

Level T

Athletic Identity / Dancer Identity

Dance can become a huge part of our identity.

It can give us:

- Purpose
- Confidence
- Community
- A sense of accomplishment
- A way to express ourselves

But sometimes, our identity as a dancer can become so important that it feels like our whole identity.

We may start to think:

- “I am a dancer.”
- “If I can't dance, who am I?”
- “What else do I have?”

When dance is going well, this may not feel like a problem.

But injuries, auditions, rejection, time away from dance, or eventually leaving dance can make it especially important to have other parts of ourselves to lean on.

More Than a Dancer

We are not only dancers.

We may also be:

- A friend
- A sibling
- A student
- A creative person
- A partner
- A teacher
- A musician
- A member of a community
- Someone with interests outside of dance

These other identities matter.

Having interests outside of dance does not mean caring less about becoming a great dancer.

It means giving ourselves other ways to experience meaning, connection, creativity, enjoyment, and accomplishment.

In the long term, developing different parts of ourselves can help us navigate the changes that naturally come with a dance career.

Remember:

Being a dancer is part of who you are. It does not have to be all of who you are.

When you invest in other interests and identities, the goal is not necessarily to step away from dance.

The goal may simply be to make sure there is more than one part of you that gets to grow.

Confidence, Comparison, Mastery & Reset Strategies

The Four P's of Confidence

Confidence is not simply something we either “have” or “don’t have.” It is something we can build and strengthen through our actions, experiences, and mindset.

1. Preparation

Confidence grows when we know we have prepared.

Preparation includes both:

- Physical preparation: Practicing skills, rehearsing, training, conditioning, and developing the physical abilities needed for performance.
- Mental preparation: Visualizing, using mental routines, setting intentions, practicing focus, preparing for challenges, and developing strategies for managing pressure.

2. Past Experience

Look back at times when you have performed successfully.

This does not mean that every past experience needs to have been perfect. Instead, reflect on moments when you:

- Handled a challenge effectively
- Performed well under pressure
- Recovered from a mistake

3. Passion

Confidence can grow when we reconnect with why we participate.

Reflect on the value, meaning, enjoyment, and purpose you find in your art form, sport, or performance activity.

Ask yourself:

- Why does this matter to me?
- What do I love about what I do?
- What makes the effort worthwhile?

4. Persistence

Confidence is built through repeated action.

We can use these strategies again and again—not only when we feel confident, but especially when we don't feel confident.

Remember:

Confidence is both an emotion and a behavior.

Sometimes we feel confident. Other times, we may not feel confident at all, but we can still behave confidently.

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Comparison

Comparison is a normal part of being human. We all compare ourselves to other people, and comparison can have both helpful and unhelpful effects.

There are two common types of comparison:

Upward Comparison

Comparing ourselves to someone who we perceive as being ahead of us or performing at a higher level.

Potential positives:

- Motivation
- Inspiration
- Learning from others
- Identifying areas for growth
- Seeing what is possible

Potential negatives:

- Putting ourselves down
- Feeling inadequate
- Losing sight of our own progress
- Focusing exclusively on what we lack

Helpful reframe:

Instead of “I’ll never be as good as them,” try:
“What can I learn from them?”

Downward Comparison

Comparing ourselves to someone who we perceive as being less advanced or successful than we are in a particular area.

Potential positives:

- Gratitude
- Perspective
- Greater appreciation for our own progress
- Increased confidence in ourselves

Potential negatives:

- Putting other people down
- Feeling superior
- Using someone else's struggles to make ourselves feel better

The goal is not to eliminate comparison. Instead, we can become more intentional about how we use it.

Ask yourself:

Is this comparison helping me learn, grow, appreciate, or reconnect with my values—or is it pulling me away from those things?