

Neskaya: My Talk for *Joining Hands*, April, 2018

Reaching Out/Reaching In:

Bringing Sacred Circle Dance to Multiple Communities

Evelyn (“Evi”) Torton Beck

I am going to begin my presentation with an invocation, with a poem whose vision resonates with what our dancing embodies.

The Merger Poem

And then all that has divided us will merge
 And then compassion will be wedded to power
 And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
 And then both men and women will be gentle
 And then both women and men will be strong
 And then no person will be subject to another's will
 And then all will be rich and free and varied
 And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
 And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
 And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
 And then all will nourish the young
 And then all will cherish life's creatures
 And then everywhere will be called Eden once again

-- Judy Chicago

This poem is a weaving together of the motifs we call forth in our dancing, and it speaks to where I am today. In spite of the many years I have spent in the world of research and theory building, my true compass has always moved toward ***the healing power of art***: the way written and spoken words can work in you, the way music penetrates the soul, how color and form take one’s breath away, how dance can become a prayer. Over the years, even as a child, recovering from the trauma of displacement (among other disasters), it has always been the arts that sustained me, both as “consumer” and “producer.”

And within the arts it is **embodiment** that now calls to me most deeply-- **the healing, transformational power of dance** has become my passion. But it is much more than a mere passion, it feels as if I have been called to bring Sacred Circle Dance to communities outside the sphere of the on-going dance circles I facilitate. My objective is to create a sense of connection and community among participants, to encourage them to bring more of themselves to consciousness and to their work, with openness to self and other.

Because I straddle several different worlds, I have taken the opportunity to introduce dance to those who know little or nothing about our dance practice and who may sometimes even resist it. But don't worry, I do not force it upon anyone. I don't have to. The dance works its own magic.

Following this introduction, instead of simply naming the places to where I have brought the dance, I have organized these into conceptual categories, which of course will intersect and overlap, but nonetheless, will bring some order to what could otherwise look like chaos. Here is where the dance has taken me thus far:

1. Academic Research Conferences (theory based)
2. Professional Conferences (with practical applications)
3. Classes and Seminars
4. Faculty development and stress reduction
5. Process and support groups
6. Coaching and organizational leadership
7. Cross-cultural communication and issues of differences
8. Ritual and Ceremony

Next I am now going to describe these categories in greater detail and in some instances I will offer examples of what I do in these different settings. The most challenging environments are one-time events, especially those heavy on theory.

1. Academic research conferences. These are the most difficult. In these cultures you sense that the body is "out of place" even when the focus is on qualitative research that uses experience-near, inter-active interview methods which stress "here and now" responses. But historically most of these researchers have not given much attention to what we can know in and through the body, to what is called "somatic knowing," not what you feel with your muscles, but what your whole body is telling you, "by the body as perceived from within." (Hanna, 1986)

At such conferences I usually present research *about* the dance and I include work I have done in this arena. For example, I presented the results of interviews I did some time ago with older women who danced with me for a year or more and I was very excited to find a strong parallel between what these women said they got from the dance, and the factors that have been shown to be needed for positive aging (Beck, 2011, see Appendix 1). But one must also be wary of over-generalizations. What is being touted now is that "dance makes you smarter," which is not true, but a twenty year longitudinal study of elders has shown that dance is the one physical activity most closely correlated with staving off dementia (Verghese, et al. 2003). Although research on the long-term effects of dance is still in its beginning phases, a

2017 study suggests that “dancing constitutes a promising candidate in counteracting the age-related decline in physical and mental abilities.” (Rehfeld, et al, 2017).

I have also presented an auto-ethnography of my own dance experience in which I tried to trace how dance fosters transformation, since I know how deeply I have been transformed by this dance practice (I have become more patient, more open, more empathic, more flexible), but exactly *how* this happened continues to elude me. Although I am not satisfied with my results thus far, I will keep trying to articulate what I feel is happening in and through my body when I dance. (Beck, 2016)

Recently I completed a project in which I interviewed a woman who dances regularly in one of our weekly circles; she is totally immobilized from the waist down (MS) and dances with us in a large motorized wheelchair which she is able to modulate so she moves in rhythm with the other dancers. Using a phenomenological approach, I interviewed members of this circle and included my own responses. We, including Barbara, the central subject of this study, were amazed at the depth of the responses and how uniformly positive they were and how much we all learned from and about each other because of her presence. (Beck, 2017).

But in academic environments there are always time and space constraints, so usually it is not possible to offer even one dance circle. What I do, in order to give people a sense of what I am talking about, before I present my research, is to ask people to stand up, hold hands and move to a piece of music. Lately I have been using *As One*, which has a strong rhythmic beat, and I model the dance in front of the room as I encourage them to join me.

Please stand up now and hold hands, and pretend you do not know this dance—some of you may actually not—and imagine this as if this were a brand new experience for you. Here I put on the music. Often I sing along with the song, at the same time that I model the movement: sway, sway or move right-close-right, left-close-left, in place. (People follow along and when the music stops, they sit down.) Usually I play only about one minute of the song. At Neskaya, with a room full of dancers, I couldn’t bring myself to stop, so played the song to the end, which corresponded to the energy I felt from those gathered.

This strategy is surprisingly effective in giving people a “here and now” sense in their bodies of what the dance can evoke. But then, to deepen their understanding of what the dance is about I also often show a power point. Here is one I used to introduce the dance at a conference in Krakow, Poland, 2016.

SHOW POWER POINT: *Dance as Epistemology* (described below)

My topic was *Dance as Epistemology: Embodied Knowledge and Social Change through Communal Dance*. The research questions I asked were, “What can we know through dance?

How do we come to know it? How far can we take this knowledge?" I first show a slide showing dancers, and explain that Sacred Circle Dance is a "*gentle form of dance to music from around the world with spiritual dimensions.*" I explain that it is meant to heal the mind/body/spirit split and foster personal growth and social transformation. I show another image of dance to go with the words of the dancer/choreographer Anna Halprin, "*Dance is the breath made visible*" and those of Bernhard Wosien, a German ballet master who is credited with initiating this dance practice in the 1970s, "Dance is a meditation in movement, a walking into silence, where every movement becomes a prayer."

I explain about the origins of this dance practice at Findhorn, a spiritual ecovillage in Scotland to where Wosien brought dances he had collected (because he feared they were dying out) in villages of Balkan countries and he included a few dances he had choreographed himself. He set the model for our practice, because to this day, our repertoire includes both traditional dances and choreographed dances that use the vocabulary of the ancient steps.

I explain about the origin of the term *Sacred* to describe our dance, a translation of Wosien's German words *heilige Tänze* ("holy" dances, which he meant in the sense of holistic, related to the German word *heilen* meaning "to heal," but unfortunately, the English translation "sacred" has religious connotations and does not convey the healing component. It is important to underscore that what is most sacred about our dance is the attitude we bring to our practice: we bring a sense of awe and wonder and are fully present when we dance. I explain that different groups use a variety of descriptors depending on the context in which they are dancing (or requesting funding). Most common is "circle dancing," but at Findhorn they are always referred to as Sacred Dances and that is the descriptor I use in the groups I facilitate on an on-going basis. It is what I want to convey.

I then quote Laura Shannon, a long time dancer/teacher and field collector of women's ritual dances, "*Every person's experience of Sacred Dance has its own unique meaning: we dance the same dances, but travel to different places within as we do so.*" Here I also wish to honor Anna Barton who kept the dance alive at Findhorn between Wosien's visits; she also became a dance ambassador, described by Renata Ramos as "the first international personality to officially represent Sacred Dance in Brazil." (Barton, 2006, p.90) This bi-lingual book offers a vivid portrait of Barton's philosophy of dance in her own words.

I bring in the work of those who have used dance for healing, not only with adults, but also with children. I also present instances of "dance activism," places where we use the dance to bring about social change: dancing in the streets to help elect Obama, to support "Occupy Wall Street," and "One Billion Rising," Eve Ensler's call to end violence against women worldwide. I end with a slide showing the beautiful poster announcing the first World Circle Dance Day which, from 2016 on, is held on the third Sunday of July (to coincide with Sacred Dance

Week at Findhorn), when circles around the world dance three of the same dances on the same day. This effort has already been enormously successful. According to my information, in 2017, 114 circles from 39 countries participated and sent videos to the World Circle Dance Day website, but this may be undercounted, as some circles did not send in their information.

2. Professional Conferences with a strong focus on practical applications. These are easier because “practical” already implies some kind of movement or action and since I have offered these annually for a number of years at the same conferences, there are many repeat attendees, who often share their enthusiasm for the dance even before the workshop begins, which helps new comers relax. Those who attend my workshops report they feel a special bond when they later run into each other in the hallways or at other workshops.

The two conferences I have presented at most frequently over the past decade are *Positive Aging* (also called wise, holistic, conscious, successful aging) and at *The National Association for Poetry Therapy*. The name of this latter association is a misnomer—it is not just about poetry and not just for therapists—it is for anyone interested in using the written word (sometimes in combinations with other arts) for personal growth and development. The people who attend are from various professions: librarians, teachers, nurses, doctors (poetry is used often now in doctor’s trainings with the idea of “humanizing” their work), therapists of all kinds, and also poets and writers, students and lovers of the word. In these environments I use the dance (combined with writing) as a tool for life review, values clarification, finding authenticity of being, creative aging, awakening awareness of the body, joy of being alive, embodied spirituality and many more. The possibilities are infinite.

To illustrate what I have just described, I am now going to offer a mini-mini-mini workshop of the kind I might offer for an entire morning at either of these conferences. Let’s call it *Riding the Winds of Change through Sacred Circle Dance and Poetry*. My main strategy for engaging people and encouraging them to let go of the anxiety so many seem to carry about something that is called “dance,” is that I emphasize the importance of **NO MISTAKES, ONLY VARIATIONS!** I cannot overstate how many people have told me how important this was to their willingness to enter the dance at all, and stick with it even if they were having difficulty—people say they find this concept useful as a guide in their lives outside of dance—but I am aware that this strategy is not necessarily used by other teachers to the same degree (or at all) and my emphasis on this may be contested even at this gathering. I stand by it because my main objective, my priority, is to bring the healing, transformative power of the dance to as many people as I can reach.

For this reason I deliberately choose **simple dances** (these are also the ones to which I am most drawn, the ones that take me to the deepest places). If I see people who haven’t danced

before struggling, especially if they seem to be kinesthetically challenged, I sometimes change my program. Usually they then are able to follow simple dances with relative ease.

I start by saying, "I will show you steps, but the most important thing for you is to keep moving to the music. If you make a variation do not stop, just keep moving and let the music flow through you, let the circle carry you." I usually tell the stories behind each dance and suggest that after the dance, they check to see if anything comes up for them in the here and now, as strong effects of the dance often arise after it is finished. The idea of combining words and dance is that each deepens the experience of the other,

READ the poem *The Way It Is*, and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud again.

The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

--William Stafford

I then ask people to call out lines, words or phrases that speak to them. I may ask people to elaborate briefly on their responses. Then I ask people to take what has arisen for them in this poem into the dance.

LET'S GET UP NOW AND FORM A CIRCLE.

I often start with **KOS** (the greeting dance, one of the first in our repertoire, based on a folk dance, likely revised by Wosien and now further revised by me (mention I do not use the "cross hands across your chest" **hand hold** he prescribed because it feels like being in a straight jacket; I use a simple V hold). And if this is a group that has never danced before, or if I feel a lot of anxiety in the room, I tell them that although this is notated to start with the left foot, in this dance, they can start with either the right or left if it makes it easier for them to dance.

Proceed: Left in, right joins, bow bow; Right out, left joins, bow bow; step to the Right, close Left, bow bow. As we practice together, I say, "We greet each other, we separate, we move as a community," using Anna Barton's interpretation of these movements. Then I add with a touch of humor which seems to relax people, "But when we move as a group it would be best if we all moved in the same direction, although it is not a calamity if you don't, since in this dance we are moving quite slowly and the worst that will happen is that we will bump into each other lightly."

I say that *KOS* is my totem dance, the one that lured me in. I may tell the story of the fishermen from the Greek island of Kos dancing this before going out to sea, looking at each other across the circle, seeing the thread of community that connects them. Perhaps they also do this dance when they return to see who came back from what can be dangerous seas. Smile when you look at the others in the circle. Or if you're more introverted, just let the circle carry you, look down, you can even close your eyes. I remind new dancers to continue holding hands and keep the silence at the end for a time.

Now let's dance **KOS**. With a group this large as we have gathered here at Neskaya, I suggest we do it in two facing circles. DANCE **KOS**.

I often follow *KOS* with a Tripudium (sometimes called the pilgrim's step), often using the music to *EYES THAT SPEAK* (*Tunula Eno*). It is a love song written by the singer/songwriter Samite to his wife when she was very ill, and he speaks to her with his eyes. This tender, plaintive melody enters our bodies and brings us together as we follow the thread of the spiral around the room. I find that doing a simple, slow tripudium to this music is one of the most effective ways of bringing people into the dance. Take a moment of silence now to see what emerges after taking the poem we read into the dance.

If we were in a smaller group (ideally 8-12) and in a room with tables and chairs, I would ask you to take out paper and pencil. But here at Neskaya we are (wonderfully) forty plus people who have been sitting on the floor without writing implements, and then dancing. So instead of a free write, I will ask you to turn to the person standing next to you and each speak whatever comes to your mind, starting with the stem phrase, "***There is a thread you follow...***" OR "***You don't ever let go of the thread,***" OR choose any phrase from the poem, or whatever words the poem and dance stimulated in you. Each of you will speak for three minutes, while your partner does something called *active listening*, that is, saying nothing but listening deeply. I will ring a bell when it is time to switch partners. After listening silently, most people will also want to respond to each other. After this, I ask a few people to share with the entire group what the experience was like for them; this likely leads to a group discussion of themes that have emerged. We close the circle by each offering a phrase or word.

At Neskaya, after a brief break, I played **HANACH PACHAP** as a gathering dance (tripudium). Continuing now with the places to which I have brought the dance:

3. Classes and seminars:

Women in History and Myth. This theme could be used in conjunction with Judy Chicago's *DINNER PARTY* (1979), an installation that honors women who have been hidden from history.

Possible dances: *Boadica, Julian or Bells of Norwich; Nada te Turbe (St. Teresa de Avilla); Mama Oxum; Bread and Roses; Yo Salio de la Mar or other traditional women's dances* (see especially the dances Laura Shannon has brought into the repertoire). At Neskaya I chose to dance **Julian of Norwich**, which I find is the most beloved, most frequently requested dance in all of my circles, new and old. There is something incredibly reassuring when the group sings along to the words of the 14th century anchorite, Julian, who, after having visions in a turbulent time of plague and persecution, believed that "All shall be well... and all manner of thing shall be well." Clearly this dance could be (and has been) used equally well for *Healing Women*. I use the recording sung by Ann Mayo Muir.

Healing Women: is a seminar in which dance is presented as a healing modality focusing on women as healers and the healing of women.

Possible Dances: *Breath of Life, Chakra Dance, Bells or Julian of Norwich, Let's Be Cheerful, Sun Meditation, Give Us Peace, No Woman No Cry, We are Angels.* At Neskaya I chose **No Woman No Cry** (sung by Joan Baez) to support the powerful *Me Too* movement of 2018 in which women are speaking out publicly about wide-spread sexual abuse and finally being believed.

Creative or Wise Aging. Focuses on stages of human development: childhood (*Cantemos con Alegria or J'acku*); budding sensuality (any *Jeni Jol*); choosing life's paths (*Pilgrim's Dance or Od Yishama* for a more humorous approach); settling down – if marriage is chosen, *any of our traditional wedding dances*; also *Menoussis (or Perpetual Motion)*; if parenthood is chosen—*Midwives Dance*; maturity (*Karev Yom or Deep Peace*). Because of time constraints I didn't do any of these dances at Neskaya.

4. Faculty development and stress reduction: Realizing that teachers are increasingly under pressures of all kinds, administrators have sought ways to reduce faculty stress and introduce them to healthier ways of living. I have brought sacred circle dance into such sessions, and although faculty often have a very difficult time getting into the dance many report that even after just one session, they find themselves more open to new ways of thinking about their teaching and even their life paths. In such an environment I might even start with a children's dance such *J'acku or Cantemos con Alegria*, but recently I have found people enchanted by **La**

Llama de tu Corazon, an exuberantly joyful dance. Such music gets teachers to relax and find the playful or silly parts of themselves and it is the dance I chose for Neskaya.

5. Process and support groups: I've been invited to bring dance to a women's *Grief Group* when this group felt ready to move into joy without feeling as if they were abandoning their beloved; the gentle moving as a group seemed to facilitate this process. I also brought the dance to a gathering of *Children of Holocaust Survivors*, many of whom had unworked-through childhood trauma. By joining in the dance, these survivors felt relief from the more difficult themes offered in the other conference workshops.

Although I have not done this myself, I know that Circle dance has been brought to a support group for cancer survivors, and I have read reports of the healing power of dance with women in prisons, many of whom were suffering from untreated PTSD. (Honarvar, 2018).

Possible dances: *Song for Mercy*, *Mykonos*, *The Source*, *Leben*, *Kangeleftos*, *Karev Yom*. For Neskaya I chose ***The Source***, to focus on fresh water for new beginnings.

6. Coaching and Organizational Leadership. People working in organizations are increasingly recognizing their need to understand how they send messages with their bodies and how they communicate non-verbally in groups. I have brought the dance to somatic coaching sessions, where we have used it in combination with yoga and meditation to help people get in touch not only with what they are experiencing but also what they exude through their bodies. In such a setting I often use ***The Chakra Dance*** which gently opens people up to themselves and each other in a non-threatening way, as we do not hold hands in this dance.

7. Cross-cultural communication across lines of difference and issues of diversity. This subject often involves *difficult dialogues* and should be part of all the other topics I have discussed but most often the topic is offered as a separate unit. For such dialogues, dance is especially helpful as it opens communication across lines of difference represented by the different styles of music, languages, cultures, and spiritual traditions. And it happens by our communicating energetically, with and through our bodies. Dancing together also works to lessen an "us/them" mentality because our repertoire is so varied. However, issues of gender and sexuality may be more difficult to embody and address through our dances, or at least I haven't found a way to do so to my satisfaction. More work needs to be done in this arena.

For this theme, at Neskays we danced ***E Malama*** (Barbara Swetina's version is my favorite) because ecology and protection of the earth, the ocean, and each other is a focus that easily connects people across multiple differences.

The words to the song *Hello Bonjour* are also very effective for multicultural themes and the music goes well with a simple cocek; dancers almost always sing responsively with the chorus, which offers another mode of bonding. **Read aloud.**

HELLO BONJOUR by Michael Franti

I don't need a passport to walk on this earth
 Anywhere I go 'cause I was made of this earth
 I'm born of this earth, I breathe of this earth
 And even with the pain I believe in this earth
 So I wake up in every mornin' and I'm steppin' on the floor
 I wake up every mornin' and I'm steppin' out the door
 I got faith in the sky, faith in the one
 Faith in the people rockin' underneath the sun
 'Cause every bit of land is a holy land
 And every drop of water is a holy water
 And every single child is a son or a daughter
 Of the one earth mama, and the one earth papa
 So don't tell a man that he can't come here
 'Cause he got brown eyes and a wavy kind of hair
 And don't tell a woman that she can't go there
 Because she prays a little different to a God up there
 You say you're a Christian 'cause God made you
 You say you're a Muslim 'cause God made you
 You say you're a Hindu and the next man a Jew
 And we all kill each other 'cause God told us to? Nah!
 Hello, hello!
 Bonjour, bonjour!
 Hola, hola!
 Konnichiwa, konnichiwa wa wa!
 Hello, hello!
 Bonjour, bonjour!
 Hola, hola!
 Konnichiwa, konnichiwa wa wa!

Among possible other dances for healing differences: *Omali (Red Rain)*, *Shalu Shalom*, *Ya Fatah*, *As One*. Here I want to call attention to a video, *THE MUSIC OF STRANGERS: Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble (2016)*, in which musicians (whose countries may still be hostile to each other, even sworn enemies) have been brought together, each with their unique

instruments and musical traditions, to make amazing music across multiple lines of difference. The video even includes a few snippets of circle dancing.

8, Ritual and ceremonial: weddings, labyrinths, memorials, silent retreats.

Possible dances: for weddings: traditional wedding dances from Armenia and Greece, or *Nigun Atik* from the klezmer tradition (see Laura Shannon's dance booklets; for dancing on the labyrinth, *Tsakonikos* or *any slow pravo*; for memorials *Breaths*, for coming out of silent retreats *Body Prayer*, *Karev Yom*, *Rose of Taize* or the other Taize dances in the repertoire.

An important note about choosing dances. Many of our dances can be used for a variety of purposes. Let the dance speak to you, and if one calls to you for use with a particular theme, trust yourself to go with it--you will convey what you feel to the group.

Before I get to my provisional conclusions (this is after all, a work in progress), I want to say something about what I have **not** yet investigated to my satisfaction, and that is the importance of the MUSIC to our dancing and its profound effects on the psyche/soma. Clearly, the rhythm and tones of the different languages of the songs to which we dance have powerful, visceral effects and evoke different meanings in each of us. But no dance speaks to me without the pull of the music; as we cannot "tell the dancer from the dance" (Yeats), so we cannot separate the music from the movement. Research exists about how music effects our brains, but I have not yet found research that helps me understand how the **music together with our dance movements** has such a powerful transformational, healing effect.

What Sacred Circle Dance has brought to dancers: gleaned from a variety of populations over many years of dancing. The ordering is random, as I believe all effects are equally important. While there may be some redundancy, I wanted to keep the words of the respondents.

Sacred Circle Dance:

Provides a safe holding space

Helps people remember they have a body

Forges integration of mind/body/spirit

Creates an immediate sense of community, a sense of collaboration

Changes energy among people, brings greater closeness and openness

Enhances trust

Offers a vision of utopia; keeps hope alive

Brings increased joy, lessens stress

Brings inner peace and a greater sense of well being

Offers a “wide and gracious path for us to tread on”

Creates inner and outer spaciousness

Offers touch (many people are actually touch deprived)

Remind people they have a body

Stimulates feeling enlivened, awakens the soul

Creates greater authenticity of being (life changes, Beck, 2014; Watts, 2006)

A sense of “mastery” in new learning (new neural networks continue to be laid down and the brain remains plastic even in the aging process) (Cohen, 2005)

Greater self-confidence (“no mistakes, only variations”)

Being fully present in the moment, focus on the “here and now”

Feeling connected to other beings and to the universe

Balance, strength, flexibility, in body and mind

Regulates the breath

Helps tolerate pain (Honarvar, 2018)

New friendships, social networks, collective action

Inter-generational connections.

I believe these are vital the continuation of the dance. If new generations don't take it up, our dance will die out. This would be very sad, since it offers so much for the improvement of humankind.

While transformation happens cumulatively over time, even with just one dance experience, a seed is planted for embodying what is possible, reaching in and reaching out, we join hands, and become *As One*.

APPENDIX 1.

"Circle Dancing, Older Women and Positive Aging" presented by Evelyn Torton Beck, Ph.D. © FTB

"Dancing was the only physical activity associated with a lower risk of dementia." J. Verghese, et al. 2003.

What is Circle Dance?

- a gentle, meditative, simple form of dance as a healing practice with spiritual dimensions
- growing out of international folk dancing using music from around the world
- historically honoring the seasons and special life events
- with the intention of integrating mind, body, and spirit
- by holding hands in a circle or spiral, creating community
- and a sense of well being, inner harmony, and balance
- based on the premise, *"There are no mistakes, only variations."*
- no partners needed; every dance is taught each time it is danced

The Study: Interviews with 15 women (aged 60-82)

who had participated in Circle Dancing from 2 to 5 years.
All could move fairly well; one was in treatment for cancer.

Reponses to the research question:

What impact has Circle Dancing had on your life?

- Without exception, all said that Circle Dancing brings joy into their lives.

Overview of the research on positive aging:

Aspects of Circle Dance that Correlate with Positive Aging

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --gives rise to a sense of well being and release from everyday worries, feels healing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --positive emotions are one of the goals of positive psychology and positive aging --activates the <u>pleasure centers</u> of the brain (music and rhythm) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --dancing together feels like being held by a community, in a safe space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --boosts the <u>immune system</u> and promotes well being --dancing creates a <u>sense of flow</u> that is part of <i>flourishing</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- learning new dances, offers a sense of "mastery," offers new learning builds confidence in the body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- helps to create a <u>sense of community</u> and builds <u>social networks</u> --"no mistakes, only variations" "acceptance of self and others" --contributes to a sense of <u>mastery and competence</u> --encourages <u>self-confidence and personal empowerment</u> --develops <u>balance</u> in the body, reduces rate of falls --improves <u>muscle</u> endurance, strength, flexibility, gait speed --dance causes positive plastic changes in the brain and lays down new neural networks in young and old alike |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --they value the opportunity to "dress up" and wear flowing skirts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --a sense of <u>playfulness</u> is important |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --brings back memories of girlhood fun, moving freely, unselfconsciously | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --encourages physical activity that is "fun" and is the only one correlated to lower risk of developing dementia |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --physical touch felt good, holding hands was comforting, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --offers <u>touch</u> (the old are often touch deprived) and <u>physical support</u> while moving |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --the dance was enlivening, physically and emotionally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --stimulates creativity |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --reported being "fully present" in the dance --emotions arise spontaneously | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --focuses attention on the "here and now" --encourages "authenticity of being" --spiritual dimensions are tapped |

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