

Why every woman should learn to Bellydance!

By Lurainya Koerber

Invite a woman to take part in a Bellydance class, and she'll probably giggle and say, "Oh, I could never do that"! Usually that means she *would* never bare her belly, thinks she *could* never be able to move like that, or doesn't think good girls *should* move like that. To any woman who's ever been curious about taking a Bellydance class - it's *not* about baring your belly; if you find the right teacher you *can* learn to move like that; and again, the right teacher will show you there is *nothing* dirty about this dance. It's about taking pride in being a woman and learning to love your body for what it is.

Unfortunate stereotypes associated with this dance can deter women from wanting to learn more about it, robbing them of the opportunity to experience all the amazing benefits this dance has to offer; because *every* woman can find a home in this dance! For most, that's in a classroom or living room enjoying the exercise, camaraderie and costuming! For some, that graduates into being a dedicated, disciplined professional. But no matter where you fit into this dance, it's important to *respect the training and the history*.

Most people don't know that this was a dance created *by* women, *for* women, and was used as a form of childbirth preparation; so it really is a celebration of the feminine. The benefits are endless and apply to every woman no matter her age, size or shape. It's great exercise, toning muscles you never knew you had; but at the same time it's a gentle workout that makes it safe for every body type. It's the most fun you'll ever have in a workout:

TOP TEN BENEFITS!

- Improves posture** - with constant strengthening of the postural muscles women measure taller at their doctors office, and chiropractors say it keeps the spine straighter!
- Improves body image and self-esteem**; so important for today's young women and girls!
- Teaches the muscular control needed throughout the course of childbirth** – Bellydance was around long before Lamaze!
- **Improves confidence** – Making you feel like a different person at school, at work, at home, and just walking down the street!
- Improves concentration**- students with ADD and ADHD have noticed a difference in their ability to focus due to the intense muscle control requiring tremendous concentration.
- Improves coordination** – learning to isolate different body parts

enhances the mind-body connection!

-Improves balance and grace – even those thinking there's no hope can learn to become balanced and graceful!

-Gives a gentle cardio workout - increasing the heart rate to burn fat!

-Tones muscles- works every muscle in the body, even the ones you never felt before; with strong focus on the '**core-muscle groups**' that everyone is so concerned about these days!

-Increases flexibility – you'll notice an improved range of motion throughout the whole body!

This dance's history is as rich as the benefits. There is a growing awareness sweeping the nation as to the truth about Bellydance. It is a respectable art form, fun for everyone, and is good for the mind, body and soul! Start now!

Read on for 10 Tips and Bits!

What's in a Name: The authentic term for Bellydance is Raks Sharki, Arabic for Dance of the East. The term Bellydance was first coined by the Europeans who viewed the dance; to them it looked like the belly was dancing.

History or Herstory: Bellydancing is a form of the oldest known documented dance. It was a dance created *by* women, *for* women, as a form of childbirth preparation. Many of the movements and the intense muscle control, specifically in the abdominal region, are helpful to pregnant women up to and throughout the course of labor.

Evolution and Involution: While still maintaining the benefits of childbirth preparation, the dance became a form of entertainment and celebration. As a dance of such antiquity, it's difficult to trace all of the developments throughout time; but it's thought to have begun its worldly migration around the 11th century when the Rom (more commonly known as Gypsies) left India and traveled throughout the continent. In doing so, they left traces of their music and dance that would meld with the already present styles of each region.

American Arrival: It's believed by many that it was first seen in America in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair where dancing girls from Egypt were one of the main attractions.

Culturally Characterized: There are many different forms of this dance throughout the world. Depending on the region stylization of costuming, music and movement can vary greatly. Some dancers prefer traditional styles like Egyptian or Turkish, while some prefer to fuse characteristics from many styles of world dance; contributing to

the continuing evolution of this art form in America.

Live it, Love it: Although different, each style of world wide shares the basic movements and conveys a celebration of the Feminine. Wherever the artistic preference may take the performer, one commonality amongst true professionals is that this dance be presented with respect. Because in the heart of most who live it and love it, Bellydance by any name, remains a dance by women, for women.

What a Workout! Find a teacher that stresses proper posture and technique, and you will find a full body workout; because when done correctly, Bellydance works *every muscle in the body!* Most notably for the beginner will be the toning *and* strengthening of *all* the abdominal muscles and *all* the postural muscles, along with the arms, shoulders, gluts and quads. Additionally, *calories* will burn! The amount depends on the endurance of each individual, but like any aerobic exercise, as the endurance increases, so will the amount of burned calories!

Baring your Belly: One of the many misconceptions about this dance is that you have to bare your belly. *Wrong!* Whether you're in class or performing, it is not about baring your belly. It's about *movement* of the mind, body and soul. In fact, traditional costuming leaves very little exposed. It's the more modern costuming typically associated with the dance that leads people to believe one must bare their belly in order to Bellydance.

Who can? You can!: Bellydance is the perfect full body workout for *every woman; no matter* her age, size or shape! Yes, it will take time to learn, because to do it *correctly and safely* is hard! Isolating and controlling individual muscles takes a great deal of concentration, and so exercises the mind as much as the body! Find a teacher you're comfortable with, be patient with yourself, and stick with it.

Everyone's time line for learning is different, but the *great workout, rich rewards, and fun* start right from the very first class, and never end!

Lurainya's Locations: Current classes with Lurainya are held in *Doylestown* at the Dragonfly yoga Studio, in *Furlong* at the Pilates for Sport Studio, and in *Hatboro* at the Sandi Spicer Dance Studio. Details at: www.MoonGypsy.net