

You CAN Learn to Dance; We Can Help!!!

By Kaye West

Last spring Larry Caves and I taught a series of *free* social dance classes called “**Walk In,... Dance Out.**” We will repeat this in a series of five evenings beginning September 28, sponsored by the Shall We Round Dance Club. We invite all interested in learning to dance or improving their dancing to attend. Those already dancing are invited to participate as mentors to assist the newer dancers.

It has been said, “Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly..... until you can do it well.” That is a generalization which applies to everything, including learning to walk, talk, read, ride a bicycle, play golf or bridge, etc. Dancing, too, takes repetition and practice. Some contend that it takes hundreds of repetitions for something to begin to feel “natural.”

In learning to dance, there are basic concepts to learn, rhythm patterns to master, components to appropriate, and one must also learn to dance in close proximity and in synchronization with another human being. While initially it may seem like a lot to learn, *everyone* can learn to dance *when they stick with it*. The first time for *any* new learning requires that pathways in the brain must be forged. In each successive time of review, the pathway becomes more and more familiar and is more easily traversed.

As people learn to dance, initially they operate through their short-term memory. In time, and with sufficient practice, they are able to transfer that new learning to their long-term memory. At that stage, dancers typically make “mistakes” which they previously did not make. It is important to realize that they are moving to a deeper level of mastery so the dancing is more “automatic.”

Learning just the first pattern in Social Foxtrot on the first evening (walk, walk, side-close with four changes of weight over six beats, taking weight on counts 1, 3, 5, and 6) allows one to use information one has used for decades (walking forward and walking to the side as when moving in a crowded movie theater to one’s seat) in a rhythmic pattern called Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick (SSQQ) since a Slow takes two beats (1-2 and 3-4) and a Quick takes one beat (5 and 6).

Mastering just that *one* pattern allows one to use it to dance repetitively on the social dance floor since most dance music supports that rhythm. Hence, one can **Walk In** to the class and **Dance Out** the very first class!

Each of the five evenings will feature a different dance rhythm (Social Foxtrot, Single Swing, Waltz, Rumba, and Cha Cha). Following awareness of the numeric pattern used for that dance rhythm, a limited number of basic patterns will be presented. These patterns not only provide some variety but also can be done in random order.

There may be cuing from the instructor initially so that dancers concentrate first on just doing the patterns, then the Leads are invited to select the sequence of patterns they dance with their partner, since in social dancing all dancers “do their own thing” on the dance floor instead

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of all doing the same pattern cued by a leader which is common in round dancing (where interested dancers can learn even more patterns and rhythms with structured practice!).

The second part of each class will feature supplemental information including elements of body awareness so dancers are able to understand the patterns more thoroughly so they can dance them more smoothly.

On successive weeks, the previous patterns will be reviewed for a half hour prior to the beginning of the new class. The instructors will be available after class to answer additional questions.

Also explanatory information will be available via the internet immediately so dancers can review the material and practice it at their leisure (even practicing in their imagination is helpful!). The descriptions will include what occurs sequentially beat by beat (both when weight is taken and how the body moves between steps) for both the Lead and the Follow.

Save the dates (September 28, October 5, 10, 19, and 26), and call Kaye West (480-390-1554) to register or for more information. We value dancing in our lives and hope to share it with many others!

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