

Dance as a Family Activity

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Over their lifetimes, children grow and become more competent in building their skills in thinking, learning, emotions, and physical development. Dance has the potential to help families and those caring for young children to grow in multiple, healthy ways.

The activity of dance provides benefits across the physical, mental, and behavioral areas. Physical benefits include weight loss, increased fitness, energy, and strength. Dance also builds movement skills in young children, and helps their young bodies grow strong. Dance participation has been linked to children having better relationships, better interactions with parents and teachers, and improved school performance. Mentally, adults and children who dance together have both increased physical activity at home and improved healthy eating habits.

When dancing together, always try to remember the joy of dancing is in the process. The satisfaction of mastery will never compare to the joy of moving, dancing, singing, clapping, and learning with your child. As adults in this activity, it is up to you to focus on having fun, and letting your children be children. If you can, remember what it is like to be a child, and even let yourself be child-like for a while. There is no safer and more enjoyable time to reconnect with being a child than when you are engaged in fun, physical activities such as dance.

The great part of dance is that you can dance virtually anywhere, anytime, and with anyone: inside or outside, in the morning or evening, with boys or with girls, with older adults and very young children. Learn and use tap dance as a fun, healthy, and engaging family activity.

Dancing has benefits to the heart, mind, and body, and these are benefits to children of all ages. So, find a great playlist that your children will love and learn some great dance steps of your choice. Tap can be a great first to learn and don't worry about mastering it. Dance is just a great excuse to learn something new together. Remember to take breaks, drink plenty of water, listen to your bodies, and laugh a lot!

For more information about Youth Development, contact Jennifer K. Terrell, 4-H Youth Development Agent for K-State Research and Extension, Southwind District at southwind.ksu.edu or 620-223-3720.