

Dancing and LGBTI+: Expressing yourself and fighting stereotypes

At every point in history, communities of all kinds have used a variety of methods to preserve their culture and values and to pass them on to the next generation. One such powerful tool is dance.

Expressing yourself through body movement is challenging but at the same time a fun, sobering and energizing experience. Dance is one of the best ways to express yourself without necessarily needing special training or knowledge of a certain language and terminology. It only takes a drop of imagination and courage to start dancing.

So in societies where a certain lifestyle is not well accepted (such as being LGBTI+), dance serves as a non-verbal way of expressing one's identity, emotions and experiences. It allows many LGBTI+ people to show their true selves through movement rather than through words that can be twisted or used against themselves.

Another important element that helps LGBTI+ people is the dance hall and the friends they meet through art. From this point of view, if you can find an accepting and supportive environment, it will allow you to transform the negative energy you have built up into something positive. In this context, your friends will support and understand you without limitations and prejudices. For the LGBTI+ community in Bulgaria and around the world, finding like-minded people who will not judge a person just because of their sexual orientation is of infinite importance.

Dance, in all its styles, provides the perfect opportunity to enjoy moments of freedom where you can be your absolute self and show your colours without fear of judgment. When this happens alongside people who support and understand you, you realise that you are not alone and that there is hope - a priceless feeling. Whether you express your ideas verbally, in writing, through dance or in any other form, you have the opportunity to represent our community's problems, evoke empathy or even offer solutions in a way that is accessible and capable of creating real positive change.

The art of dance can be a powerful tool to combat prejudice and serve to raise important issues that we need to talk about as a society. With its unique ability to connect people regardless of their identity, dance helps us create an accepting world for all. Dance is a universal language that crosses borders and unites people of different cultures, ethnicities and beliefs. It is a bridge between differences and a tool to overcome stereotypes. In the dance hall, people are not defined by the color of their skin, their sexuality, the shape of their body or their religion. They are guided solely by their movements, style and energy. This unique aspect of dance is especially important for the LGBTQ+ community, who face prejudice and discrimination on a

daily basis that puts enormous pressure on mental health. In the dance environment, people from our community can be accepted in their full glory

I offer you a challenge - take some time for yourself and feel the emotions you are experiencing at this moment. Choose a song or music that can describe those emotions, like a 30-second piece and choreograph it. Just like that, without rules or inhibitions, express yourself while no one is watching. Sounds liberating, doesn't it?

As an additional task, I challenge you to record yourself on video with your phone and share it with a few people of your choice. Ask those chosen what emotion they feel you are expressing through this dance. You will be surprised how many people will understand your art and emotions.

Be strong and be yourself. Never forget that dancing is capable of boosting your self-confidence and self-esteem, and by perfecting it, you will be better prepared to handle the challenges that life throws at you.