

HEALTHY HOMEWORK

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"Dance isn't something that can be explained in words, it has to be danced."—Paige Arden

As a clinic focused on a holistic approach to health, patient responsibility is the essential element in creating an optimal health plan. We have created healthy homework that offers tools to challenge you in making positive changes in your lifestyle and possibly accelerate your level of healing. We feel that true health is not just physical comfort, but a holistic union of well being on all levels. This is why we present your homework focus in 3 different perspectives-body, mind and spirit. We will explore 3 different ways of approaching one singular subject. In this case we will look at dancing and 3 different ways to reap its benefits and possibly deepen your experience and enjoyment of this form of exercise. It is always important to remember that your healthcare is your own practice, so follow what feels best for you. This may mean pushing comfort zones at times and pulling back at others. Please experiment and enjoy this exercise program on all levels... mind, body and spirit.

This month's article:

Dancing-Work the body, ease the mind and delight the soul.



Body:

Through the ages there is one form of physical fitness and expression that humans have always enjoyed. Dancing incorporates many muscular groups (as you choose to let loose) and is often an excellent cardiovascular workout. From playing air guitar in your living room to ballroom dance classes, dancing offers many health benefits.

According to the Mayo Clinic, dancing can burn as many calories as walking, swimming or riding a bicycle. During a half-hour of sustained dancing you can burn between 200 and 400 calories. Depending how long you dance for and how hard you rock, dancing can help build the heart's strength and endurance, raising it's beat from 80 to 120 beats per minute.

Dancing makes good on the phrase "use it before you lose it." It is a weight bearing exercise, which helps to strengthen your weight bearing bones (tibia, fibula and femur). This can help prevent the loss of bone mass which causes osteoporosis. Using the joints in a controlled manner through regular exer-

cise is the best way to avoid arthritis and remedy joint discomfort according to the American Journal of Medicine. The rotating motion often used in dance can help the spread of synovial fluid to the connective tissue of joints. This is highly beneficial to the long term health of your joints-so don't be afraid to move those hips!

Homework:

As James Brown, the Godfather of soul says: "Get up off of that thing and dance, you'll feel better!"

It could be turning up the radio while you're cooking, going to a social dance or signing up for dance classes-however your inspired to do it, initiate some dancing into your life. There are so many excuses we use to keep ourselves from moving to the beat, it may be two left feet, tone deafness or no inner rhythm - your homework is to do it anyway! Taking a dance class can be a great way to begin developing your sense of movement and provide a regular source of physical activity. There are many social dance communities that can offer an opportunity for regular ho-downs and provide a group to encourage you to keep going! Dancing has a low risk factor for injury, depending how much gusto you put into it. If you have heart disease or other medical conditions that could be effected by this type of activity, consult your doctor before seeing how low you can go. Otherwise, prior to going up into a full-on break down, it is always wise to warm up with a few stretches and simple steps to ease your body into activity. Remember to know your limits and take a break if you need to, this can help you to avoid strained muscles and fatigue - you may need to work up to dancing the night away! Wherever you find it, the challenge is to feel the funk and move with it - it's a fun and flexible form of activity that can reward with health on all levels.

Mind:

Allowing your body to have fun while dancing can have many benefits on your state of mind. The first and foremost is creating a sense of enjoyment! Dancing releases endorphins- hormones produced by your body, which naturally enhance your mood and bring you to a more positive state of mind. If you choose to take your dancing practice beyond your living room hardwood, the social aspect of dance can offer an opportunity to connect and bring a sense of community with others. Adding other people into your dancing equation can increase your fun ratios, it's easier to go there when others have already arrived and have lots of room for

more. Dancing with a partner can offer an opportunity to experience a feeling of intimacy and a new mindfulness towards each other's movements.

If your mind is the busy and distracted type, dancing can provide a space to refine your focus with the singular act of moving your body. If it's your own freestyle or a strict dance move, dancing can demand a form of concentration on steps that may give a new perspective of where 'two left feet' come from. Maybe it's your mind rather than your body! The liberating experience of dancing can help increase self-esteem and bring lightness to your outlook on life.

Homework:

Samuel Beckett states it simply: "Dance first. Think later".

Many times it is our mind that keeps us off the dance floor. A variety of reasons are often ready to give a convincing case towards the position of staying seated on the sidelines. This kind of limiting thought towards dancing can be a reflection of other places we don't allow ourselves to 'let go' in our life. Your homework is to challenge your mental barriers and move through them. Whether it's a disbelief in your ability, a resistance to make a time commitment or a feeling of self-consciousness – here is an opportunity to break through! Dancing can be as easy as hopping up and down or swaying side to side. What do you think really makes it the most challenging? Your mind may feel like it is the ruling factor in your life, but wait until you get dancing and you'll see what your body (and your spirit) has to respond to that notion! Allowing your natural sense of physical movement to come through can be very physically liberating from the regular constraints of every day groove. Dancing can offer a renewed sense of your body and help to let go of the everyday stress that can accumulate. However it looks or feels for you, allow your doubts and self-constraints melt away and offer your mind a liberating experience. Dancing, to whatever degree, can allow our mind to take a break from chatter and enjoy the ride. It's only up to you to say yes.

Spirit:

Throughout the ages, the power of dance is a common thread that has woven through the many ancient tribes of the globe to connect with the spirit world. To ignite energies of animals, the earth's forces or the guidance of the gods, dancing

has been seen as a powerful channel for connecting with the realm of the unseen. In relevance to our own experience of dancing, this land of the unseen can be experienced through the expression of our spirit. When dancing, especially when it's from our own free flowing movement, another force has the opportunity to move thorough us. Dancing is an important art form that gives us an open canvas to create our own physical symphony...or mosh pit, depending what mood you are in. It can be a vital tool for release and self-expression, beyond how it looks, it's more of a sensory experience. You can feel like 'poetry in motion'.

Homework:

Fredric Nietzsche said this of the spirit of dancing: "I would only believe in a god that knows how to dance."

If dancing is an art then within each one of us lies a distinct artistic spark. Your homework is to ignite your spark while dancing. Sound like a big assignment? It doesn't need to be, because it's easiest when you don't try. Once you have worked your homework for your mind and let go and let loose, your inner creative urges won't be able to help themselves to sneak out and have a whirl. This is the playtime of your spirit. Out of movement emerges joy, fun and expression. When your spirit takes hold, time melts away and we usually have experiences we rarely forget. Recognize the need within you to express the unseen part of you. This assignment is not isolated to dancing beautifully or technically supreme, it extends to the movement of all aspects of you. There are many personalities of dance for whatever sentiment needs to be represented. The playing field is never closed to your own original experience.

With anything in life, most importantly your spirit, it is your intention that will dictate the experience. In this case, approach your dancing with an intention of openness. Try to put your judgement aside and see what amazing things will emerge. You are no exception to the rule. In every body, there is a spirit that knows how to dance.

We hope you enjoy the benefit and beauty of dance and may you move and be moved, body, mind and spirit.