

<p><u>DANCE LIFE</u> <u>COACHING</u></p> <p>A COLUMN TO HELP DANCERS JOURNEY IN LIFE</p> <p><i>By Susan Silva</i></p>	
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“LAUGHTER IS A MEDICINE!”

How much do you laugh? There is a proverb that says, *“A merry heart does good like a medicine; but a broken spirit dries the bones.”* Another way to say this scripture is, *“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.”* Does your strength ever feel sapped? In this busy life that we all lead, especially in the ballroom dance industry do we take the time to laugh? Or are we so intent on the driving force of getting ahead, doing better in our dance career, winning the competition, that we forget to enjoy the journey on the way. Laughter has many benefits, besides enjoyment, taking a daily dose of laughter is good for your health. **IT’S BEEN PROVEN...PEOPLE WHO LAUGH LIVE LONGER!**

Here are some facts how laughter can help your health. Mayo Clinic reported that laughter aids breathing by disrupting your normal respiration pattern and increasing your breathing rate. It can even help clear mucus from your lungs. Hearty laughter is also cardio-protective! It’s good for your heart. It increases circulation and improves the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to tissues throughout your body. Laughter stimulates your immune system to fight off disease. Laughter helps fight illness by marking invading bacteria and viruses for destruction by white blood cells.

Laughter decreases the stress hormones levels. It’s also good for allergies. It helps control pain by raising the levels of our brain’s natural endorphins, which are 50-100 times more potent than morphine itself. Laughter helps relieve stress by causing the release of these natural painkillers in the body. When we laugh out loud, endorphins and adrenaline are released which result in a natural high, making you feel good about yourself. It’s a natural STRESS RELIEVER. Have you ever laughed so hard that you doubled over, fell off your chair, spit out your food or wet your pants? You can’t maintain muscle tension when you are laughing!

Laughter is an amazing thing! It’s a tension dissolver. It’s an antidote to anxiety. It’s just like a tranquilizer, but without any side effects. And it’s free! You don’t even need a prescription. Laughter is life’s shock absorber! If we want to have less stress in our lives, we need to learn to laugh at our circumstances! We have got to find the fun in the frustrating! Someone once asked President Lincoln how he handled all the stresses of the Civil War. He said, “If it hadn’t been for laughter, I could not have made it.” Many famous comedians grew up in poor neighborhoods with lots of problems. They coped with their troubles by learning to laugh and making others laugh. We need to laugh more! In fact, some of you need to LEARN to LAUGH! If you can laugh at it, you can live with it! And besides, if we learn to laugh at our problems, we’ll never run out of anything to laugh at! Life is full of funny situations.

As I look back on my ballroom dance career, I have so many memories, some good, and some sad, and some very funny ones. I want to share a few of the funny ones with you. At the time they probably were not funny while they were happening, but looking back now they are hilarious. David Van Hamilton and I were the Adagio Team performing at a very exclusive nightclub on the east side of New York City for two years. This club did not have a stage, only a very small dance floor, probably 15 x 18, and the ceiling was painted in black, with black pipes sticking out throughout it. Since we did overhead lifts, we had to be very careful where exactly David lifted me. This in itself was ridiculous, so as I was lifted in the air in

between the pipes, if David missed the exact spot, my head would have hit the pipes. My costumes were made with rip off layers that came off during different dance numbers. One night during the Samba piece of our show, as I twirled out of my skirt, and David tossed it behind him, it didn't quite make it onto the band stand, but landed on a side table where no one was sitting and caught on a candle that was lit and started to burn. There were not many people in the club at that first show, and no one saw it but me. So while I was still dancing, I was pointing to the fire, and yelling at the same time, "Fire, Fire". Picture that! Thank God someone finally saw it and put the fire out.

Another time, during our famous Matador's Fantasy piece, David did a fabulous cape piece solo, and as he was turning with the cape, it hit a front table that had a birthday cake on it and wiped off the whip cream topping. Then another time during this same piece, as I am in a low double attitude floor lift, my black fishnet stocking on my right leg got caught on David's button that was on his jumpsuit. David kept spinning with me in this lift as I was desperately trying to rip my right leg off of his button, while trying to keep my stage presence. Finally I got it off, and I had this huge 10-inch hole in my black fishnet tights right in the front of my thigh. I was in a full fishnet body suit, without any skirt covering it. As embarrassing as it was all I could do was just finish the performance. The show must go on!

We need LAUGHTER in all of our relationships, especially in our ballroom partnerships. If we don't laugh together we're missing out on a ton of fun! Wouldn't it have been wonderful that during all the years that I competed and performed when things went wrong, that I could have laughed. As we get older do we get wiser? I am still learning this lesson. My 14-year-old adopted daughter from China, Autumn, laughs all the time. She tries to get me to laugh too. At 2 weeks old she was left in a red blanket in a basket in front of a café in a province in China. She already has been through a lot, yet she is joyous all the time. If we look at life from a positive perspective, we'll look for the lighter side of life...we can find things to cheer ourselves up. But if we allow our emotions to dwell on the negative, we'll see life as full of trouble!

Some people call laughter "*God's Prescription Medicine*". What's so amazing is all of this modern science just reinforces what the Bible has always said...the more you laugh the greater your chances of good health. Proverbs 15:30 says "*A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health.*" Tell Your Face...the Good News has not reached your face!" Definition of laughter: "to express certain emotions, especially mirth or delight, by a series of spontaneous, usually unarticulated sounds often accompanied by corresponding facial and bodily movements." With all of the stress in our fast-paced world, with all of the stress in our relationships, we need to utilize this vital resource that God has given us!

Here are some quotes from a few famous people about laughter. Will Rogers "I don't know any jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts." Mark Twain "Laughter is the greatest weapon that we humans possess and it's the one we use the least!" Abraham Lincoln "If I do not Laugh, I should die!" Norman Cousins used to say that laughter is so beneficial for your body that it is like "inner jogging." He healed himself of a major chronic disease with Laughter Therapy.

Some ways to increase Laughter in your lives: Look For Laughter! Hang Out With People Who Make You Laugh! Read Funny Books, Newsletters, Cards! Watch Comedy Shows/Movies! Take a Daily Dose Of Laughter! A child laughs 400 times a day on the average, while an adult laughs only 15 times a day. Even God Laughs! Psalm 2:4, says, "*He that sits in the heavens shall laugh.*" God has a sense of humor. Have you ever seen the face of an orangutan? God thought that one up! That proves he has a sense of humor. And he created you and me!