

PUT *Ballroom Dancing...*

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“Dancing with the Stars” shows us that it’s now “hip to be healthy!” It is no secret that the benefits of overall wellness should be enough reason for anyone to take up the hobby and/or sport of ballroom dancing. From memory gain and weight loss to lower blood pressure and increased stamina, the amount of positive health gauges attributed to the sport has helped to increase the number of adult dancers throughout the country, but what about those that are under 18 or in college?

Are the health benefits of dancing wasted upon those who are in youth and collegiate divisions?

Absolutely not.

Today’s dancers are pushing the boundaries of arts and athleticism. They are not only taking advantage of the wellness partnered with the sport but have also found ways to take the “soft skills” and professionalism of their own personal development to give them an edge in the work place.

What are the positive “professional developments” of ballroom dancing for youth and collegiate dancers?

Goal Setting:

Whether it’s a competition, a skill level, or a certain step to master, it’s important that all dancers have goals set with deadlines to meet them. Managers and workers alike are constantly under deadlines and the ability to meet a deadline while exceeding your own expectations is imperative to today’s workforce.

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Work Ethic and Dedication:

If you want to be successful in the workforce, you have to be dedicated to your craft. We know that the youth dancers begin at an early age, but even if you start dancing at the collegiate level, your work ethic has to match the goal you are setting or you will never achieve the success you desire. Do you want to be the best social dancer you can be, do you want to be an amateur champion, do you want to be a world champion? – the sky is the limit but you have to work for it. Any type of promotion is only possible through hard work and dedication to your craft.

Leadership and Team Building:

We all know that ballroom dancing partnerships are a TEAM of two (and if you are in formation team – the number can be much higher) and being able to work successfully in a team atmosphere is what all companies are looking for today. Being able to lead (or back lead) and follow will develop future managers and CEOs in deciding when to take control of a situation and when to take a “step” back and allow another to lead.

Following Directions and Taking Constructive Criticism:

Everyone has differences of opinion. Whether it’s a routine you have mastered or a proposal you are taking to your manager, your vision is not always what the one reviewing your work is looking for. Social dance partners might need more lead or follow and coaches often see past our current knowledge and can view our true potential - but we often take criticism as negative or cold-hearted. It’s important that today’s dancers realize that their best can only be achieved through trial and error. There will always be different ways to look at something, especially in such a subjective sport as ballroom dancing.

On-site Problem Solving and Creativity:

What do you do in a crisis and how do you make sure that the problem is solved - without the public knowing that there was ever a problem at all? Whether you miss a connection or “draw a blank” in the middle of a routine, it’s not the fact that the problem happened that is a measure of your skill but how well you fixed the problem! Picking up the pieces with creativity and confidence can improve almost any situation.

Performance Ability:

Do you know when to “turn it on” and how to “sell it?” Young dancers today must be confident in their skill, image, knowledge and must be able to present it to an audience – all while adding multiple levels of emotion throughout their performance. They must act and look as professional as possible at all times, as even being off the floor they are judged on their actions and composure. Excelling in presentations and setting the standard for office protocol should not be a problem for today’s youth dancers.

As a collegiate and/or youth dancer, they have the amazing opportunity to build a network of peers through competitions, social dances, and club organizations. This is an invaluable chance to create a nationwide support group for friends, internships, jobs, social connections, and of course possible dance partners!

To all those collegiate and youth dancers – think about how you are developing yourselves through your dancing. Are you the same person today as when you began to dance? Think about the items mentioned above and find ways to start “dancing toward your future success!”

To all of you who are employers or managers, wouldn’t you want to hire someone with the above attributes?

Maybe next time you review an application, check first to see if they are a member of USA Dance! ■