

Partnerships—Life and Dance

by Jeanne DeGeyter

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But what about dance partners? Frequently the rules for one area of life often apply to another. For instance, it often amazes a new dancer to learn that a competitive dance partnership can be quite like a life partnership.

With both a dance partner and a life partner you invest hopes, dreams, time and money. You communicate and negotiate on a regular basis regarding scheduling, priorities, commitment, and finances as well as personal and physical aspects of your relationship. For some, a dance partnership can be a very “business-like” partnership, with great productivity and growth—but wait...I think I had a marriage like that one time too!

While we realize we should focus noticeable attention on picking a life partner who compliments our life goals, some dancers may not realize the importance of picking a dance partner who matches not only our dance goals, but also our personality.



A strictly swing partnership is a lighter, and usually short term, commitment (kind of like a quick “fling”). A routine partner is usually a longer lasting relationship, deserving more consideration.

Do your personalities work well together?

When considering a dance partner, make sure you will enjoy the time spent together. Do you have non-dance topics you can enjoy discussing when taking a break? Can you laugh together? Are you productive together? Is there a balance of strengths and weaknesses? If one is more light-hearted and not so disciplined, is the other organized enough to bring a positive note of discipline? If one is too serious, can the other break up tension with a funny comment?

How do your dance goals compare?

If one person just wants to dance for fun without concern for the details of technique, but the other has a desire to focus on technique in order to compete at the national level, you might just have a conflict. The desire for competition should usually be approximately the same, since a person who always strives for first place may want to strangle the one who has no awareness for arm lines and synchopated footwork.

What are the goals of the partnership?

If one partner is just looking for a single-event dance, but the other is making plans for the swing circuit, this could present a problem. Discuss what events should be considered. Never just assume a partner will dance with you beyond a defined contest. However, out of respect, partners should always be clear about their intentions.

How much time will be required?



Both partners should understand and agree upon the practice time required for this partnership as well as the event schedule. Obviously not all dance partners are intimately involved with each other, and may in fact be married (or attached) to other people. If this is the case for either partner, support (or at least a lack of sabotage) from the significant other is important. Other responsibilities such as family and business are also a consideration. Scheduling your time (and sticking to the schedule) is a good way to define the boundaries for everyone.

What are the financial commitments?

Expenses, such as choreography, coaching, entry fees, travel, costumes, etc. should be discussed, along with financial boundaries. While professional choreography and coaching is important to the aspiring competitor, most of us have a limited budget we are willing to spend. Costumes can range from off-the-rack and simple to custom-made and elaborate. (She usually wants to sparkle more than he does though!)



How do you deal with conflict resolution?



There it is!...The communication issue. Relationships are a direct reflection of how we deal with people.

Dance partnerships are never short on conflict and disagreements. For serious competitors, a dance partnership can be just as sensitive and personal as a minor marriage. Cooperation and negotiation is an absolute requirement. Both partners must have the ability to listen, empathize and share in the processes of learning, improving themselves and building the partnership. Resolution, rather than blame, should always be the goal—without the expense of hurt feelings.

The Break-up.

The break-up of a dance partnership can be very emotional, depending on the degree of commitment and time invested. As stated earlier, when hopes, dreams, emotions with a significant amount of time and money are invested toward a goal, one or both partners can be heartbroken. This might be difficult for a non-dancer or a non-competitor to understand, and even confusing for the person experiencing the emotions. But the loss of a dance partnership brings about similar emotions, especially if one of the partners has already moved on to a new partner.



So there it is, the complexity of a dance partnership, but also the potential for great dreams to be achieved. If you love to compete and dancing is an expression of your soul—there are great rewards as well as great lessons to learn from competition dancing. Picking partners is one of those lessons. And if you are lucky enough, you will enjoy several rewarding dance partnerships with dancing memories to last a lifetime.