

# The Healing Power of Dance

## I. History & Background

For many centuries, dance has served as an integral part of almost every culture and civilization. Some sources say that the oldest proof of the existence of dance can be found in India, where there are 9,000 year old cave paintings which illustrate dancing. Around 3300 B.C., dance became a more popular practice, as the Egyptians integrated dance in their religious ceremonies. This of course covers just a small speck of the history of dance.

In many cultures and ancient civilizations dance has served as entertainment, as a means of celebration and mourning, in ceremonies and rituals, as a way to share stories and legends, as a method of healing and as a method of expression.

Over the years, dance has evolved into many different branches such as, jazz, hip-hop, ballroom, ballet, West African, contemporary, river dancing, tap and swing. In today's mainstream society, it has become mostly known as a means of entertainment, art, and performance, but also as a source of healing.

## II. The Energy of Dance

Just like all things in the universe, dance is vibration. I see dance as a silent vibration in which each dance move carries different vibrations, each serving a particular purpose to move energy in, out and through the body. Dance is energy in expression, and our bodies are the instrument/vessel giving way for the energy to express itself. In its purest form, dance is a connection to the divine, and it is an authentic expression of the soul. Dance is also a form of moving meditation; it is medicine that creates deep shifts within us when done with intention.

One of the most important elements of dance is the music that propels the body to move. Whether we look at rhythm, melody, tone, or just the overall energy of the music separately or as one, these all play a part in how we express ourselves through movement.

The practice of dance holds so many benefits, but some of the best are that it can deepen our relationship with ourselves, heal trauma, release blockages, increase vitality, ground us in our bodies, raise our vibration and realign our connection to all that is. Today, I want to explore the healing power of dance, and how dancing can serve as a gateway for releasing unexpressed emotions, healing trauma and as a conversation with our divinity.

## III. Dance & Trauma

The dictionary defines trauma as “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.” There are many different levels of trauma, and when we do have these experiences, the consequences can range from anxiety, depression, PTSD, addictions, eating disorders, and physical illness to complete disconnection from life and loss of identity. These are just a few of the disturbances that can result from a traumatic experience. Yet, the beauty in all this is the miraculous transformation that can occur within an individual when they reconnect with their body through dance and movement.

When we experience trauma, the mind, body, and spirit become disconnected in a way, and movement becomes the gateway to regain that connection. Through the dance we have the opportunity to rediscover trust with our bodies and ourselves, and dance also becomes a great medium for processing uncomfortable emotions that are connected to the trauma. By moving the body consciously, we can also begin to integrate our memories and the energy of the trauma, which then allows us to see a bigger picture and perhaps a deeper meaning of the experience. We move from a state of fear and constriction to a state of flow and release.

Dance and movement are being used with all ages, from young children to seniors. It has been monumental for child soldiers in Sierra Leone, and it has transformed many with eating disorders and mental disorders. It truly is a powerful tool of shifting the vibrational patterns we live in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roxqkypXW6g>

## **IV. 5 Rhythms**

The 5 Rhythms is a unique and very dynamic movement practice that was created by an inspirational woman named Gabrielle Roth. The practice itself is very straightforward, yet it is a catalyst for deep healing, moving the dancer beyond the layers of self, beyond limiting beliefs and conditioning. It is meant to bring you back into the the body, while taking you on a journey of self discovery, expanded creativity and deeper connection.

The 5 Rhythms are Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical and Stillness. Although the practice is generally done in groups, it is still very personal and liberating. Each of these rhythms is expressed by each individual in their own way. Gabrielle Roth considered the 5 Rhythms as states of being and as a map to travel anywhere we want to go on all planes of consciousness: inner and outer, forward and back, physical, emotional, and intellectual being some of them. She also saw them as “markers” on the journey back to a more authentic self.

## **V. Flowing**

In the rhythm of flowing we have the opportunity to physically practice the art of being fluid in the body. This particular rhythm is the gateway to our inner truth, intuition and trust. It guides us to trust the flow of our energy, and it guides us to trust in that which can only be felt. The flowing movement creates a deeper relationship to our inner and outer world, allowing us to become more perceptive and receptive to our needs. This is where the connection begins. “Men and women that embody the Rhythm of flowing are supple, flexible, surrendered and trust their feet to lead them where they are meant to go.”

## **VI. Staccato**

The Staccato Rhythm promotes a physical connection with the power of masculine energy. While each Rhythm holds its own power, Staccato is “percussive, strong and the ruler of our linear world.” It allows us to build a connection to the outer world with a strong sense of being grounded and connected to how we feel. This is why they also say, “It is the gateway to the heart.” This Rhythm represents our fierce inner warrior and the values we hold. It also serves as a “teacher of boundaries”, as well as protecting our “fluid being”. “Visually a man or woman fully embodied in the Rhythm of Staccato is defined, clear, connected and not fearful of the transparent expression of their heart.”

## **VII. Chaos**

Through the Rhythm of Chaos we learn to completely release our bodies. The movements are fast, and we let our spines, head, arms, hips and feet move with no boundaries and no particular pattern. This Rhythm jolts us into the present moment, and it helps us gain freedom from our illusions. We get so immersed in the chaos that we begin to let go of all ideas of identity, only to discover a more “free, intuitive and creative being” that has been there all along. “Chaos is the gateway to the big mind. Dancing Chaos is the practice of going into the unknown, not fearing what's on the other side.” It's sweaty, messy and totally liberating. Perhaps that's why they call it the “break-through dance”.

## **VIII. Lyrical**

When we enter the Rhythm of Lyrical, it takes us through a practice of shifting out of Chaos. In this Rhythm we are offered a journey of “physical, energetic, emotional and spiritual dancing rebirth. It is here that we reconnect with our deepest soul's essence and break free from self-destructive patterns. Similar to the Flowing Rhythm in its fluidity, Lyrical, however, brings out more repetition and creativity from that re-alignment with our higher selves. It is an expansive dance of the soul. “We become light in our feet, like birds flying in the air, but make no mistake, in Lyrical we are grounded

and fully empowered.”

## **IX. Stillness**

This may be one of the more challenging Rhythms to embody, since we live in such a fast-paced physical world. The Rhythm of Stillness is not about sitting still, but it is about moving consistently, unpredictably and freely in a slow motion manner. This practice allows us to deepen our inner stillness as things around us change and transform. “Each time we dance into Stillness, we practice the art of making humble and mindful endings.” It is through Stillness that we carry ourselves to the “next wave or cycle”, whether that be a new day, a new relationship, a new year, or a new life cycle. This is a dance of deepening the connection to our inner wisdom, so that we can always revisit the infinite stillness that resides in and around us.

Gabrielle Roth once said, “Energy moves in waves. Waves move in patterns. Patterns move in rhythms. A human being is just that, energy, waves, patterns, rhythms. Nothing more. Nothing Less. A dance.” Every body is a dancer, dancing to the universal song of life. Whether we are dancing to recorded music or the subtle music of the universe, we are all in a way cosmic dancers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cYYzcTzm6Y>

## **X. My Personal Journey with Dance**

I chose to do my paper on the healing power of dance, because it is something I have experienced first hand. Moving my body to music raises my vibration. It allows me to feel emotions I have long buried deep within the darkest corners of my heart. It connects me to the energy of all that is, and gently guides me into a state of flow.

Video Examples:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BcvQOoxIHM1/?taken-by=journeytoall>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BW6Pjywlhzb/?taken-by=journeytoall>

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