

# Social dancing – good for the body and mind

By Valerie J. Nelson, Los Angeles Times

Far older than most of the regulars at his weekly South Bay swing-dancing class, the World War II veteran invariably shuffles in, sidles up to his instructor and unwittingly gives voice to a scientific truth: “I’m here for my anti-aging therapy and happiness treatment.”

Dancing has long been lauded as a great physical workout, yet research has increasingly shown that social dancing, such as swing, a lively, improvisational style that requires rapid-fire decision-making in concert with a partner, is also beneficial to both mind and spirit.

Doctors have prescribed her dance classes for patients dealing with depression, and many students have recovered from “horrible divorces” while learning the free-spirited Lindy Hop or the jive on her dance floor, says Rusty Frank, who has taught swing dancing since 1988 at her Lindy by the Sea school in El Segundo.

Engineering students at Northwestern University in Illinois are encouraged to swing dance in Whole Body Thinking, a class aimed at helping science majors, who are known for relying on the analytical left side of the brain, to flex their creative right side. At Cal State Long Beach, students who are thinking about dropping out have been advised to take social dance classes before making the decision.

Dancing also strengthens the immune system and increases the ability to deal with stress, says Phil Martin, a dance instructor at Long Beach since 1983, who conducts research on the exercise benefits of dance.

**Read the whole story**