

# CMBA HONOR SOCIETY EDITORIAL

## Why Everyone Should Try Dance

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I used to try and sell ballet like I was an insurance salesman. Whenever one of my classmates would make the mistake of mentioning ballet or dance in general, I was the first one to sing its praises. I am fully confident that none of my annoyed peers took my advice but I enjoyed badgering them about the benefits of ballet. These include but are definitely not limited to increased physical ability and mobility, socially accepted manners, and a balanced life.

I am 100% certain that the reader has seen images or videos (perhaps on social media) of dancers flying through the air in a split. Dancers work from a young age to be able to gracefully leap across the stage and whip out multiple turns lightning fast. By working on flexibility, strength, balance, and endurance, dancers turn out to be incredible athletes. Dancers can boast strong ankles, legs, and an especially strong core. They have above-average balance and you've seen the flexibility that's required for a dancer. Even taking a couple ballet classes will improve your overall fitness and your awareness of muscles.

Ballet dancers aren't the only ones to advocate strongly for the physical benefits of ballet. Many professional football players take ballet classes as a way to crosstrain and prevent injury. Steve McLendon of the New York Jets takes classes to help with balance and to increase muscle in his legs. "It keeps you injury-free — your ankles, keeps your feet strong, your toes strong; you get away from knee injuries," he told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in 2013. Take it from a professional: ballet is good for your body.

When I started ballet 12 years ago I expected to become a professional ballerina. That meant (in my 5 year old mind) that I would fly across the stage with strength and grace. However, what I didn't expect was the manners I would have to learn along the way. Not where-to-put-the-silverware manners but more like cover-your-mouth-when-you-yawn and be-quiet-when-the-teacher-is-talking manners. I learned silverware manners from my mom but I learned important social manners from my ballet teachers. They taught me not to talk when the teacher is talking before my teachers at school did. That life skill has helped me in school and other social settings immensely. Another skill my ballet teachers taught me was that I need to cover my mouth when I yawn. Seems silly right? Kind of, yeah. But it does

show respect. Yawning is a sign of boredom and fatigue, and the simple act of covering up one's yawn is a deep sign of respect for the speaker. Those simple acts are very useful in my life but the best manner ballet taught me was to refrain from crossing my arms. Another gesture that can be taken as a sign of disrespect. I can almost guarantee that I would not have learned some of these useful mannerisms without ballet.

Another thing I've learned from ballet is how to hold myself. Constantly lifting up and practicing good posture was super helpful to my back, neck, etc. Sitting at a desk for 8 hours of school can be hard on your spine but ballet can help relieve slouching and improve how one stands. Especially since people are using phones more and therefore hunching over to look at them often, the stretching and lifting up of your upper back is awesome for you.

The last reason why I think everyone should give dance a shot is the sense of self I have from dance. Respecting yourself and knowing your boundaries is a skill not everyone has. I have found that most if not all dancers are very in tune with not only their bodies but with their mental health as well. Knowing how far to push yourself in terms of a balanced life is crucial to one's success. For example having a day of school work balanced out with a day with friends. Some people I know that don't dance aren't as good at balancing their lives as they tend to focus way too much on socializing and not enough on school work. Dancers are more adept at balancing their lives because they have to have the ability to know how much force to put into their movements. This may not seem like a direct correlation, but the mental capacity to know how to balance your life and how much energy you need are very similar. Think of different commitments (like friends and school work) as parts of the body. Imagine doing a pirouette. Exerting too much force can easily cause you to lose control. Same thing with life. Putting too much energy into socializing will leave you with mounds of homework and a bad grade in class. However, putting in enough force for you to turn and be stabilized will determine a good pirouette. Putting in enough time for school work and other commitments as well as friends will keep your life balanced.

If you get anything at all from this essay, it's the fact that there are countless perks to dance that relate to more than just pirouettes and plies. The physical, social, and mental benefits are incredibly helpful in everyday life. Remember ballet the next time you cover your mouth when you yawn.