

Dance Yourself Free



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Free dance? – Not for me, I always thought. About seven years ago I found myself taking movement classes that next to choreography included segments of free dance. “Move your own way,” the instructor would cheerfully shout out and go about joyfully jumping, gliding, or whirling around the room. Following choreographed steps made me pleased with what I saw in the mirror – grace, beautiful posture, physical confidence of “I got this...” Left to my own devices, I fumbled, I froze, I felt ridiculous. Disconnected from the music, the class, the body, and myself. Give me some choreography please, quick!



Hiie Saumaa, photo by Eliane Baggenstos

This is how my journey into the world of free dance and creative movement started. Little by little, through regular practice of working with my mental and physical resistance, I became more at ease exploring my own movement. All of a sudden I realized that my body possesses a vast knowledge – I have a lot to tell via my body! Movement vocabulary is close to infinite! Enthused, I started to explore. What parts of the body do I sense when I move? How does that sensation

change when I invite my awareness to travel to a different part of the body? Or the space around the body? The ground underneath my feet? Can I sense my bones when I move? My muscles? My skin? What about my heart? How does my body respond to music? I got very curious about movement and imagination. I learned to turn inward, to dance from the inside out. My body began to educate me in trusting my own movement impulses and intuition.

Practicing free dance increases your wellbeing, ease, playfulness, gives rise to states of flow, makes you more graceful, joyous, relaxed, positive, creative, and perhaps even more loving. But importantly, we need to practice moving our own ways because it connects us to the realm that many of us on a deep, experimental level do not know that much about – our own bodies and our inner being that expresses itself through movement. One reason why free dance can be intimidating is that when we do not follow someone else's steps and create our own, we also reveal something vital about ourselves. We let ourselves be seen. A non-judgmental and supportive environment is paramount for free movement expression to flourish.



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Engaging in free dance and creative movement affects you by liberating and bringing forth your own voice as a mover. Finding your style as a mover can powerfully impact how you think about and use your voice in other realms? in how you write, teach, conduct meetings, raise your kids, choose your clothes, cook your meals... Finding your movement voice allows you to get a deeper look at who you are, at what makes you unique. That voice teaches you to embrace and treasure how you sense and express yourself in movement. Ultimately, my daily search for and practice of my movement voice is a

yearning to connect to "me." It's a journey to the core of the self.

Written by Hiie Saumaa for bodono. Photos of Hiie Saumaa by Eliane Baggenstos.

Hiie Saumaa, PhD, teaches classes and workshops in sensory-based dance modalities, creative movement, somatic awareness, and meditation. She is a certified Nia dance, JourneyDance™, and BodyLogos® Active Meditation instructor. Hiie teaches courses in literature, philosophy, and writing at Columbia University, her alma mater, and her scholarship explores early twentieth-century movement educators and the interconnections between literature and kinesthetic imagination.

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