

Hi everyone,

Last month I spoke of making space for new growth. The seeds we have sown are now seedlings in need of nurturing. We nurture seedlings by keeping them moist and warm. We nurture a campfire with tinder and a spark. We nurture relationships by tending the embers as well.

When we think of nurturing ourselves as dancers, it brings to mind taking care of ourselves physically and mentally (so we can be like our friends who dance into their 100s). We do this by eating right, exercising, spending time with friends, getting enough sleep, and taking care of our bodies.

I was once told that getting old simply meant having more body workers on your staff. Having hands on bodywork can be a wonderful nurturing experience for anyone, and especially dancers and others who are physically active. This is so important that multiple people I know travel long distances regularly to receive the bodywork they know works for them.

Bodywork does two wonderful things, not even counting the physical improvement and changes due to the treatment itself. One, it provides healthy touch in a safe environment, much like dance. Two, you get a chance to be the focal point of dedicated attention, much like dancing in someone's arms. Either of these is nurturing alone, and the combination is unbeatable.

However, nurturing is not coddling or protecting you from the world. In the plant world, one part of the nurturing cycle includes something called hardening off, whereby plants coddled and tenderly raised indoors need to be slowly acclimated to the outdoor environment. With children, the same thing applies - babies get coddled and need protection to be nurtured, while toddlers need to risk falling down in order to learn to stand on their own.

We nurture ourselves as dancers when we learn a new dance skill. While it feels great when you first learn a new dance, dance step, or dance tune, it takes repetition to really make it your own. Only seconds are required to start any action, but to convert that action to a habit requires that you integrate it into your life again and again. The act of repetition nurtures new learning and builds strong roots.

If we examine what we are currently nurturing in our lives, we see what we really value. What we focus on grows. We may want to consider nurturing areas we are currently neglecting. Nurturing, however, takes time and energy. If you are lucky enough to have many areas you want to nurture and have time contention, it may help to prioritize your values and explore how you are using your time in light of them.

Nurturing is not limited to the individual, but can be extended to an idea or experience. When we attend an evening of dancing, play dance music, expand our repertoire of dances, bring friends to a dance, or are otherwise active in a club we are nurturing our local folk dance community.

NFDI's mission is to encourage the study and advancement of folk dancing and its related arts, and to bring recreational dancing, instruction, and performances to the Northwest. In a nutshell, NFDI's goal is nurturing folk dancing. You can nurture NFDI in many ways. For example, you can keep your membership current, donate to the scholarship funds, give friends gift memberships, join the board, participate in a committee, become an editor, buy an ad, write a column for the newsletter. Spread the word!

Excellent advice for life I've heard recently: nurture yourself by finding your joy and sharing it. Let's dance!