Stick to the Basics - **Reading**  Outside Change July 2019

Did you look at the picture first? How many seconds/minutes did it take you to get to the title and author of the article? Were you interested or concerned about the credentials or background of the author(s)? When was the last time you actually read or studied a book or instructional syllabus on ballroom or Latin dancing? In our era of *INSTANT* everything, social media has lured us into the “right now” or abbreviated form of information intake. Have you become gullible to believe or depend on whatever magazine is on the table or whatever primary feature pops up on the internet or Face Book?

Carefully reading the articles in Outside Change has sharpened my focus on what the judges are looking for and what my priorities need to be as a competitor and performer. I’m also becoming more disciplined to watch for the biographies and qualifications of contributors. If I see a difference of opinion on certain subjects, I go back to review the author(s) credentials, then take my thoughts and questions to my instructor.

Fast and furious is the tempo of the business of dance as well as information technology. We need to be cautious, to train ourselves to read through dance contracts, event programs, and our instructional syllabus for the dance(s) we’re working on. Oh, did you even ask for a copy of the syllabus, or check the origination of the course work for which you are paying a substantial amount?

I am a “hands on” learner, or in this case a “feet to the floor” learner. Reading instructions was never my favorite thing to do. Usually I tore into the box and tried on my own to figure out the A’s and B’s or Steps 1, 2, 3. Most often I just wasted time and had to go back to the beginning, pull out the instruction form and start over. My current instructor has been patient, very patient with me. I came to him after 14 years of dance and thought I pretty much had it all together. He has persistently taken me back to some basics and with my attention to his detail, he has caught me up and moved me ahead in 6 ½ years.

We make written notes during each lesson; I am certain to read those notes before our next lesson and am prepared to review before moving forward. I quickly learned he is extremely intelligent and mentally captures/stores all elements of our lesson. (I’m the one who carries the written notes home.) Trust me, all this study doesn’t minimize the fun of the footwork; it enhances it.

**Read your contract; Read your syllabus; Read and re-read your lesson notes!** If timely and thorough, it will stir you to increased progress and pleasure in your dancing.

To the dance professional: You may be certified, have substantial years of experience, and hold international dance titles, but please be aware of the current written material intake of your students. If they come to you with questions on an opinion expressed, they need a clear and correct response to ground them for future growth. You can’t control or mandate their reading habits, yet some guidance as to proper and productive reading resources might prove to be helpful.