

Level 6A

Unhooking From Thoughts

As a dancer, your mind is going to produce thoughts constantly. Some thoughts may be helpful, while others may be distracting, critical, or anxiety-provoking.

You might notice:

- I'm going to mess this up.
- I should be better at this by now.
- What if I forget the choreography?
- Everyone is watching me.
- That turn wasn't good enough.

The goal isn't to stop these thoughts from showing up. The goal is to notice them without getting pulled into them.

One way to practice this is through three simple steps:

1. Notice

First, notice what is happening in your mind.

"I'm having a lot of thoughts right now."

You don't need to change them or figure them out. Just notice.

2. Name

Put words to what you are experiencing.

You might say:

"I'm noticing a worry."

"I'm noticing self-criticism."

"I'm noticing the thought that I'm going to mess up."

Naming what is happening can help you create a little distance from it.

3. Refocus

Once you've noticed and named the thought, ask:

"Where do I want my attention to go now?"

Bring your attention back to something that helps you perform:

- The music
- Your breath
- Your partner
- Your timing
- Your feet
- The next movement
- The next eight-count

You don't have to get rid of the thought before you refocus.

The thought can be there while you put your attention somewhere else.

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STOP-RESET-REFOCUS

Sometimes thoughts aren't just distracting—they can make your whole mental workspace feel overloaded.

Think about your working memory like a desk.

When your desk is clear, you can easily find what you need. But when papers, notes, choreography, corrections, worries, and reminders are piled everywhere, it becomes harder to find the one thing you actually need. The same thing can happen during dance.

You might be thinking about the choreography, your teacher's correction, your technique, the dancer next to you, whether you are keeping up, and what happens if you make a mistake—all at once.

Your mental desk gets crowded.

STOP-RESET-REFOCUS gives you a way to clear some space.

STOP

Pause and notice that your mental desk is getting crowded.

Take a breath.

"I'm feeling overwhelmed right now."

You don't have to solve everything.

RESET

Create a little space.

Take a breath. Feel your feet on the floor. Relax your shoulders. Let yourself slow down for a moment.

Ask:

"What can I let go of for right now?"

You don't need to clear the entire desk. You just need to make enough space to find what matters next.

REFOCUS

Choose one thing to put back in the center of your attention.

Ask:

"What matters right now?"