

Boquete Health & Hospice



*The Magic of Music
Healing the Heart, Body & Soul*

Shake Your Booty! Wellness Benefits of Moving to the Music!

By Art Blevins & Val Strahl

The wellness benefits of music launch into another dimension when we are not just listening to the music, but actually moving to the music. Movement to music is currently used as therapy for developmental disorders like Down's syndrome, mood disorders such as depression, and neurological disorders as in the case of schizophrenia, Parkinson's, and dementia. There are numerous wellness benefits for healthy individuals as well. Whether walking, working out at the gym, or dancing, the combination of physical exercise with the positive power of music can improve our physical, mental, and emotional health. [1] These wellness benefits include the following.

- Strengthens the brain – including memory and cognitive function [1,2,3]
- Improves the body's strength and endurance [4]
- Facilitates weight loss [4]
- Helps maintain a healthy heart and respiratory system [4]
- Boosts the immune system [4]
- Lowers blood pressure and improves circulation [4]
- Reduces arthritis pain [4]
- Improves one's mood, and decreases depression and anxiety [1,5]
- Improves balance, flexibility, and dexterity [2, 3,4]
- Lowers the risk of dementia [1]
- Increases metabolism [4]
- Improves posture [4]
- Slows the effects of the aging process [2,3]

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- Increases sex drive [4]

Also, with dancing, the social connections help to make you feel happy, due to the endorphins that are being produced when you interact with like-minded people — laughing, chatting, and enjoying time together. Plus, it's just plain fun!

Just Do It!

You, too, can realize these wellness benefits. But in order to do so, it's not enough simply to read about these things, you actually have to do them. In this respect, it's a lot like the wellness benefits of diet or exercise. We can't reap the benefits by sitting on the couch reading or thinking about it. We actually have to get off the couch and do something.

Some people think "I can't move along with music. I don't have rhythm." If you say this to yourself, you are simply mistaken. You naturally have rhythm – it's what your body is – from your heartbeat to breathing to walking and a myriad of other bodily functions. Your very being is movement and rhythm. And by timing our movements to music, we are simply fine tuning this natural rhythm that we already have.

How can you start doing it yourself? Add music to your favorite workout: walking, jogging, biking, working out at the gym, etc. While walking, time your steps with the music – pick music that is around 100 steps (beats) per minute to reap the highest benefits. [6] With any exercise, pick music that is energetic and motivating for you. Music distracts people from pain and fatigue, elevates mood, increases endurance, reduces perceived effort and promotes metabolic efficiency. When listening to music, people run farther, bike longer and swim faster than usual—often without realizing it. In a 2012 review of the research, Costas Karageorghis of Brunel University in London, one of the world's leading experts on the psychology of exercise music, wrote that music is "a type of legal performance-enhancing drug." And this is backed up by "USA Track & Field", the national governing body for distance racing, which has banned athletes from using portable music players in order "to ensure safety and to prevent runners from having a competitive edge." [7]

Looking for something that's more fun than your usual exercise routine? Why not try dancing? Of course you can turn on the music wherever you are to simultaneously enjoy life and improve your health and wellness. Check out the playlists below if you want to shake your booty in the privacy of your own home. And for a little added motivation, check out [this delightful video!](#)

Playlists for Dancing

- [Motown Workout Mix](#)
- [Pop Latino Mix](#)
- [50's Dance Music Hits Playlist – Greatest 1950's Dance Songs](#)
- [60's Dance Hits](#)

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- [Best of 70's Disco](#)
- [80's Party Music](#)
- [Ecstatic Dance Music - World](#)
- [Shuffle Dancing](#)

Dancing in Boquete

For those interested in more than they can get at home, what follows is a list of dance opportunities currently available right here in Boquete.

- Belly Dance Class – Saroya Kendrick
 - What is it? Belly dancing, beginners welcome
 - Time & Place: Thursdays at 3pm at Stone Cabins (Next to Casa Vieja)
 - Cost: \$5
 - Contact Info:
 - Phone/WhatsApp: 6461-1871
 - Email: Saroya_Atlanta@yahoo.com
 - Websites:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/bellydanceboquete>
 - <https://www.saroyadance.com/>
- Line Dancing with Latin Style Music – Paul Cordero
 - What is it? Line dancing, mostly beginner and beginner plus
 - Time & Place: 3:30pm Mondays at Stone Cabins (Next to Casa Vieja); 4pm Fridays at Mesa Azul
 - Cost: \$5
 - Contact Info:
 - Phone/WhatsApp 6440-4000
 - Email: dr.pc@instruction.com
- Zumba & Mat Pilates - Gina Wong
 - What is it? 45 min Zumba, 30 min mat pilates, plus a snack after class
 - Time & Place: Saturday Aug 14 9-10:30am at Hotel Ladera
 - Cost: \$10
 - Contact Info:
 - Phone/WhatsApp 6437-0565

If you like more informal dancing, there are other opportunities to shake your booty to the music of local Boquete bands: Hashtag, Monkey Nerve, Café Con Leche, Still Kickin', Three Days Rain, Power Trius, Manex Trio, Adhi & Dario, Tim Connolly, Scott McConachie, Area51, and

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others. Also, be sure to check out local DJ Mike Webber! If he can't make you get up and boogie, you might need a defibrillator! Check local listings such as the "Boquete Music Calendar" group on Facebook for specific times and dates.

Note: Boquete Health & Hospice encourages everyone in public to abide by mask and social distancing guidelines to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Backing It Up With Science

Need the proof before you gain the confidence to actually do it? Read on. What follows are more details from the scientific research regarding the benefits of music and movement that are listed earlier in this article.

I. Research on Exercising with Music

Listening to music while you walk:

- Walking speed is a reflection of health and fitness and is a good predictor of how well and how long you may live. [8]
- Although your walking ability can change with age, you can take steps to avoid or minimize mobility problems. [8]
- Research shows that walking to a steady beat or music helps improve walking speed, stride length, walk rhythm and symmetry. [8]
- Music helps motivate you. It causes the brain to release dopamine, a brain chemical that assists in regulating motivation and goal-oriented behavior. [9]
- Choose music you like with a distinct and steady rhythm, making sure the volume still allows you to hear traffic and other noise around you. [8]

Music will also transform and improve your running. According to a study by Dr. Coastas Karageorghis, in his book "Inside Sports Psychology", listening to music while you run can positively affect your performance by 15%. Not only is music good to listen to, in which to distract yourself from getting bored during a long, hard, intensive workout but it also helps to improve your mood. Therefore, if you are in a good state of mind when you are working out you will be less likely to cave into the voice within your head telling you to give up. Numerous studies suggest that the repetitive beat while you run synchronizes brain waves in ways that help you move to the music. [10]

Regarding other exercises, such as working out at the gym, music can promote peak performance and contribute to a satisfying workout. [10] Two of the most important qualities of workout music are tempo—or speed—and what psychologists call rhythm response, which is more or less how much a song makes you want to boogie. [7]

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II. Research on Dancing to the Music

From the Harvard report "Music and Health": Falling is a serious medical problem, particularly for people over 65; in fact, one of every three senior citizens suffers at least one fall during the course of a year. Can music help? A 2011 study says it can. The subjects were 134 men and women 65 and older who were at risk of falling but who were free of major neurologic and orthopedic problems that would limit walking. Half the volunteers were randomly assigned to a program that trained them to walk and perform various movements in time to music, while the other people continued their usual activities. At the end of six months, the "dancers" exhibited better gait and balance than their peers — and they also experienced 54% fewer falls. Similar programs of movement to music appear to improve the mobility of patients with Parkinson's disease. [11]

Dancing Gets Your Brain and Body Involved

Some workouts, like running on a treadmill or spinning, you can do and completely turn your brain off. When you exercise in ways that disengage your brain from actively participating, you're getting the physical benefits of increased blood flow and oxygen to the brain and the release of feel-good, stress-reducing neurochemicals, but you're losing out on cognitive gains. Studies using PET imaging have identified regions of the brain that contribute to dance learning and performance. These regions include the motor cortex, somatosensory cortex, basal ganglia, and cerebellum. [1]

Dancing Activates the Brain's Reward Center

Dancing combines the therapeutic power of music with physical activity. As with any cardio-based workout, dancing causes the release of feel-good neurochemicals, endorphins. When you combine dance and music, you get the added bonus of activating the primal reward centers in the brain. One study concluded that dance constitutes a "pleasure double play" in your brain. Music stimulates the brain's reward centers, while dance activates its sensory and motor circuits. [1] In a study conducted at the University of Derby, the psychologists worked with people who were suffering from depression. These people received salsa lessons for a period of nine weeks. The improvements began to be appreciated after four weeks and, after finishing the course, the participants said they had fewer negative thoughts, better concentration and a greater sense of peace and tranquility. [5] Not only does dancing stimulate the reward circuit in your brain, but it also activates the hippocampus. The hippocampus is the part of the brain primarily responsible for emotions and memory. Whenever you dance, it can subconsciously remind you of good feelings at other times when doing it, like at your wedding or just having a good time with friends. [1]

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Dance Lowers Dementia Risk

Keeping the hippocampus engaged is key for preventing cognitive decline and dementia. One study found that when people between the ages of 63 and 80 were taught dance moves, it had a lasting effect on their brain's neuroplasticity — the formation of new neural connections. Another study investigated the effect various leisure activities had on the risk of dementia in the elderly. The researchers looked at the effects of 11 different kinds of physical activity, including cycling, golf, swimming, and tennis. Of all the activities studied, only dance lowered participants' risk of dementia. According to the researchers, dancing uniquely combines stimulation from physical and mental effort as well as social interaction. [1]

Dancing Decreases Depression and Anxiety

Because dance is both a physical and emotional release, it's ideal for people experiencing stress, depression, and anxiety. Studies show that dance, in particular, can decrease anxiety and boost mood more than other physical outlets. One study involving teenagers with depression, anxiety, and stress found that those who attended dance classes two days per week showed significant improvement in their psychosomatic symptoms and self-reported that they felt happier. Other research found that when people with depression participated in salsa dancing, they had fewer negative thoughts, better concentration, and an improved sense of tranquility. [1,5]

Dancing Reverses the Signs of Aging in the Brain

As we grow older we suffer a decline in mental and physical fitness, which can be made worse by conditions like Alzheimer's disease. A study, published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, shows that older people who routinely partake in physical exercise can reverse the signs of aging in the brain, and dancing has the most profound effect. "Exercise has the beneficial effect of slowing down or even counteracting age-related decline in mental and physical capacity," says Dr Kathrin Rehfeld, lead author of the study, based at the German center for Neurodegenerative Diseases, Magdeburg, Germany. "In this study, we show that two different types of physical exercise (dancing and endurance training) both increase the area of the brain that declines with age. In comparison, it was only dancing that led to noticeable behavioral changes in terms of improved balance." Elderly volunteers, with an average age of 68, were recruited to the study and assigned either an eighteen-month weekly course of learning dance routines, or endurance and flexibility training. Both groups showed an increase in the hippocampus region of the brain. This is important because this area can be prone to age-related decline and is affected by diseases like Alzheimer's. It also plays a key role in memory and learning, as well as keeping one's balance. [3]

While previous research has shown that physical exercise can combat age-related brain decline, it was not known if one type of exercise could be better than another. To assess this, the exercise routines given to the volunteers differed. The traditional fitness training program

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conducted mainly repetitive exercises, such as cycling or Nordic walking, but the dance group were challenged with something new each week. Dr Rehfeld explains, "We tried to provide our seniors in the dance group with constantly changing dance routines of different genres (Jazz, Square, Latin-American and Line Dance). Steps, arm-patterns, formations, speed and rhythms were changed every second week to keep them in a constant learning process. The most challenging aspect for them was to recall the routines under the pressure of time and without any cues from the instructor." These extra challenges are thought to account for the noticeable difference in balance displayed by those participants in the dancing group. [2, 3]

Dancing Can Help One Feel Happier, Live Longer and Look Younger

Various research suggests that dancing is the key to living longer and making yourself look younger. The research even claims that it is more effective than spending hours in the gym doing resistance exercises. What is the link between longevity and dance? As you age, your physical health declines and there are increasing limitations in your ability to participate in activities with high resistance levels or that require a lot of physical movement. The pain in the muscles and bones becomes more present as you age and while it is an inevitable process, the dance is capable of delaying it or at least reducing it. It's no secret that dancing can be therapeutic, which is why it's commonly used as a stress reliever. The upshot of this is that people who dance for a living are not only less stressed, but happier. Researchers from the Swedish Health Sciences Center found that dancing exponentially increases feelings of euphoria after analyzing the effects that dance had on the mental health of more than 100 participating women. There is no better way to stay young than by being stress free. [2]

When we dance our brain releases endorphins, hormones which can trigger neurotransmitters that create a feeling of comfort, relaxation, fun and power. Music and dance not only activate the sensory and motor circuits of our brain, but also the pleasure centers. Neuroscientists at Columbia University say that when we move in tune with the rhythm, the positive effects of music are amplified. Therefore, a little secret to make the most of the music is to synchronize our movements with the beat, so we will be doubling the pleasure. However, the magic of dancing cannot simply be reduced to brain chemistry. Dancing is also a social activity that allows us to connect with others, share experiences and meet new people, which has a very positive effect on our mental health. [5]

Conclusion

Listening to music has many wellness benefits. However, when we start to actively participate by moving our bodies with the music, the wellness benefits expand substantially. We hope you find the enthusiasm and confidence to jump in and try it for yourself! Get up, get energized, celebrate the moment and move to the music! And in the process improve your mental, physical and emotional well-being!

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We Welcome Your Feedback

Do you know of any more opportunities in Boquete to move to the music? Let us know! Email us at Music@boquetehealth.org

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