

Balance: the Byproduct of Posture and Energy

by Jorge Morales

Do you remember your first attempt at riding a bicycle? If you are like most people, you made a feeble effort to get the cycle moving, desperately trying to pedal. After numerous unsuccessful attempts, eventually you improved, hopping onto the bicycle, giving it a good roll and then casually beginning to pedal.

What you were unknowingly doing — or perhaps you did notice after a while — is that you gave your body and bicycle a thrust of energy that got you moving. You sat up straight and used the pedals to maintain a supply of energy to continue cycling. And as a result, you were balanced.

Technically, Newtonian physics defines balance as the zero sum totals of forces acting upon an object. But, what does that mean for a dancer?

Balance as a byproduct of posture and energy

As a dance instructor and trainer, I often hear: “I cannot spin because I cannot balance” or “I can’t do this move because I can’t balance.” Many beginning dance students have a great misconception about balance with many believing that it is an action that is performed and on which the ability to do even the most basic of dance steps depends. In short, balance is a state not an action. I contend that, dancers are off balance because they cannot spin or complete the move correctly.

Balance is a byproduct of doing the right things, having everything in place at the right moment that you do a spin or dance step. Experienced dancers do not think about balance when executing a movement. If a balanced state is not achieved, experienced dancers instead think of maintaining whatever position they want and sending energy where they want it to go, focusing on the outcome versus the process. A dancer’s goal is to move to music. Balance is just something achieved along the way, something that happens from one move to the next and helps create a seamless flow of captivating movements.

The Elements of Balance – Structured Posture and Radiating Energy

Achieving balance starts with good posture. From a balance perspective, this translates to having something that is easy to handle. If the body does not maintain some sort of uniform structure, a balanced state becomes much more difficult — if not impossible — to achieve. This structure must be firm and steady and positioned on top of the supporting foot.

Once good posture is constructed, dancers must radiate energy away from the body. Equal energy in all directions will result in static balance, and a surplus of energy in one specific direction will create strong, balanced movement in that direction.

So, next time you think you are off balance, immediately put the thought out of your mind. Instead, commit to your goal of achieving the correct position and give energy in all directions. You will find that success is achieved much sooner. Remember that what separates a professional dancer from an amateur is an overwhelming sense of confidence on the outcome. This confidence is not innate, but the result of many unsuccessful repetitions that are eventually followed by many successful ones.

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