



50+Living our best lives now and in the future!

Born to Dance: Empowered through Movement

Reflecting on her life's work, Diane Jacobowitz recalls, "I can't remember a time when I didn't want to dance or when I didn't already know that dance was going to be my life focus." As an accomplished artist, she has choreographed and performed in numerous concerts, appeared in Michael Blackwood's *Making Dances* and other dance films, formed a dance company, and created several acclaimed dance programs for New York City youth. In 'retirement,' she now works with older adults, offering training in Creative Aging in Dance and Essentrics, an "aging backward" fitness program.



Photo by Roberto Falck

Jacobowitz believes "dancing is an instinctive response in the body." Growing up in a home filled with classical music playing all the time, like the *Grand Canyon Suite*, she responded to the melodies by creating dances. Later, when exposed to musicals like *West Side Story*, she "spent hours playing and dancing each part of the story."

By the time she was 13, she was traveling to [Juilliard Preparatory Division](#) on Saturdays. And she joined a teen dance troupe that performed the choreography of the inspiring director/teacher Annabelle Gamson. In college, she majored in Dance at Ohio State University and "learned an extraordinary amount about the larger field of dance—improvisation, choreography, technique, dance history, dance notation, anatomy/kinesiology, and performance." A few years later, she received a full fellowship from Connecticut College and earned an MFA in dance. For 15 years, she also directed and managed her own dance theatre company.

Performing and Teaching

"My company had several residencies and performed throughout the East Coast. I was invited as a guest artist to teach in Taiwan for a few months, which was an amazing opportunity. I created several memorable pieces and was offered a unique chance to show my work at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. I was also teaching at Long Island University as a dance professor." At that point, given the demands of running a nonprofit and wanting to spend time with her two-year-old daughter, Jacobowitz closed her company but soon refocused her energies on reaching out to children.

Creating Programs for Youth

Jacobowitz created the Kids Café Festival, a program that treated young dancers as “artists in the making.” With the success of the Festival, Jacobowitz created Dancewave, a dance education nonprofit organization that focused on serving those who could not afford the price of dance education. Since then, Dancewave has brought free dance to tens of thousands of New York City children in public schools. Through Dancewave, Jacobowitz created pre-professional dance companies, annual College Dance Symposiums, and a community dance school for all ages.



Aging & Training for Rejuvenation and Healing

Essentrics: Jacobowitz studied and practiced for years to reach a Level 4 Essentrics Certification. This unique fitness program is a transformative ‘aging backward’ technique that stretches, strengthens, and rebalances all 650 muscles in the body. Essentrics is renowned for its focus on healing and bringing back youthful resiliency and health to the body.

Healing from a Hip Replacement: After a hip replacement “last year, followed by a rib fracture, shoulder impingement, and greatly restricted arm movement, I stopped teaching but continued doing Essentrics classes very gently for myself. I am now so grateful for how this program helped my body heal and allowed me to feel like I could move more fully.” Jacobowitz has resumed teaching Essentrics.

She can be reached at dbjznew@gmail.com or through her website, [Fitness Empowerment](#); you can sign up for a free trial class.

Creative Aging in Dance: “Creative aging is an exciting new field that approaches aging from an empowered point of view.

It is founded on the idea that the elder years are a time of rich experiences, a celebration of life, and a time to explore creativity!” Jacobowitz recently started teaching Creative Dance in addition to Essentrics. “This is not a fitness program but a way to encourage everyone to move in their own unique way.”

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

“I am currently in the process of getting certified in EFT (Tapping); it is part of a growing field of ‘energy medicine’ that addresses physical pain, reduces stress and anxiety, improves performance, lessens food cravings, helps resolve fears...” and much more. Read about this simple technique to reduce on the Fitness Empowerment [website](#). Diane offers free consultation sessions.

Also, you can watch Jacobowitz explain EFT in a Coming of Age NYC [webinar video](#):



Relaxation

“I tap, which helps me relax. But I love to cook dinners with my husband, ride our bikes, and take long walks regularly in the park near our house. I also love to read!”

Advice for Others

“Find a way to move that makes you happy” and one “you can keep up consistently.” She also encourages “people to learn to tap to relax their stress and not get emotionally overcharged... I am creating a healing workshop incorporating the many tools and techniques I have used to heal myself.” In addition, Jacobowitz stresses the importance of expressing gratitude in our lives. “I find there is so much to be grateful for...It’s crazy, but when you acknowledge how much you have, the world becomes fuller, richer, and a better place to live in.” And, of course, our opportunity to participate in it is also a gift.”

Dancing and Cognitive Performance

Research suggests that dancing “interventions lasting between 10 weeks and 18 months were related to either the maintenance or improvement of cognitive performance.”

Essentrics: Research about Benefits for Older Adults

In a 2021 research article published in *the Journal of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine*, Essentrics is described as

“a type of guided exercise program similar to Tai Chi and Yoga.”

Reported results of a small, qualitative study suggested Essentrics improved perceived flexibility, balance, posture, and overall energy.



In a 2022 *Journal of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine* review, authors emphasized the importance of age-appropriate exercise and suggested Essentrics was suitable for older adults. Further, the authors noted this form of exercise may help reduce chronic pain and “May improve the health of older adults, including those dealing with chronic diseases and decreased mobility and aerobic capacity.”

Strong, Flexible Feet for Better Balance

I have practiced balance exercises for the past decade, primarily because my daughter-in-law, Marki James, DPT, told me how important it was to do so as we age to limit the risk of fall-related fractures.

Recently, I’ve become more aware that foot exercises are also part of working on my balance. A September 2023 AARP article, “Ten Foot Exercises for Balance and Stability,” suggests we must keep our feet strong to avoid falls. The author offers ten exercises for improved foot stability. One of the suggestions I like involves putting a towel under a foot, keeping the heel on the ground, and then using the toes to “curl the towel toward you until it is bunched up.”

Knowing I routinely work on my balance, a friend and retired health professional, Tess Marino, sent me Carol Clements’ book, Better Balance for Life. Clements, who has “more than forty years of experience as a personal trainer and dance therapist,” provides several illustrated balance exercises that are easy to incorporate into our daily activities. Some of the exercises she offers also target the feet, including toe stretches and ‘big toe’ routines.



Why not resolve to treat your feet to some great care in the coming year? *Paula Marie*

Keep it Moving

Twyla Tharp created dances for the Joffrey Ballet, the New York City Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, and more. In her 2019 book, Keep it Moving: Lessons for the Rest of Your Life, she writes from the perspective of a seventy-eight-year-old who isn’t done yet, “Like the dancer, you have dozens of ways to mark your day—creative, substantial ways of integrating physical activity with whatever else occupies your time.” Her suggestions can be easily integrated into our daily activities, like paying attention to our posture when in a meeting, taking the stairs instead of the elevator when shopping, or intentionally parking at a distance in a parking lot.

A Gift for Your Brain in The New Year

For years, research has shown that healthy eating, getting sufficient sleep, managing stress, maintaining social connections, and regular exercise are essential to healthy aging. Some current research also reveals that cultivating the habit of life-long learning is crucial for living our best lives.



In one [study](#), for example, participants ranging from 58 to 86 years old were asked to “simultaneously take three to five classes for three months.” Cognitive assessments were administered before, during, and after the study period. The results revealed that in just six weeks, participants “increased their cognitive abilities to levels” like younger adults—even decades younger.

Purpose and Mental Well-Being

“Based on data from tens of thousands of individuals and published in the [Journal of Clinical Psychology](#),” findings suggest “that having a sense that your life has meaning and direction can influence your mental well-being.”

We’ve Lived a Few Decades and Know a Thing or Two

Remember the Farmers Insurance slogan, “We know a thing or two because we’ve seen a thing or two?” That catchy slogan doesn’t just apply to insurance. Those who have been around for a few decades have seen, heard, learned, and gained more insights than some might imagine.

Contributing to the Oct./Nov. 2023 *AARP* Magazine, Diane Von Furstenberg suggested we ask

how long people have lived rather than how old they are. She suggests it could change everything.

If we ask others how long they have lived and what insights they have gained, we may discover that we are surrounded with more wisdom than we might have imagined.

Each of us has different knowledge sets, experiences, insights, and more that could lead to wisdom others need.



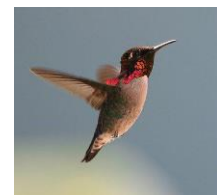
Younger Individuals May Know a Few Things We Don’t

Wise people recognize that they don’t know everything about anything. We all have much to learn. Younger generations grew up in a different world than those of us who are 50, 60, 70, and beyond. Asking what younger people think, know, and what they hope for in the future could be enlightening for all of us.

Thank you, all who have shared your wisdom with us. May we not only continue to share but also continue seeking the acquired wisdom others can offer.

Happy Holidays

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season with a renewed sense of purpose and hope for the future.



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