

Lesson 8: Begin Anew! Comparing Seven Rhythms

By Kaye West

Any time is a good time to reflect on your life and make a positive change. What can you do to begin to increase your health and joy?

Jeffrey Rosen, in his new book *The Pursuit of Happiness*, explains the meaning of that phrase for the founders of our country in writing the *Declaration of Independence* and calling for a government supporting “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Rather than a common contemporary view meaning the pursuit of *pleasure*, our founders adopted the philosophy of classical writers who believed that joy was found in *continuous self-improvement*, though recognizing that the goal-post continually changes so one never reaches the sought for “perfection.”

Nevertheless,... would you like to improve your health with enjoyable physical activity? Are you interested in keeping your brain healthy with a life-long learning endeavor? Might you like to improve your social life, meet new friends, and interact with folks whose life experience was different from yours? Do you need an activity to share with your spouse or which provides time away from the stresses of modern living?

If your answer to any of those questions is “yes,” then you are a perfect candidate for learning to do partnership dancing because it addresses all of those situations! You might begin with social dancing to learn some of the basic rhythms and patterns as described below. Also consider joining a round dance class (new lessons, **with no dance experience required**, are available throughout the nation and around the world!)

Round dancing provides for continual learning and growth in a phased sequence (so dancers can chart their own progress) with workshops to learn new routines, dances to practice dance sequences previously learned, and many opportunities for socializing and travel. While Mesa, Arizona, is the “Round Dance Capital of the Universe,” there are instructors in many places (on the internet see roundalab.org > **Dances and Classes** > **Find an Instructor**) and upcoming events are available at the same location and also at the International Choreographed Ballroom Dance Association (ICBDA) website (icbda.com > **left-hand menu**).

Health professionals suggest that happiness can be attained by providing service to others. Therefore, you can help yourself *as well as others* if you teach what you know about dancing to someone else! After all, research has shown that the best way to learn something is to teach it to another person. And since partnership dancing is something which can be learned and enjoyed by children as well as adults of every age, there are multiple folks who can be selected to teach (friends, neighbors, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, siblings, cousins, etc.). Informal surveys have revealed that about seventy-five percent of folks would like to learn to do partnership dancing!

Don't have a partner? Your spouse avoids the opportunity? No problem! Attend as a solo or invite a friend of the same gender to partner you!

You say you don't know how to dance yourself, let alone teach someone else? There is help available readily to anyone in the world via this website. Just follow the lessons! This information was introduced to us by Larry Caves who was the director of the ballroom dance program at Arizona State University (ASU) for twenty-seven years. It includes material to learn

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partnership dancing sequentially beginning from scratch (the first four lessons plus a step-by-step tutorial for folks to master the first rhythm, Slow-Slow-Quick-Quick or SSQQ, provide a great deal of variety while practicing one regular rhythm pattern to get a great start on learning to dance!)

Also on this site is abundant (and growing) information about round dancing. There are links to videos (describing round dancing in thirty-seconds plus many videos of round dance routines in many rhythms being demonstrated with cues named ahead of the figures being done) and sources for a wealth of knowledge about round dancing including articles describing aspects of partnership dancing, understanding timing, body awareness, harmonious movement, the benefits of partnership dancing, and the promise of arts (dance) education.

Additionally, under the link **Round Dance Rhythms Chart**, there are twenty rhythms listed by categories which are the most commonly done in round dance circles. Each rhythm has a page including a link to a chart of the round dance figures in that rhythm listed by phase so folks can monitor their own progress as well as identifying places where more information about how to dance the figures is available online.

Many of the figures are flagged with an asterisk which identifies those which have *diagrams of footprints* along with written descriptions for those who would like to have such reference information. One source (**Cold Feet II**) is available *free* to anyone in the world via the internet at **icbda.com** (left-hand menu). Other books are available *free* for those who join ICBDA (2026 dues are only \$15.00 per person per year).

Following is a recap of the six rhythms introduced in the first 7 lessons, showing the timing pattern and the Lead's footwork (Follows do the natural opposite). **Notice all of the similarities!** All dancing is based on a limited number of timing patterns and ways one can move! Full explanations for the patterns are available in the lessons themselves.

Social Foxtrot (SSQQ)

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6
Closed Position	Forward L		Forward R		Side L	Close R

Nine Social Foxtrot patterns are summarized in Lesson 4.

Single Swing (SSQQ)

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6
Low Butterfly	Side L (Bend R Knee)		Side R (Bend L Knee)		Rock Apart L	Recover R

Four Single Swing patterns are described in Lesson 4.

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Triple Swing (Q/&Q Q/&Q QQ)

Position	1	&	2	3	&	4	5	6
Low Butterfly	Side L	Close R	Side L	Side R	Close L	Side R	Rock Apart L	Recover R

Lesson 4 explains that the Single Swing patterns can be danced as Triple Swing patterns by substituting *each* Slow (two counts) with a Chasse' (three changes of weight) using the same two counts. One can also begin with the Rock Apart, Recover, followed by two Chasse's (yielding QQ Q/&Q Q/&Q with the QQ at the beginning instead of the end of the pattern).

Waltz Box (123456)

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6
Closed Position	Forward L	Side R	Close L	Back R	Side L	Close R

Five additional Waltz patterns are described in Lesson 5.

Rumba Box (SQQ SQQ)

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Closed Position	Forward L (hold)		Side R	Close L	Back R	(hold)	Side L	Close R

Three more Rumba patterns are described in Lesson 6. This timing pattern was used to match the steps in the Waltz Box. Rumba timing can also be QQS (starting with a side step).

Cha Cha (QQ Q/&Q) – American Style Basic

Position	1	2	3	&	4	5	6	7	&	8
Closed Position	Rock Forward L	Recover R	Side L	Close R	Side L	Rock Back R	Recover L	Side R	Close L	Side R

Four other Cha Cha patterns are included in Lesson 7.

Cha Cha Patterns Converted to Rumba Patterns (QQS)

Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Closed Position	Rock Forward L	Recover R	Side L	(hold)	Rock Back R	Recover L	Side R	(hold)

Each of the Cha Cha patterns described in Lesson 7 can be converted to Rumba patterns by substituting each Chasse' (three changes of weight) with one Slow step (one change of weight).

Note that each of the above patterns can be danced repeatedly, so one pattern alone permits one to "walk in and dance out" at a social dance situation! So challenge yourself to master one lesson at a time sufficiently to teach it to someone else (which will further reinforce your own learning). Also share this information widely! Know that you are improving your own health and joy in doing so as well as helping others to enjoy this fabulous partnership activity!