



# Larrys Corner

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This is called Larrys Corner because when I teach I stand in the corner so I can see everyone.

If you want to read dance stories they are under Headlines or Larrys Corner.

[Http://www.comedancewithus.com](http://www.comedancewithus.com) Or  
<http://www.dancempls.com>

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Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future Newsletters. If you have anything you would like to write about, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry. I enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

## CENTERING

Logic tells us that any object has only one "Center". I am frequently asked for an opinion on making dance decisions - based on who I thought was right and who was wrong. Fortunately - through years of practical experience, I have observed that both parties are usually saying the same thing - but expressing it in a different way. I have a favorite saying: "NOTHING is wrong - if you are accomplishing what you set out to do." The flip side of that is that "what you are setting out to do" might not be the highest level **that you are capable of performing.**

My MAIN concern is seeing student progress. I have spent, and continue to spend, many hours dissecting information - and rearranging that information in ways that will assist the dancer in developing better dance habits. It is important to me that the student be able to apply new concepts - once each concept has been presented.

On the subject of "Centering" - ***The Universal Unit System***<sup>®</sup> recognizes **one center**. (Center Point of Balance) However - we acknowledge and regularly refer to - **three separate ZONES Shoulder, Hip and Center. These three zones overlap and work together. The Center Zone houses the CPB (Center point of balance) and is in control of the other two zones, unless there is an isolation move.**

**Shoulder Zone:** Encompasses the area from the top of the shoulder, down to the bottom of the rib cage. (Includes both the Upper Right and Left Quadrant.)

**Hip Zone:** Starts at the top of the hip bone and goes down to where the leg connects to the hip. When isolated, hips can produce movement that comes from working the knees. How-

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ever, hip movement that is controlled from the "center" is much smoother and looks more professional.

**Center Zone:** Covers the lower edge of the rib cage - down to the upper edge of the hips. This area ties the Shoulder Zone and the Hip Zone together - through the medium of the "Center Point of Balance" - located at the Solar Plexus, precisely below where the rib cage meets. The "Center Zone" ties all three Zones together in order to produce an upper level degree of movement.

**Let's pretend that you have a wide back support belt around your waist.** (You can even purchase one at your local medical supply.) Place this wide support tightly around your center, with the top of the belt barely covering the lower ribs - and the bottom of the belt - barely covering the top of the hipbones.

This "support" has now pulled the body all together into one Dance Machine. Once this whole "Center Zone" gets toned and under control - you can pull it all together into the top of the Center - which is the location of your **"Center Point of Balance" (CPB)** When you concentrate on that Center - and start moving from that center - you will feel the effect in all three zones. A feeling of "connectedness" develops. You begin to experience a cooperative effort in your entire body. It's a very secure feeling. You can experience this feeling rather quickly with the aid of a support belt - or you can experience this same feeling by pulling all of your abdominal muscles in and up - starting low in the power base (way down in the groin) and moving upward into your CPB.. This second process takes a little more time and practice - but it's worth the effort. It feels like someone squeezes all of your Center area - up into your middle - forcing your CPB upward - while the shoulder area comes back and down. **To get a stronger feeling of the shoulder area going back and down, I'd like to suggest we concentrate on the "Centering Knob" that connects the base of the neck to the top of the spine. Press that area backward and it immediately pulls the upper body into line. Ladies refer to this as the Goddess knob simply because of the dramatic change that takes place. You can see and feel immediate change, which encourages the development of body flight.**

**Locating your own "Center Point of Balance" (CPB)** - Unlike a center of mass (used in martial arts for a lower base stance) - or a center of gravity, which seems to change location with different body types - the "Center Point of Balance" is located in the same place on every person, regardless of size or shape. It is **located in the Solar Plexus** - right in the center - just below where the ribs come together. If you stand with your feet together - you will find that you can move your "derriere" 5 inches forward - backward - or sideways - and still not lose your balance or have to move your feet. You can do the same with your head, shoulder, arm, or foot. But NOW - Move your "Center" (solar plexus) only 3 inches in ANY direction - and you will **have to move a foot** because you have moved your "Center" (CPB). That is the basis of "Centering".

Another way to identify the location of your center is to pretend that your body is a mannequin. Place a fist into it's Solar Plexus - well above the waistline - and well above the naval. Placing a fist in the Solar Plexus area - we could lift the mannequin a few inches off the floor. The feet would fall directly under it's "Center" and the mannequin's head and shoulder area would stay upright. If we placed a fist in the lower abdomen - it's top half would fall over. If the fist is placed in the shoulder area - it would immobilize the shoulders - producing stiffness and a lack of flexibility. It is really amazing to see the change in level of performance - once a dancer tightens all three zones and focuses on moving from the "Center Point of Balance."

**Individual Centering:** Being "Centered" requires running a straight line up from the **Power Point** in the foot - through the knee - up through the **Power Base** (groin area) and on up through the **"Center Point of Balance"** - all in one coordinated movement. This allows the body to land precisely ON the beat of the music. Good individual "Centering" produces great

posture and a good sense of body dynamics. It creates a combination of power and control that produces a more professional performance. You can identify this look on specific dancers, but if I tried to list the ones who have it - I would certainly miss someone and get myself in trouble. The next time you are in the presence of upper level dancers - simply social dancing - be observant. You will be able to identify **that extra element of "centering" by the tingle in your own spine.**

**In evaluating the performance of a Ballet Dancer** - or a Jazz Dancer - the same degree of professionalism exists. Movement can be classified by how well the dancer moves from his or her "Center" - and not from the foot. Professional Dancers are not evaluated by how fast they dance - or how complicated their material - but how well the body moves from their center.

**Foot FOLLOWS Frame** The center moves first. Once you can control your center to move on the "&" count - prior to a weight change, moving from the center becomes the focal point of **all** movement. That one skill - immediately adds an extra "Dynamic" to your dancing. You will be able to FEEL the difference. It may take a little time before you can maintain that feeling - but just feeling it once, allows you to experience the **dynamic** that is possible. It is all within your grasp.

**Partner Centering** is easier to perfect - if the individuals involved are actually "Centered" themselves. However - **one partner, well centered - can have a positive influence on the total performance of the other partner.**

**Stage One** in learning "Partner Centering" is the "Flashlight Technique" - This is a process where each partner aims their center - either toward each other - or toward the direction of the next move. This helps even basic dancers start to feel the control that takes place, once the "connection" starts taking place in the centering process.

**For the Man:** His "Flashlight" (Center Point of Balance) - will be aimed either at his partner - or in the direction that he wants the partner to travel. This creates a strong connection - without the necessity for arm leading - and also maintains a cleaner slot. (A wonderful feeling for the follower.)

**For the Lady:** Her "Flashlight" will aim at her partner's chin. This tends to lengthen her upper torso - which in turn develops better posture and centers her whole body toward her partner's center. As her upper body rotates in various patterns, her "Flashlight" will return to him as quickly as the tempo of the music allows. This one technique alone - will elevate any performance that was in need of better centering.

**Competition Observation:** "Centering" toward the judges is not considered good taste. There are times when centering to the judges is part of the natural unfolding of a routine - or times when both partners are actually **facing the judges**. However, there are also times when either the leader or the follower seems to center their "Flashlight" toward the judges instead of toward their partner - when it is not appropriate. In judging circles, it is referred to as "mugging the judges". It is particularly noticeable when the lady faces the judges on every anchor instead of facing her partner. This not only detracts from the performance - but loosens the connection of the partnership. So flashlight your partner not the spectators, not even a judge.

**Stage Two of developing "Partner Centering"** requires more control of each partner's individual "Center". More than having each partner simply face each other - a certain degree of leverage (based on tight control of the three zones and a lifted "Center") develops a more professional "body attitude" - which is the hallmark of the upper level dancer. When two partners are really "Centered" to each other, an astute observer becomes aware of the action/reaction that takes place in a split second. When you are part of the partnership - you will feel that action/reaction. The leader's "Center" moves on "&a" - and the follower reacts to that lead. This allows both partners to land at the same time - precisely on the beat of the music. Both part-

ners may choose to dance different rhythms - even different syncopations - and yet they can still be totally "Centered". Although their "Centers" are actually connected through the hands - the connection is "rooted" (connected) to the center.

**Teaching Technique** - At Intensives, I use slightly flexible ropes to show how the "Center" can do the leading - without using the muscle in the arm. The rope is wrapped around the man's chest - at "Center" level - while the lady holds on to the end of the rope. He moves his "Center" in the direction that he wants the lady to go - and she follows effortlessly. Their hands are not connected - and yet she is able to follow his lead. In the real world - the lady sometimes has to compensate for an arm lead in order to make the move look more fluid. However, the reverse is also true. Men complain that some ladies strong-arm their partners, believing that they are doing a better job of following. When judging a competition, It is sometimes impossible to determine who did what to whom - because "arm leading" leads to "arm following" and perpetuates the problem from both sides. The more each pattern is led from the "center" of the leader, the smoother the development of the partnership.

## DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE

**DANCERS! ENJOY DANCING TO THE FULLEST!**  
Let's All Practice Dance Floor Etiquette!  
**MANY DANCERS AND MANY STYLES OF DANCING CAN BE ACCOMODATED ON THE FLOOR AT THE SAME TIME, IF TRADITIONAL DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE IS FOLLOWED. LETS ALWAYS BE COURTEOUS, AND WE'LL ALL HAVE A GREAT TIME DANCING!**

