



Larry's Corner

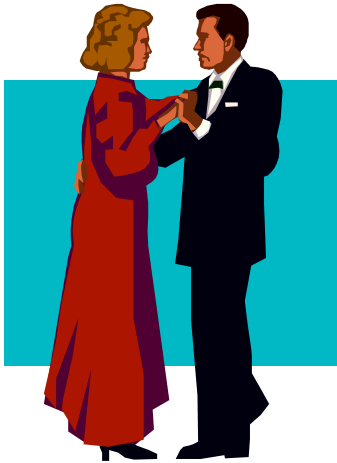
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Dancing and Romance



Dancing by its nature is a romantic activity. It involves music, and the close proximity of (usually) the opposite sex. For most of us, this is part of the attraction of dancing. Where else is the opportunity of having an attractive stranger in your arms within a few seconds of meeting them? However, the connection of dancing and romance can unfortunately also lead to misunderstanding and unhappiness.

Much of this unhappiness can be avoided by awareness of the basic premises of social dancing. Social dancing is exactly that, *social*. I will use the metaphor of a cocktail party: a dance is like a brief chat in a cocktail party, after which one moves on to the next conversation. Each of these conversations may in turn be funny, heated, professional, elegant, or provocative. Nevertheless, they are nothing but brief conversations, enjoyable at the moment, but certainly not signifying or requiring a long-term interaction.

The same principle applies to social dancing: Each dance is a brief, and hopefully enjoyable, social encounter. Newcomers to dancing sometimes have a hard time understanding this, but to ask or accept a dance does not necessarily indicate a personal interest, even though the dance itself might look passionate or provocative.

Dancing is about fun and fantasy and make-believe. It often involves imagination and the telling of a story: the majesty of Waltz, sensuality of Tango, nobility of Foxtrot, or the fun attitude of Swing. A particular dance

Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future Newsletters

If you have anything you would like to write for us, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry.

I enjoy writing something for you. LARRY

Inside this issue:

Dancing and Romance 1

Looking Inside 2

Summary of Ballroom Dance Etiquette 3

may look alternatively elegant, provocative, strong, or sexy, but it is only a role-playing game. Correspondingly, a social dance event is a safe haven where one can play these games and have a degree of uninhibited fun, with the understanding that our actions on the dance floor, especially during a dance, are not to be interpreted according to the more serious (and conservative) standards of the outside world.

The common understanding of the dance community makes this level of fun possible; it has been agreed that we come together, enjoy our dancing, and that our dancing activities have no implications beyond the dancing itself. To read more into what happens on the dance floor would be a mistake.

Two facets of this mistake that can be particularly hurtful: The first is to misread the attention and mannerisms of a partner, during dancing, as genuine romantic interest. While romances do develop in the dancing community (as anywhere else), be careful about making any assumptions. You will save yourself from an awkward moment, or worse, endangering your dancing friendships.

The second facet of this problem involves romantic partners that both dance. The key to their dancing and romantic happiness is, once again, that dancing is merely role-playing, and that what happens on the dance floor is not for real. Each of them should feel free to dance with other members of the dance community. Realizing this, they can spare themselves much pain and anguish, and build a stronger relationship.

Despite the fact that much of dancing is fantasy and make-believe, and that many dancers keep their romantic and dancing lives separate, there is nothing against looking for romance in the dancing circles. This may indeed seem a natural place for it, since dancing is an activity that brings the two sexes together. However, if you participate in dancing *only* for romantic purposes,

it is advisable to be subtle and artful about it.

Looking Inside

When all is said and done, your happiness in social dancing depends more on you than anyone else. If you are determined to have a good time, and have a good attitude, you have a good chance of enjoying your dancing experience.

The first ingredient of a good attitude is a sense of humor. Take all that comes to you in stride. If you are not asked for dances, or are turned down a few times, don't be bothered. If a particular dance does not go well, if you misstep in a pattern or two, let it pass. You can do no better than your best. Be nice to other dancers, continue to improve your dancing, and you will have a progressively more enjoyable dancing experience.

Dancers are in general a likeable bunch. But in dancing, as elsewhere, you will come across all types. Sooner or later, someone may rub you the wrong way, or even worse, be directly obnoxious to you. You may see gigantic egos, unsightly ambitions, and plain unkindness. Especially if you are a novice dancer, these circumstances can be difficult to deal with. Thankfully these situations are rare, but at such times it is especially important to look inside and draw on your strength of character.

The key to enjoyment in dancing is awareness of your goal: to enjoy dancing. Enjoyment is contagious and cumulative. People like to be around individuals who enjoy themselves. Be one of those individuals. Be determined not to let small things spoil your evening of dancing.

To enjoy dancing, you must enjoy the music. If you are not already a musical person, develop an understanding and appreciation of the music. It will also help your understanding of the dance.

Active, outgoing personalities have an advantage in social dancing. Even if you are not naturally that way, try and cultivate a pro-active approach to your dancing. If you like a song and want to dance, if you like a partner and want to dance with him/her, don't hesitate to go and ask. Make friends in the dancing community. You would be surprised how much an occasional smile and salutation can do. There are virtually hundreds of individuals out there waiting to be friends with you. All it takes is a minimum level of effort from you.

Ultimately no-one and nothing can make you happy or unhappy. Only *you* can make you happy. Dancing can help.

Summary of Ballroom Dance Etiquette

First things first...

1. **Dress should be suitable for dancing.** Ladies, in particular, should bear in mind the "dancer friendliness" of their attire (beaded sleeves that swipe their partner's faces, snagging fabrics, long trains etc. should be avoided at all costs). Gentlemen should always close their jackets or take them off before dancing.

2. **Ideally, dress should be suitable for the occasion.**

Informal: Casual attire is acceptable, but blue jeans are discouraged

Semiformal: Coat and Tie for men, dress of any length for women

Formal: Tuxedo or 3-piece suit for men and a long dress preferred for women

3. **Personal oral and bodily hygiene is of utmost importance.** If you notice that your partner is hesitant to get into the

proper ballroom hold, is holding their breath, bolts from the dance floor once the dance is over and repeatedly refuses to dance with you again, take the hint.

4. **Heavy perfumes and highly volatile hair styling products should be used sparingly** since some dancers may be chemically sensitive. Strong fragrances can make even the average person woozy

5. **Punctuality** is always appreciated at social events.

At the dance...

1. Either the man or woman may ask for a dance

2. When asking for a dance, try not to be overly aggressive—i.e. take the hint after two refusals

3. Try one's best not to turn down anyone who has asked for a dance. It is all right to state that one is "sitting this one out" or that one is not familiar a particular dance. It is extremely rude to turn down one person and then accept another invitation during the same dance number.

4. Introduce yourself to your partner right away

5. With couples of two different genders, the gentleman always leads the lady unless you agree ahead to switch.

6. Cutting in is quite acceptable at dance classes but should be avoided at social events

7. At the end of a dance, one should thank his/her partner for the dance and leave the partner at the "sidelines" instead of on the dance floor.

Dance Faux Pas to be Avoided by Women:

1. **The Claw:** this is when a woman clutches the man right arm with an iron grip. This can be painful with long nails especially in combination with the Coat Hanger
2. **The Coat Hanger:** this is when the woman does not support the weight of her own arms or body but sort of hangs off her partner as dead weight that he must drag across the dance floor
3. **Role reversal:** Other than lack of rhythm, the most common complaint that men have: women who lead and/or don't follow the man's lead. This faux pas will land you on the sidelines (and blacklisted) for sure unless you have stunningly good looks.
4. **Limp-wristed spaghetti arms:** this is physically taxing and no fun for the man since he has put in twice as much effort to lead the woman
5. **Miss Sourpuss:** shaking one's head, rolling one's eyes, looking bored, unenthusiastic or pissed off and ignoring one's partner all fall into this category of bad attitude. "In dancing, it is the job of the woman to look like she is having the time of her life"

Dance Faux Pas to be Avoided by Men:

1. **The Non-Existent Lead:** Ambiguous or non-existent leads are most common complaint of female ballroom dancers. It is not the job of the woman to know what steps to do. A firm lead is always appreciated since it is usually the woman that ends up looking incompetent when the man doesn't lead properly. Ambiguous leading leaves the woman thinking "What does this guy want from me ???"
2. **The Egoist:** The primary job of a male dancer is to make his partner look good," It is, therefore, considered impolite to dance above the level of one's partner. If you sense that a

lady is not comfortable with a certain step, avoid it. Please be sensitive to your partner's level of dance experience.

3. **Limp-wristed spaghetti arms:** Lack of frame is bad enough in women but it makes dancing almost impossible when it is the man that is guilty of this faux pas.
4. **The Dictator:** Men who lead by barking orders and arm-wrenching are unpleasant. Though this is somewhat rare, what is more common are men who, to various degrees, bulldoze and drag their partners across the dance floor. This is particularly unpleasant when dancing the faster dances with larger men, an experience that is akin to being slammed by a granite block.
5. **The Pervert:** Wandering hands, indiscreet stares, stalking, unwanted advances, men who circle the dance floor checking out women and the list of lecherous behavior goes on and on and on... You know who you are. You are fooling yourself if you think that we don't.

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