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I'm interested in how dance can change the way people feel, think and solve problems. I run the Dance Psychology Lab at the University of Hertfordshire where we research the psychology of dance.

I have a little boogie every day. I believe we are born to dance and that it’s innate. There’s no culture anywhere in the world where dancing doesn’t happen.

Two-day-old babies can perceive rhythm. At five months old, they begin to respond physically to music. Then, at two-and-a-half years old, they can entrain their movements to a beat. It starts to look like dancing.

Dancing has so many positive effects. We’ve shown that when people learn a set dance routine, they get faster at solving ‘one solution’ problems, such as long division. But when they do improvised dance, their creative problem solving improves. Other people have found similar results in non-lab settings, like the classroom.

We worry that if kids fidget, all the clever stuff will spill out of their heads. But research suggests the opposite. If you let children stand up or stretch while they are in the classroom, it can help the learning process.

We’ve shown how improvised dance can help people with Parkinson’s disease. It can enhance mood and ease symptoms. The effects can be quite profound and long-lasting.

I used to be a professional dancer. I toured nationally, did panto with Anita Dobson and even spent six months working as a dancer on a Caribbean cruise ship. There’s a photo of me shaking my maracas and wearing tights. It was every bit as flamboyant as an episode of Strictly.

Whenever I give talks, I always get people up on their feet grooving. I recently did an event on neural synchronisation where I got the audience to wriggle around in an uncoordinated way to represent the way neurons work. Then, every now and then, I’d get groups of people to move together, like clusters of neurons firing. We had this whole brain flash mob thing going on. I’ve done quite a bit of TV too. I was on Big Brother’s Bit On The Side where I represented the personality of various housemates through the medium of dance. And I’ve been on Strictly Come Dancing: It Takes Two. I watched rehearsal tapes and was asked to predict who would go furthest in the competition. I did pretty well.

I dance because it makes me happy. People have lots of different motives to dance. It can be for social reasons, or for fitness. It can be the challenge of learning something new, or a form of cathartic release. For me, it feels like the most natural activity to do. I couldn’t imagine life without it.