

## Dance for the Right Reasons

If you want to be successful and happy in your middle eastern dance career, whether you are a professional or a hobbyist, you need to have a healthy, positive, and realistic outlook toward the dance.

The primary reason that you dance should be that you love to dance. The act of using your body and brain to express emotion and interpret music should give you inner joy.

If you use middle eastern dance as a means to an end (as opposed to an expression and celebration of your self), one of two things will happen:

- Your dance will be limited by your goals.
- The dance will disappoint you in the end.

I took up middle eastern dance for two reasons: I loved to dance, and it sounded like it would be fun. I have stayed with the dance because I fell in love with it. I have been dancing for almost 25 years, and the dance has never disappointed me.

Many dancers, however, *have* disappointed me. And having an analytical personality, I have tried to understand why.

I have come to realize that the dancers that I enjoy and respect obviously love to dance, and love this particular dance. The good things that have happened to them as a result (recognition, respect, self-fulfillment, and empowerment) have happened because they loved to dance.

The dancers that disappoint me are those who are using the dance for other purposes:

- I want to be the center of attention.
- I want people to look up to me.
- I want people to think I'm beautiful.
- I want people to think I'm sexy.
- I want recognition and power.
- I want revenge for some perceived insult or disrespect.
- I want to make money shaking my booty.

In other words, they want the dance to give them something that they haven't found in their real life. They don't find it, but they keep trying, becoming ever more frustrated and unhappy. This unhappiness is reflected in their dance and in their relationship with the dance community.

Middle eastern dance can be a catalyst for improving your life, but it is not a magic elixir that will cure all that ails you and makes you unhappy in life. If you are not ready to change, the dance cannot change you.

When I watch a truly superb middle eastern dancer, one particular trait stands out: Playful, exuberant self-confidence. These women like themselves, know their inner beauty, and love that the music and movements of middle eastern dance allow them to express those feelings.

Dance for yourself, and the world will dance with you.