



TBH Focus

Body | *Move It*

- Aerobic exercise boosts the brain's physical health, sharpens intellectual performance, and has been shown to lower dementia risk.
- Regular aerobic activity may contribute to the building of a protective buffer against memory loss, often referred to as “metabolic reserve.”
- Keeping physically fit helps prevent obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and other chronic conditions that in turn can increase dementia risk.

The TBH Science

A case of boogie fever can be good for brain health! That's according to research looking at the effects of dance on various aspects of cognition. For example, one study compared how an array of activities—from doing crossword puzzles to playing a musical instrument to walking or swimming—affected the risk of dementia in folks between 75 and 85 who had no signs of mental decline. Dancing was the *only physical activity* found to lower dementia risk; what's more, it drove down the likelihood of developing dementia by a whopping 76 percent—the most of any of the activities included in the study.

Other research has found that people who mastered complex dance routines—think ballroom dancing or square dancing, in which steps are performed in a specific order—performed better on memory tests. Beyond that, many of the same factors that boost the risk of heart disease are also known to increase the risk of dementia. These include obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and an inactive lifestyle—all of which can be managed with exercise—meaning that what's good for the body is also good for the brain. In fact, research has found that people who exercise daily have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

You Will Need

- A video that breaks down easy dance routines of any genre, such as line dancing, ballroom, swing, hip-hop, into simple, clear steps (see Resources)



- Introduce the activity. Use the TBH Focus and TBH Science to talk about the brain-health benefits of learning complex dance routines and getting regular aerobic exercise.
 - Use instructional videos to teach several dance routines.
 - Have a dance contest! Offer brain-healthy prizes as incentive—crossword or Sudoku books, board games, handheld puzzles.
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- Introduce the activity. Use the TBH Focus and TBH Science to talk about the brain-health benefits of learning complex dance routines and getting regular aerobic exercise.
 - Demonstrate and teach a simple dance routine.
 - Have participants practice the routine.
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Make time to get your groove on! Studies show that complex movement such as dance routines (ballroom, line dancing, even playing dance-based video games) can boost overall brain health and memory. Put a little boogie into your day by taking a dance-based fitness class, or just crank up some favorite tunes and spend a few minutes practicing your best moves.



Expert Opportunity

Invite a dance instructor or a volunteer with dance training to teach the group.



Resources

See the Resources section of your online Toolkit for all worksheets, links, and additional materials for this activity.