

In the past two decades, dance has enjoyed a resurgence of interest as both a medium of artistic expression and exercise modality for the general public. While many adults still choose yoga or Pilates nowadays to balance out the long hours of sedentary life, more and more choose ballet for its high "fun factor." But what's really attracting those to the ballet studio? Apparently, ballet is a total body workout and a form of artistic expression that requires both discipline and focus. It promotes creative expression, and indeed brings with it tremendous benefits in terms of health and emotional well-being. Simply said, ballet is "therapeutic" for both mind and body.

Many of us including me, dedicated students in ballet, know that it can definitely improve your physical fitness. Studies of professional ballet dancers in the United States have shown that what these dancers do is as strenuous as what professional football players do. It is not difficult, then, to imagine the amount of training the body gets when you do ballet. No wonder classical ballet is considered a "full-contact sport". Ballet uses muscles that are seldom used in other sports, giving you a total body flexibility workout. Stretching in ballet will increase the range of motion of your muscles, and reduce the risk of injury by building up the muscles around the joints of your body. The movements taught in ballet classes are designed to tone and firm muscles without developing bulk so you develop long and lean muscles as opposed to thick ones. No surprise, many ballet students find that they even end up shedding some fat and having well-toned muscles after having started regular training. Ballet combinations require the use of good posture and a neutral stance with the spine straightened and hips "squared" (meaning parallel on both sides), this awareness of good postural alignment is going to have a "spill-over" effect on your daily posture and activities. Ballet is an excellent form of exercise to strengthen and develop the core muscles of your back and abdomen. This may result in less back pain and a flatter abdomen. Ballet students often notice that their waistlines become more defined over time. Practicing ballet regularly will help you develop the speed, balance and technical skills that are required when you execute the moves. When you first start, you will get an introduction to the basic techniques. By repeating them routinely, they will start to become like second nature. You'll be able to build balance and poise, learn to go from one move to the next effortlessly and seamlessly, and you won't have to even think about it.

Ballet requires that we use a lot of "brain power" to memorize the steps and to coordinate our body movements. For example, we work the "left brain" for getting the logic of the step combinations correct; the "right brain" for interpreting the music and expressing our body in an artistic manner; the upper rear portion of the brain for interpreting spatial relationships; and the lower part of the brain for memorizing the steps. Even some studies have shown that classical music used in ballet lessons stimulates the alpha waves

therefore enhancing thinking and learning. Ballet is a wonderful way to relieve stress and relax. When you perform, your focus shifts to concentrating on each movement and the placement of your legs and arms. When I dance, I do not need to find the right words. It's just direct, intuitive expression.

Ballet is a highly aesthetic art. Those who have picked up ballet as a hobby or as a way to keep fit usually end up being in love or even obsessed with the art genre. Your musicality is also likely to improve over time as you learn to “dance” with music instead of just counting the beats. You will also learn to better appreciate classical music.

Whether you end up on the stage or not, the ballet classes do provide a chance for you to "perform," even if it is only for the teacher, your classmates, and yourself. If you are sold on joining an adult ballet class by now, I can guarantee that you will be reaping all its benefits, even if you simply start off with the intent of keeping fit. And along the way, you will get to make friends in a niche field - friends who are as addicted as you are with this art genre.

The best way to learn and appreciate ballet is to take a class. You may not see yourself naturally suited for ballet, but through a combination of conditioning and natural abilities, you could be capable of developing your ballet abilities. Do not be intimidated by all the things you have to pay attention to!! So get started now, enjoy the experience, and develop yourself as well as you can!!

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