

It was Mothers Day 2005 at the age of 49 that I just happen to fall into real partner dancing. There is a saying I really believe in and that is, "when the student is ready the teacher appears". There is definitely a readiness for learning in our lives.

I have been athletic my whole life, but I was always outside cold, bored and lonely.

Music was part of my life growing up from my fathers 1930's swing band, called "Memories" to My Fair Lady songs in my bedroom, like "I could have danced all night". My mother sang for Sweet Adeline's and Crescendo for 40 years. Music filled our home.

I had taken some Jazz dance in college, required to take the pattern dances in high school, had always enjoyed freestyle dance, sang in many choirs, tried to assist my children to learn piano music theory, played in my children's elementary school steel drum band, but never had learned real Ballroom Dancing. I remember in the 1980's going to the discos and watching this amazing dance, not knowing what it was, but remembering as though it was yesterday, saying to my self with a low self esteem, "**oh I could never learn that**". I write this with tears flowing down my face. It was Hustle, which I have learned and is only **one** dance in the many I can do now along with elegant Ballroom Dancing. Ballroom Dancing has transformed my life like a **butterfly** emerging from its chrysalis full of **color, beauty, energy, motion** and **flight**. On the dance floor I can develop my whole brains ability for coordination, counting, timing and rhythm. My body can sculpture its muscles for frame, lift, tilt and twist, as I walk, glide, slide, touch or hold a step. I am creating an Art Form to beautiful music, smiling, laughing, while staying physically connected to another dancer in a mirror like image. All of these attributes in ballroom dancing have changed my life to grow socially, embrace more happiness, and decrease loneliness. I believe friendships forged on the dance floor last a life time. Ballroom Dancing has allowed me to laugh harder and deeper than I have ever laughed in my whole life. We laugh at ourselves; admire one another while giving compliments, feedback and support. Ballroom Dances are exciting, gives you something to work for, and a sense of purpose and belonging.

I have more self esteem and confidence that crosses over to all aspects of my life. My heart and lungs are stronger, my circulation has improved and my outlook on life has changed from fear worry and doubt to a sense of peace and contentment. I feel like all my problems dissolve on the Ballroom Dance floor, with a crystal ball, fancy dress, music, lights and a dance partner, at least for that moment in time.

This euphoria is probably one reason why Ballroom Dancing can become a healthy habit. And even though not everyone has a dance partner, everyone has a friend on the dance floor. Ballroom Dancing has inspired and changed my life to encompass more joy, friendship and fun than I could have ever received, doing anything else and for this I am eternally grateful.