

When Life Asks You to Dance, Say Yes

“Come on, let’s dance.”

An attractive young woman was standing in front of me, holding out her hand. I was sitting next to my wife, Laurel, taking a break from a ballroom practice night at the RJ Dance Studio.

Those four unexpected words provoked an intense reaction.

People talk about mixed feelings. My mind and gut were way beyond that. During the few seconds it took me to reply, my emotions were whirling at warp speed in a turbo-charged Dilemma Blender.

Laurel and I had noticed the woman and her male partner soon after we’d walked onto the dance floor. Good dancers are impossible to miss.

My wife and I, we’re competent, but eminently missable. We can dance most ballroom styles in a workmanlike manner. Meaning, we know the moves, but style tends to elude us.

Mostly because of me.

Early on in our dancing, when we’d insanely started taking Argentine Tango lessons, arguably the most freaking difficult dance for beginners to learn, our instructors said, “The man is always wrong.”

Having been married for many years, I already knew that. But ballroom dancing highlights this truth since the man leads, and the woman follows.

So when something screws up on the dance floor, generally the man takes the blame. Further, if the leader’s repertoire of moves is limited, the woman has to follow along, though she may be capable of much more.

Which helps explain why I was temporarily paralyzed after hearing “Come on, let’s dance.”

This woman and her partner were very skilled. I was more than twice her age, and had less than half of her dancing ability.

I'm pretty sure West Coast Swing was the style being danced that night. Though I'd taken a bunch of lessons, I knew that my swing was on a way lower branch of the dance tree than this woman's.

I'd never seen her before. I had no idea why she wanted to dance with me. I envisioned making a fool of myself with many people watching.

Yet I heard myself say, "Sure." I took her hand. We started dancing.

My fears vanished. She was a lot of fun. Moving with her made me feel like a better dancer. I realized she could do her styling thing, while I did my basic thing, and it was all good.

After the song was over I asked her how long she'd been dancing. "Just a year or so," she said. I told her that was amazing, to be so talented, so fast.

"I'll tell you my secret. I dance with as many different people as possible. I learn something from everybody."

Well, I sure learned from her.

Life is nothing but a dance. Each of us is constantly getting enticing invitations to get up and boogie. We shouldn't let fears stand in the way of saying yes.

When you think, "Geez, this is scarily crazy, yet I've got to do it!" — that could well be your sanest moment.

Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like. Brian Hines blogs at hinesblog.com