

My Personal Journey to Dancing and Beyond

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College Teachers, International Institute for Complementary Therapists, International Association of Professional Life Coaches, and Motivational Speakers Australia. Jeff is also an Ass. Member DTAA and Association of Integrative Coach-Therapist Professionals. Jeff has an extensive background in training and coaching teams within the corporate and small business environments. More recently his focus has expanded to address personal relationships. He now devotes a great deal of his time and energy towards working with individuals, couples, families and teams seeking to enhance and grow their relationships towards identified outcomes. In so doing, he draws upon a unique personal and professional development platform, Talent Dynamics, as well as ballroom dancing, to create difference for those he engages with.

Recently I discovered the Dance Movement Therapy Association Australasia, purely by chance, though most definitely by good fortune. It seemed to be an amazing body of professionals dedicated to using dance towards helping those in need to grow and develop, to enhance life, and to be as healthy as possible. What a brilliant mission, and one that attracted me. Why... because I had already begun a similar journey some time ago, not realising at the time the amount of work already being done by others in this field.

My story is an interesting one, and one that has taken me into areas I would never have considered some years ago. I would like to share some of the highlights here, if only to remind myself of my own adventures.

It all started much earlier, when I was fortunate enough to spend my days as a professional musician, travelling the countryside and experiencing the “high life”. But as life would have it, I grew older and my direction began to change ... and music fell more into the background. However, it did allow me to experience so many things along the way, all of which have stayed with me to this day, and all of which have helped shape me into the person I now present to, and share with, the world.

Back in the real world, after gaining my qualifications in psychology I entered the field of “coaching”, which in reality became simply training others. I employed all the ‘usual’ strategies and resources, and enjoyed moderate success. But all along I felt there was something missing. I discovered the difference between ‘passion’ and ‘purpose’. I realised that for me passion was simply what a person liked doing, while purpose was essentially what a person was put here to do. A big difference in philosophy, and one I stand by wholeheartedly. So, I was looking for my purpose, and as luck would have it, a couple of years ago I was introduced to a program entitled Talent Dynamics. This amazing personal development program is based on the i-Ching and draws upon so much wisdom and science that I was immediately sold – I had to know more. My quest led me to studying this material here in Australia, where I went as far as I could in attaining the knowledge open to me. I gained my basic formal accreditation, and was very excited to be able to work with people as they addressed their own work towards growth and change. My thirst to know and experience more led me to Bali and then to England, where I was fortunate enough to study under one of the leading specialists in Talent Dynamics. I came away with a level of understanding that was profound, and a strong desire to devote my time to sharing what I had learned with those in need.

Essentially, because this is not the place to dig too deep, Talent Dynamics (the i-Ching) focuses on assisting people identify and appreciate who

they really are. It seeks to implement strategies such as 'value', 'trust', 'flow' and 'leverage' in people (individuals of all ages, couples, families and teams), though not in the context mainstream society would understand. Utilising the i-Ching has changed my view on the world. It has given me the grounding for the development of my purpose. I would love to share more about this with those of you who wish to know more, and I invite people to contact me for a discussion on the potential impact of assimilating this in their existing work with clients.

But I would like to return to earlier times, and to share another part of my story. Whilst no longer on the stage, I was lucky enough to become involved with ballroom dancing, and began writing monthly articles for a national dance magazine on the emotional and mental factors behind success in dancing. I had no intention though, at that time, of ever being a dancer. Not for me. Too 'full on', too showy, too intense. Too everything else I could think of to avoid 'dancing'. I guess I was displaying signs of 'typical Australian male', although it seems looking back that my adventures as a musician had slipped my mind. But fortunately, eventually I was coerced into dancing, and it was time to put into practice all the mental and emotional things I had been preaching to others all this time. After all, it was only dancing. How hard could it be? Soon I found out! Being on a stage as part of a group in front of thousands was so much easier than being on the floor with only one other person, and nowhere to hide! I soon began to realise all I wrote about really was more than just words ... it had real power to influence how I thought, how I engaged with myself and others ... or in other words, how I performed in a relatively new (to me) environment.

To cut a long story short, through hard work and self-application I ended up dancing New Vogue (my favourite style of ballroom) at the highest level with a partner who had been ranked in the top six in the country.

So, to tie the story together. We have arrived at the present, and the two main reasons behind why I am proud to be an associate member of this amazing association – dance and Talent Dynamics.

As I mentioned above, as I began the task of learning the 'physical act' of dance I quickly discovered how influential the mind and emotions are within the process. I realised firsthand the strong bond between the physical and the thinking aspects of dance. This led me to

considering how dance could be a strong 'player' in my work with people seeking change and growth, and the bigger question ... what can dancing give people that goes way beyond the physical enjoyment of movement?

Such questions led me to begin developing the art of dance in environments other than the dance community. And here's why.

I believe individuals can enjoy a full and productive life right through to old age, based on the premise that much of the beliefs, attitudes and motivators for people that can assist them lead a successful life can be learned, and learning through dance is a novel and unique way that provides learning through involvement and fun. More so, it is the only activity scientifically proven to engage every part of the human existence ... body, mind, emotion and spirit.



In fact, where possible I now use dance in my work with people in the corporate world, teenagers and older folk. Eventually I hope to use dance with those who live with a physical or mental disability, and to help these people, to gain more out of their lives and stay active much longer.

We now know that we never stop learning. We retain the ability to learn right into old age. That means that at any age we can grow or regain or maintain a more 'youthful' approach to life, work and general well-being. The fact that neurons in the brain can actually grow as a result of learning relates nicely to dancing. To dance involves so many aspects of our mental, emotional and physical being as well as our ability to learn.

A 21 year study of senior citizens in America, "Leisure Activities and the Risk of Dementia in the Elderly" funded by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City (and

published in the New York Journal of Medicine March 2003) highlighted the following benefits of engaging in dance:

- Encourages left and right side brain usage, helping to lessen the likelihood of early onset of illnesses such as Alzheimer's.
- Sharpens sensory acuity.
- Assists with mental focus and clarity by exercising cognitive processes.
- Enables an increasing ability to learn new things.
- Facilitates heightened existing memory plus the ability to remember new things better.
- Allows for more dynamic and 'rapid fire' decision making, through the creation of new neural pathways.
- Encourages the brain to seek new stimulation, which in turn encourages an active mind, therefore encouraging greater productivity.
- Reduces stress and depression.
- Increases energy and serotonin levels in the body.
- Improves flexibility, strength, balance and endurance.
- Strengthens bone structures and increase cardiovascular health.
- Assists the retention and maintenance of general well-being (including posture etc).

To prove the point, this study of senior citizens in America focused on what popular activities had the capacity of helping reduce the risk of dementia in older people. The findings?

- **0%** ➡ cycling, swimming, playing golf
- **36%** ➡ reading
- **47%** ➡ doing crossword puzzles at least four times a week
- **76%** ➡ dancing frequently

Interesting? I think so. Also interesting ... dancing is probably the only activity that occurs all year round and is enjoyed by people of all ages, from young kids to those in their seventies (and some beyond). And it doesn't matter how good they are, or what dance style they engage in. It is the act of dancing and what it demands from the body and mind ... and gives back ... that creates the potential for a long and healthy life.

This can extend beyond assisting people who are ageing or in need of specific therapeutic support, to being of benefit to mainstream society seeking

enhanced performance in a chosen environment. It even gave me a pathway into the corporate world, using dance as a medium to deliver strategies that manifest in:

self-belief	focus	awareness
belief in others	motivation	communication
confidence	self-esteem	image / presence

Imagine the value of a workforce embracing these key elements of personal performance within their work roles, and all with the aid of dancing. Incredible! I am proud to say that I now have a number of programs that intertwine the elements of dance with those of more traditional coaching. And, even more importantly, I use ballroom dancing as my medium rather than other forms of dancing that would require years of formal study. Thanks to various TV shows and musical productions, ballroom dancing has gained in popularity, making its introduction to people outside the dance world that little bit more 'friendly'.

But it doesn't stop there. Remember I mentioned earlier how I became fascinated with Talent Dynamics and the i-Ching? Well, that was my final piece of the puzzle, bringing Talent Dynamics in as a 'partner' with dance in the programs I was developing. Now I have specialised programs that have been built around Talent Dynamics, programs that intertwine dance within the content, and workshops that involve the two together with other aspects of my coaching that involve neuro linguistic programming and more traditional coaching methodologies.



For me, I believe we should all be aware of how 'lucky' we are to become involved in an activity such as dancing, in whatever form or genre

chosen. We should appreciate the advantages that accrue to those who choose this type of physical and mental activity, and be appreciative of how we can be of service to them as they strive to maintain and/or enhance their daily lives. But, I wonder how many of you have thought about actually using, specifically, ballroom dancing as a medium for work with your clients.



And how many realise the level of skill and mental acuity required to succeed in that form of dancing. And more so, how many will take the initiative and actually add ballroom dancing or even Talent Dynamics to their 'arsenal' of coaching strategies You see, I believe there

are so many more ways of reaching out to people than can be learned in formal study, and all we need to do is look outside our own world with open eyes and see. I did. And now my world has expanded as a result, both personally and professionally.

So, are you up for the challenge? I would love to hear from you if you are. If not, then perhaps down the track you may come across someone like me ... and then?

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Reference

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