved family relations, reduced anxiety and more.</p>
<p><u>Why Dance in China?</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Fall 2017 Susan L. English This article describes a how a group of young American dancers visited China on a cultural exchange with the goal of sharing the joy of traditional dance. The results included broadening horizons, building interpersonal relationships, and developing a sense of community - among other benefits.</p>

<p><u>One Hundred Years of Morris Dancing in America</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Winter 2010 Rhett Krause</p> <p>This article reflects on the history of morris dance in the US including how in the early 20th century, morris dance was used as a form of physical exercise for students to support health, development of morals. In addition, folk dance was seen as positive as it reconnected immigrants to their traditions and it was suitable for girls. The article identifies early promoters of folk dance in the US.</p>
<p><u>Contra Wabi-Sabi</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: July/Aug 2002 Marcia Michael</p> <p>A first-person story about attending one's first contra dance including some of the great aspects of contra/what dancers can get out participating.</p>
<p><u>"Splendid Stuff For...The Boys" (1917)</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: republished in the CDSS News, date unknown</p> <p>Cecil Sharp</p> <p>This is a copy of a letter found in CDSS' files written during WWI talking about introducing country dance, rapper and morris to the men and women at war.</p>
<p><u>Farewell, I Must be Gone: A Reflection</u></p>	<p>CDSS News: Winter 2014-2015 Emma Breslow</p> <p>A personal account of CDSS campers week, speaking to impact of the experience.</p>