

NEW!

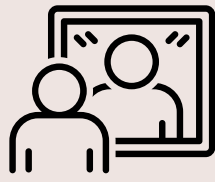
Experience: Tap Dancing



This assignment came at a particularly aligned moment in my personal development journey. I've been working extensively with a registered dietician while using the intuitive eating model developed by two registered dietitians. I have been exploring this in particular because I was conditioned from a young age that diet culture was the right modality of thinking and this had damaged my relationship with my body, food and movement. We are currently exploring one of the 10 intuitive eating principles called 'Joyful Movement.' This is an approach to movement that was not familiar to me because exercise was used as a tool to make my body smaller and to punish it for what was deemed wrong by societal beauty standards and its influence on diet culture. That being said, I began to think about a movement that I knew would challenge me and push me out of my comfort zone, a new creative confidence! Part of my personal development journey is to boost my self-esteem, and something mentioned in our week 4 lecture resonated with me and relates to why I chose the experience I ended up choosing. In the Inc interview with the Kelleys (2013b) where they claimed "The big fear of holding people back from creative confidence is the fear of being judged (92), This rings true in many areas of my life and currently in both my experience with movement and my art practice that I didn't want to be seen not doing something well and be judged for it or have people think that I looked stupid while doing something. Because I found dancing to be something that made me the most uncomfortable because there was so much need for body awareness and that is something I wanted nothing to do with, I decided it would be wise to choose a form of dance. From there I began to think of dancing categories and which one I felt most interested in would be the one I picked. I went searching for dance studios in my neighbourhood that provided lessons for adults and to my surprise there was a lovely studio down the street just a short 15-minute walk from my house hosting adult dance classes. I went ahead and looked through their roster and decided on tap dancing because as a child I remembered being so fascinated by the sounds the teacher's shoes made when they would click and clack down the hall. Additionally, tap felt like an upbeat and joyful form of moving that would be fun!



Dance City Corp had a 4-week tap course, so I signed up and have only taken one class so far. My initial feelings after deciding on this experience were, that I might have made a mistake and that it would be too hard for me to grasp or that there wouldn't be anyone my age in the class. On the day of the first class, I decided it would be a good idea for me to walk off my nerves and walk to the studio before and arrive a bit earlier so I had time to settle into the space. Upon arrival, the reception was very kind and welcomed me, and I made my way to the bench outside my classroom. As I was getting on my tap shoes and looking around to see if there was anyone else who might be in my class, a few people walked toward the bench with a bit of a nervous demeanour and hesitation. I quickly asked if they were here for the tap dance lessons and we all started talking about how nervous we were how we were expecting young teenagers to be in the class and how we had never done anything like this! It was extra nice to hear that I was not the only one experiencing something new and stepping outside of my comfort zone. When everyone was gathered and waiting for the teacher, there was one person who arrived and someone asked "Are you here for the tap lessons too!?" and they responded in a bit of a sour tone "No, I'm your instructor." This threw me off a bit before starting class and made me worry that the instructor wouldn't be kind. I was mistaken because the instructor was very kind, a bit on the introverted side and quirky so that was a definite misperception. Once we got into the room we began to disperse into rows around the space. The instructor did an introduction and before we knew it we were being thrown into the beginner steps! We went over the 4 basic moves which were shuffle ball, ball change, step heel and heel step along with approaching each with different rhythmic patterns. Another component of tap that we went over was the importance of shifting your body weight and how that will affect your ability to lift and drop your feet in the right way to achieve the steps we had learnt. When the class was over, we taught a closing tap sequence that closed it off in a very playful way.



Reflection

How did it make you feel?

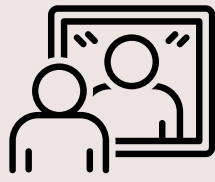
Making the decision initially felt aligned, inspired and playful. The timing helped me feel encouraged to be pushed to decide to try something new and have it align with other areas of my life that are relevant. After the decision was made, my anxiety set in regarding the fear of not being good, having it be too hard, being the only person in my 30s in the class, not connecting to the instructor's approach, and the list went on and on. Walking to the space allowed my brain to relax a bit before the first session and release some of that anxious energy into something grounding. Once I saw the other people and noticed that they were visibly uncomfortable as well as finding out that they were feeling similarly to me was very calming. I wasn't alone! The interaction with the instructor and their town was a bit of a throw-off moment, but that feeling didn't linger long once the lesson started. During the class, there were feelings of overwhelm, but I tried to stay mindful and in the moment by listening to the tapping sounds and catching onto the rhythms to get back up to speed when I fell behind. By the end of the lesson, my body was aching in ways it hadn't before, but there was a feeling of joy and calm that I carried with me that night on my walk back home.

Did you change your mind about the experience?

My mind's racing judgements and anticipation were cleared in different ways just as I had mentioned before. The comradery of the newness for the other participants dispelled the idea that I was going to be alone in where my prejudgements were. A lot of the people were worried about being the oldest one in the group, not catching on or being able to keep up, not being able to move their bodies properly etc. These preconceived notions seemed to be seeded in everyone's mind! After class, other participants and I didn't get to debrief but I could tell by body language that there was a lot of relief and joy just as it was for me.

Did you learn something valuable?

In just one lesson, I learnt that being vulnerable helps to open up dialogue for others to be vulnerable too. I learnt that a snap judgement of someone isn't always the best way of knowing if you are going to enjoy being around a person. I learnt that giving time and space to ground myself before doing something that might be anxiety-inducing is very helpful. As well mindfulness can be done in any activity and is very helpful in finding rhythm. I learnt that I can find joyful movement that doesn't feel like a punishment to myself or my body and doesn't need to change my appearance. Overall, a tremendous amount of valuable insights in just one lesson, so I am eager to know how much more I can take away as the course progresses.



Reflection

Do you normally try new things or do you find it difficult?

I do tend to try new things, but overall I do find it difficult. Social anxiety tends to be a big dictator in what I try and this alone makes it difficult. Another layer of difficulty is my self-esteem in which I don't feel like I belong in certain spaces and I fear someone will say something rude to me about me doing something new. It ties back to social anxiety and being perceived/ judged.

How might trying new experiences enhance your creativity?

Some direct examples from our lecture in week three when looking at divergent thinking trying new experiences can strengthen these skills and thus begin to strengthen your creativity. First, when going into a new experience one might be judgemental and fearful of the process and the outcomes, but with time and repetition of new experiences, the judgement will start to melt away. This leaves room for the key components of deferring judgment such as respecting other possibilities, approaching with a can-do attitude instead of cant, opening one up to new ideas, and promoting a shift in perspective. Just as deferring judgment the ability to make connections within divergent thinking will increase when trying new things because you are creating a roster of nuances in thinking from the new experiences that begin to build unusual ideas and flexible thinking, Lastly new experiences are a novelty in themselves, which in turn relates to the building of divergent thinking skills.

How much do you work towards opening yourself up to new experiences in the future?

Opening up to new experiences in the future feels like something Important to continue to explore I believe that one step toward a new experience has given me more confidence to take some more risks.

Did you feel that this experience helped you think differently?

I believe it strengthened some meta-cognition skills within myself that I wasn't sure existed in me before this experience, For instance, my ability to modify when I wasn't comprehending the steps by listening to the rhythms instead and tapping in when I could get on count. Or utilizing rehearsing by going home and repeating the steps we learnt in class to gain better proficiency for the next lesson.