Mild aerobic exercise through dance: the key to good health and well-being

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**Physical activity and health**

Lack of physical activity has recently been recognized as the most dangerous factor for various diseases. It is now widely accepted that the adoption of some kind of physical exercise that occurs at regular intervals offers both improved personal health and longevity. Exercise helps prevent cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, obesity, musculoskeletal problems and other ailments. Also, regular physical exercise improves physical fitness, improves strength and energy, improves body image, helps burn fat and better metabolic function, alleviates daily stress and enhances energy and self-confidence.

Physical activity is also associated with psychological benefits related to good mood and anxiety. Regarding good mood, this is due to the secretion of certain hormones (e.g. serotonin and endorphins) during exercise. Endorphins are small groups of proteins produced in the pituitary and the hypothalamus of the brain, released through the spinal cord and passed into the bloodstream. They are considered as the best anti-mood medication and are a potent painkiller - a hundred times more potent than morphine. Their action is particularly beneficial as they calm down, give us a sense of happiness, improve mood by neutralizing the high levels of adrenaline, causing stress, strengthening the immune system and delaying the progression of aging. When endorphins are produced in large quantities, they contribute to the health of body organs. Endorphin levels increase when we perform some activities. Gymnastics, dancing, sex, laughing and chocolate consumption are some of them. When we train, levels of endorphins increase. The secretion of serotonin and endorphins at the time of mild aerobic exercise contributes to good mood, they act soothingly in cases of anxiety or intense anger.

**Music and Physical Activity**

Over the past two decades, advances in technology have helped music to be an effective intervention to achieve a range of desirable physiological and psychological impacts on the performance of participants (Karageorghis & Terry, 2011). During subliminal exercise through dance, music can limit attention, and this in turn helps to divert the mind from the feeling of fatigue. Research has shown that synchronization of music with repetitive exercise is associated with increased levels of output. Music can positively influence the acquisition of motor skills, as well as increase intrinsic motivation. The psychophysiological influences of music concern the effect of music on a number of physiological factors, such as heart rate and breathing rate. Music has an ergogenic effect as it improves physical performance either by delaying fatigue or by increasing working capacity. This often leads to higher than expected levels of endurance, strength and productivity.

**Aerobic exercise and dance**

As a result aerobic exercise, music and dance are connected together. Aerobic exercise (also well known as cardio) is physical exercise of low to high intensity that depends primarily on the aerobic energy-generating process. Aerobic refers to the use of oxygen to adequately meet energy demands during exercise via aerobic metabolism.

Most forms of dance can keep constantly moving for long periods of time, elevate heart rate and bringing oxygen to heart. Dance styles that include lots of jumping or turning, like tap dance, salsa, some Greek traditional dances such as dances from Crete and Thrace, are vigorous aerobic exercise. As an aerobic exercise, dance can increase the levels of “good” cholesterol and decrease the risk of heart disease. According to the Cleveland Clinic, dance can also improve lung function and lower blood pressure.

Aerobic exercise through dance is the best choice for weight loss, as it is efficient for burning fat.

**Intensity and duration of exercise through dance**

The type of exercise that is thought to contribute to physical health, anxiety management and good mood is the mild aerobic exercise, and that can be achieved through dance. The duration should be over 20-30 minutes each time. Do not exceed one hour. The intensity depends on the physical condition, the state of health and age of the participant and it should be repeated at least three times a week.