

Professional Ballet Program #7

Finding Your Optimal Performance Zone (IZOF)

- Explain the basics of IZOF (Individual Zones of Optimal Functioning)
- Identify their emotional, cognitive, and physical markers of peak performance
- Distinguish between intensity vs. type of emotion (e.g., calm vs. energized)
- Recognize early warning signs of dysregulation
- Apply at least 2 regulation strategies before or during performance

Today we're going to talk about something that every dancer experiences—but not everyone understands:

why you sometimes dance brilliantly... and other times don't.

Before we start—there's no 'right' personality or emotional style in ballet. Some dancers thrive on adrenaline. Others on calm. Our goal is to figure out *your* version.

Understanding IZOF

- Performance = being in your *individual optimal zone*

“Think of your performance like a dimmer switch—not just on/off.

Too low = flat

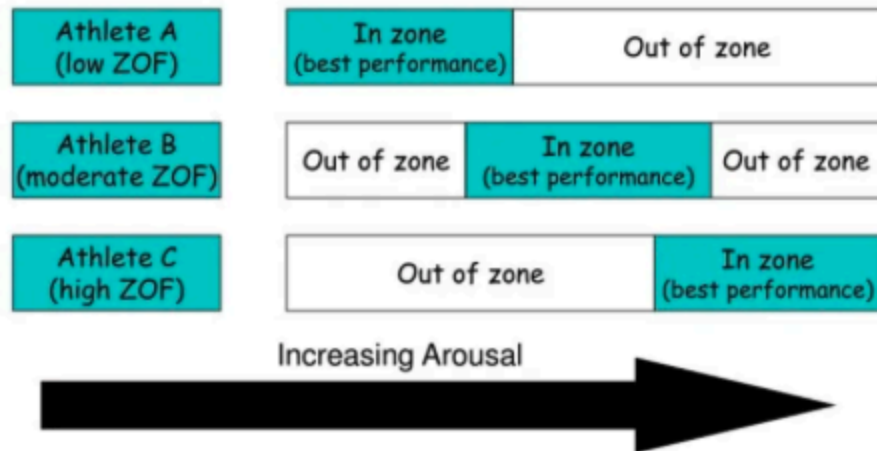
Too high = chaotic

Just right = expressive, controlled, present”

The “goldilocks zone”



Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning (Hanin)



An athlete will enter the zone when arousal is at an optimum level and the situation matches the athlete's strongest attentional style.

Ballet-Specific Examples

State	What it looks like in ballet
Under-energized	Marking full-out, low jump, no projection
Optimal	Musical, expressive, controlled technique
Over-energized	Rushing, gripping muscles, and balance errors

Mapping Personal IZOF

● UNDER-AROUSSED

Not just “lazy”—can be:

- Mentally disengaged
- Emotionally flat
- Technically safe but uninspired

● OPTIMAL

- Not perfect—**functional and expressive**
- Mistakes may happen, but performance feels connected

● OVER-AROUSSED

- Often mistaken for “trying hard”
- Actually reduces coordination and timing

Important:

- Same emotion can exist in different zones
 - Example: “Excitement” can be helpful OR overwhelming

STRATEGY TOOLKIT

If UNDER-AROUSSED (Need ↑ activation)

- Small jumps, fast footwork
- Short quick breaths
- Cue words:
 - “Attack”
 - “Sharp”
- Upbeat music
- Social energy (talking briefly with peers)

If OVER-AROUSSED (Need ↓ activation)

- Inhale 4 → Exhale 6 (longer exhale = calming)
- Shake out tension
- Slow tendus with focus
- External focus:
 - Music
 - Spatial awareness
 - Artistry
- Cue words:
 - “Lengthen”
 - “Breathe”
 - “Smooth”

If IN OPTIMAL ZONE

- Avoid overthinking corrections
- Stick to routine
- Trust muscle memory

MY IZOF PERFORMANCE PROFILE

1. My Peak Performance Snapshot

Performance/Event: _____

Emotions I felt:

- _____
- _____

Energy Level:

LOW — MEDIUM — HIGH

My body felt:

- _____
-

My focus was:

- _____
-

2. My Zones

UNDER-AROUSSED

Emotions:

- _____
-

Body:

- _____

Thoughts:

- _____

 OPTIMAL ZONE

Emotions:

- _____

Body:

- _____

Thoughts:

- _____

 OVER-AROUSSED

Emotions:

- _____

Body:

- _____

Thoughts:

- _____

3. My Warning Signs

I know I'm UNDER when:

- _____

I know I'm OVER when:

- _____

4. My Regulation Plan

To increase energy:

- _____

To decrease energy:

- _____