

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could become sexually alive, alleviate depression, mend your broken heart, enliven your marriage and ultimately reclaim your feminine power through belly dancing? This exciting guide book shows you how to do just that!

I Know Who I Am When I Belly Dance!

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**I Know Who I Am When I
Belly Dance!**

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Interior photography by Larry Grant

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my sisters on the belly dance path. May you fully embrace the power and beauty of the Divine Feminine and help uplift humanity and our Great Mother, the Earth.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

A Transforming Healing Art

In my first book, I introduced the belly dance with step-by-step, how-to dance instructions, as well as shared the meaning of the dance, its connection to childbirth, its history and my own dance story. In this book, I hope to lead you to deeper, transformative aspects of the dance and its capacity to heal your body, mind and soul. After 19 years of dancing, I am inspired to present a book that offers belly dance as more than a sensual art. I am inspired to offer the belly dance as the purest form of art: *a transforming healing art*.

Belly dance has the power to enable us to integrate the feminine and masculine within us so we may achieve balance in our lives. Many of the moves no doubt came from our ancestors observing different aspects of nature: a leaf quivering in the wind, ocean waves and a snake's undulations. Belly dance therefore offers a means for us to harmonize with Mother Nature. Being quintessentially feminine, belly dance teaches us to connect to attributes we call feminine. I believe that as we come to value these attributes we define as feminine (compassion, understanding, cooperation, creativity, intuition, and the ability to set boundaries and to care for ourselves as well) we usher in the traits humanity needs at this dire time in history.

As a belly dancer, I experience the strange sensation that I live in three completely different worlds. Throughout the day, I find myself preoccupied with my dutiful roles as wife, mother and wage earner. Then, in my classes, I transport myself into a beautiful, time-honored, ancient past where the pace of life is slow, soft, sensual and oriented toward nature.

Daleela Morad

Finally, while performing, I become a glamorous, sexy and sophisticated woman of the world. Whew...no wonder I'm tired by the end of the week!

Like many men and women, I grew up learning to devalue feminine attributes as inferior to male attributes. But, as I continued with my dance studies, I found myself slowly becoming a different woman. Dancing with bare feet connected me to nature and to the Earth, moving to the powerful rhythms of the drum grounded me, dancing soft, circular movements connected me to a healthy sensuality and a primal female energy I had lost long ago.

As I learned to belly dance, I began to recognize the strength and power inherent in female qualities. I began to connect to a long lineage of women who identified with their feminine natures, who were in tune with the cycles of the moon and connected to their bodies in a way modern women are not.

A belly dancer is often the shadow side of the modern day woman who lives from her neck up, too busy to feel, too stressed to enjoy her body, always doing, but rarely *being*. A belly dancer is an earthy woman, connected to her feelings, to gravity, to the soles of her feet. She is a creature of the earth, often symbolic of motherhood, possessing rounded hips and a belly. She is a powerful earth woman who is aware of the spirituality inherent in her sensuality, and who honors her body and her feelings. She is not about denying her flesh or her emotions, but about embracing both body and feelings in honor of the Divine Earth Mother.

To belly dance means to slow down, to connect to one's body and deep feelings, to go back before the advent of modern civilization when our ancestors lived closely connected to nature and to one another. This dance art

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epitomizes female energy at a primal level. It embodies all traits thought of as earthy and therefore female. As we learn to value all that is feminine, including nature and the belly dance, we will learn to value our Mother, the Earth.

Our planet needs tremendous healing. I think both men and women feel this need on some level. What can we do? As men and women, we can begin to value the feminine within ourselves in order to value our Mother, the Earth, the feminine without. But we cannot do this if both sexes continue to deny the value of female attributes, if we continue to live detached from our feelings, our bodies and our feminine spirits. We must all embrace and heal our feminine sides in order to heal the planet.

Belly Dance as Therapy

Because this is where my experience and knowledge lie, I will write primarily from the female perspective *addressing* women. However, there are many men who belly dance, and who gain similar benefits from this ancient art form. Throughout this book, please keep in mind that much of what I share about this dance may also apply to men who study the art.

The exercises, meditations, suggestions and advice given in this book are not intended as a *substitute* for a good therapist, but may be used as a supplement to professional counseling.

Belly dance affords you the opportunity to begin to heal from deep inner pain, to start to discover your lost sensuality and the power of feminine energy (within both sexes). You will learn how with the appropriate focus, belly dance may serve as a tool to begin healing yourself at an emotional, mental and spiritual level.

Daleela Morad

You probably realize that belly dance is a great strength training and aerobic workout, but you may not know that it also possesses the power to alleviate depression, help heal sexual trauma and connect to others through mutual empowerment and healing.

When I encourage you to belly dance, I recommend this as a professional therapist and as a professional dancer. As a dance teacher, I have seen many shy and introverted women blossom into confident and powerful dancers. This confidence and sense of personal power often translates into their day-to-day lives. I have seen women who were ashamed of or disconnected from their femininity embrace their female traits and female power. I have witnessed young girls who started dancing as young as age five learn to love their developing bodies. They gained a sense of themselves as women as they developed into adulthood.

Connecting to your body through music and movement may help you release repressed feelings. Unlike your thoughts and feelings, your body eventually reflects whatever difficulties you may be encountering. Your body will never lie to you. If you are chronically depressed, your posture, stance and gait will quickly reveal this. If you have carried anger for a long time, your muscles will become chronically tense. If you have not yet released a past trauma, your body will hold onto the emotional impact of the trauma and often manifest the emotions as a physical illness or as pain.

From the onset of this book, I want to make crystal clear that when I suggest belly dance as a therapeutic path, I don't suggest you aim to dance professionally. On the contrary, it is more therapeutic to dance for fun, at home with a video, an inspiring book, or in a class with a good teacher who will introduce you to the joys of the belly dance.

Belly Dancing to Mend a Broken Heart

Have you ever felt addicted to a man? After he left you, did you feel as though you would never feel alive again or ever fall in love again? This chapter shares how belly dancing may become addictive also, but in a good, life-giving way, not like an unhealthy, life-draining relationship. In this chapter, I share a short story about how Sylvia was able to break her addiction to a man who wasn't good for her and how she found a deep feminine power and wisdom again. At the end of the chapter, you will find a list of what to do to begin to mend your broken heart.

Belly Dancing to Alleviate Depression

Belly dancing allows you to begin to heal the emotional wounds lodged in your body, wounds often created by societal beliefs that result in devaluing the feminine. Through belly dancing, you will learn that traits thought of as female, such as creativity, receptivity, sensitivity, sensuality and empathy, are powerful, *not weak*, once you own them and use them to balance your masculine traits.

Also, belly dance may act as a powerful moving meditation with the capacity to alleviate depression simply by releasing your pent-up anxieties, fears, and anger, feelings we all experience throughout our lives at some time or another. Using belly dance as an avenue for emotional expression and for experiencing a greater connection to one's body is immensely therapeutic for depression. Because depression is characterized by feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, once you begin to experience greater mastery over your body and emotions, these feelings may lift. The basic body stance in belly dance, which thoroughly grounds you, by itself begins to create a foundation

of physical strength and begins to free up old patterns of disassociation and repression.

You will discover the power to begin to lift yourself out of depression by embracing a dance companion that will never leave you. As a belly dancer, you have an outlet for unacknowledged feelings or fears. As you begin to own your repressed side (or shadow side), you will learn to value your power as a woman and rediscover your self-esteem.

Reclaiming a Healthy Sexuality

Belly dance may help heal your sexual wounds. Can you think of a better way to push your sexual hang up buttons than through connecting to the sexuality of your body as you gyrate your hips, undulate your belly and shimmy your shoulders? Learning this ancient dance becomes a beautiful opportunity to face your fears and begin to heal. Connecting to your sensuality is the first step to connecting to your life energy and to creating healthy sexual patterns.

If you have suffered from physical or sexual trauma, at a very basic, instinctual level, you may claim ownership over a body you may have dissociated from long ago. You may recapture the sensual joys you once experienced prior to having been traumatized. You may connect to and then release the trauma lodged in your body by owning your pain. You may come to integrate all the scattered aspects of yourself into a unified whole.

A Mental Discipline

Mentally, this dance is a focused discipline, requiring your dedication and practice, as well as your creativity. Because the dance demands that you

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learn to isolate numerous muscles, it requires tremendous concentration, focus, determination, practice and patience. It is as much a mental discipline as it is a physical discipline. As with any dance form, learning dance steps, combinations and traveling steps will help you to improve your memory and spatial abilities. Also, pouring your mental energy into dancing will make your daily troubles seem miles away. You will leave your workout or class feeling energized and ready to take on the world. This dance is a marvelous mental stress reducer.

Enlivening Your Marriage

Because belly dance helps you become fit as well as helps you learn to accept your body as it is, you will actually become more beautiful and more sensual for your significant other, as well as for yourself. As you become stronger, both physically and emotionally, this will transfer over into your love life. You will learn fifty delightful ways to entice your lover using role-plays, Arabian fantasies, belly dance sexual techniques, tantric sex principles and the element of surprise. You will use your aphrodisiac powers to entice your husband or to find a husband!

After many years of being with the *same* person, you may add spice to your marriage or significant relationship. If you feel your marriage is stale or down in the dumps that sense of playfulness, joy and romance that initially drew you to your beloved will return. Your husband or lover may himself heal as a result of your own healing. You and your marriage may come alive like never before!

Connecting to Your Spirituality

So what is spiritual about belly dance? Belly dance possesses the capacity to connect you to the feminine face of God because it is earthy and feminine. As a woman who belly dances, you will have the opportunity to tap into qualities often devalued by the larger patriarchal social system, qualities such as sensuality, sensitivity, intuition, receptivity and emotional expression. You will begin to feel more alive through valuing feminine aspects of yourself you may have previously denied, minimized or devalued.

As a spiritual discipline, the dance will never let you down. On the contrary, with the appropriate focus, belly dance may become a spiritual path or even your “church” as one of my fellow dance teachers put it. It may become a means for you to connect to the Divine Feminine or to Mother God. Because it epitomizes the feminine, it connects you to a primal female energy you may have disassociated from years ago in order to become successful in a man’s world. In the following pages, I invite you to reclaim this primal female power, because it is your birthright.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could become sexually alive, alleviate depression, mend your broken heart, enliven your marriage and ultimately reclaim your feminine power through belly dancing? This exciting guide book shows you how to do just that!

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