

# SPEAKING OF DANCING...

## *Tips, Tricks, and Hints for Happy Dancing*

by Gigi Jensen

My intention with these occasional offerings to the readers of this fine magazine is to share some of what I've learned over the years that may be useful to you, whether you are an experienced dancer or a newbie. As my mother always says, "You learn something new every day."



### **First up: Healthy Dancing**

If you're dancing, you're exercising. Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives many definitions, but the three that explain my point best are: "...regular or repeated use of a faculty or bodily organ; bodily exertion for the sake of developing and maintaining physical fitness; and something performed or practiced in order to develop, improve, or display a specific capability or skill." That pretty much sums up folk dancers. My question for you is: are you treating your body with the respect it deserves?

NOTE: These suggestions do not constitute medical advice. Follow your doctor's recommendations for your needs.

### **Before dancing:**

- Be rested so you can put the energy into your dancing.
- Be well hydrated with water or other non-alcoholic beverages.
- Remember to use any supportive gear your body requires. Is it worth dancing without it and risk getting hurt?
- Check your shoes for wear and tear. Broken laces or floppy soles are an accident waiting to happen.
- Warm up your legs and feet before you start dancing. Move your body in different ways. For some of us, just getting those shoes tied counts.

### **While dancing:**

- Take a break when you're tired. Tired dancers are a risk to themselves and the others around them.

- Stretch every now and then since muscles get tight with repetitive motion.
- Stay hydrated. Eat a small snack if you need to.
- Dance within your own abilities. Just because someone else can kick high doesn't mean you should. Is turning difficult? Then don't.

### **When you get home:**

- Store your shoes where they will get good air circulation so they can dry out. One of my teachers kept his on the window sill with the window cracked slightly. Never store them in a plastic bag or shoe bag. They grow bacteria.
- If you have the luxury of two pairs of shoes, alternate them. They have a chance to resume some of their structural integrity and will last longer.
- Stretch. That means your back and neck muscles as well as your legs, ankles, feet.
- Here's a trick I learned from another dancer: If your feet are a bit swollen, rest them above the level of your heart. The couch or recliner are ideal for this. (Good luck staying awake.)

It's good to remember that your body needs to enjoy dancing as much as your soul so treat it well.

Next up we'll be discussing how to use social media to support your dance.

Happy Dancing!

