

I can honestly say that I might not still be married to my husband had it not been for the gift of learning to dance together.

As a child, I loved to dance, but my parents couldn't afford to send me to class. I couldn't play sports, be on the drill team or take lessons of any kind. I grew up feeling like I had no talent for anything that would set me apart from other kids. What I did have was rhythm and a dream of someday being able to dance with a partner like in the movies.

I was married at 16, had 2 little girls by the time I was 19 and was living a happy life with my husband. Several years and another daughter later, I worked in a restaurant with a dance club in it. One night I stayed after work with co-workers and was asked to dance by a man who could lead a woman in a closed hold. For the first time I experienced what a "real" dance must be like. I had died and gone to heaven. This was "it." This was what I was missing in my life. I came home and told my husband about what fun that was, but he wasn't too excited at that thought, remembering how at his senior prom, I had been reluctant to dance with him because I knew he couldn't, and I didn't want to be embarrassed.

We were a happily married couple at this point, but what we lacked was a shared interest in something other than our children. What would we do with each other when our kids were raised?

Then a life-changing event happened. The restaurant I worked at changed from a Top 40 music venue to country western. "WHAT??" I couldn't believe it. I hate country music, "how will I be able to stand that music while I work?" Out of curiosity I stayed after work with co-workers to see what it was about. I sat in the back of the lounge to watch and what I saw was awesome. Good dancers showed up. They were 2-stepping and swing dancing and I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought, "this looks really fun, how can I be involved in this?" Then some guy comes up and asks me to 2-step and I am petrified. I was able to easily follow him with a quick, quick, slow, slow verbal direction. We floated around the dance floor and for the second time in my life, I felt euphoria. This had to be a part of my life. Now the hard part, how do I get my husband on board? After lots of convincing, he took lessons while I was at work and taught me later. I was a good follower from the start, which gave him the confidence to keep learning. I'm not saying it was easy, we fought and argued a lot, but I knew that this was a really important activity that was going to change our marriage for the better.

Some friends invited us to our first 3-day dance event in Oregon. It was a country-western- swing dance competition where we took lessons all weekend. We immersed ourselves into the entire experience. We learned so much and watched amazing competitions. We laughed, cried and were totally exhausted by the end. All we knew was "this was for us and we were going to do whatever it took to be a part of this community of awesome people!" We continued going to dance events, usually about 3 a year, and taking lessons at work.

Several years later, country western music died out in the clubs and we needed a new venue to continue our passion. Some friends invited us to their USA dance club. We went, even though we didn't know much about ballroom dances. We knew the country western and swing dances, so we just had to add the foxtrot, rumba, tango etc. It seemed daunting to add all these new styles, but the people we met at the USA dances were so warm, friendly and inviting. How could you not keep coming back? Once we started going to their club, we never missed a dance. The people that we have met through USA dance will be life-long friends.

In all honesty I can say that 35 years later, having dance in our life and our marriage has strengthened us and given us a silent communication that I hold very dear to my heart. This thing called "DANCE" was a gift from GOD to bless our marriage. I am forever grateful for this ability, these friends and for my husband for being willing to come on this journey with me.