

## **Where is Your Weight?**

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Where is your weight...in terms of how are you accommodating/shifting \*on your feet\* in order to execute movement in a beautiful way.

Have you ever really thought about what it feels like \*in your feet\* when you are moving like a belly goddess? Knowing where your feet are and \*why\* can make a huge difference in the way your dance looks.

For instance...hip slides. Pretty easy move, yes? Unless...your feet are too far apart. If your feet are too far apart, it makes it nearly impossible to keep the pelvis parallel to the floor as the hips slide from side to side. If your feet are right under your hip bones (and your pelvis is tucked!) you can slide more easily without dipping the hips down at the edges of the movement.

But there is more to weight placement than just knowing where your feet are.

Weight placement has everything to do with how the movement looks from a traditional dance standpoint. (If you are a tribal/fusion goddess, this dynamic has import for you as well!) I teach traditional style dance, and traditional style dance is about entertainment, but it is also about *representing someone else's culture*. Therefore, with a responsibility like that, it's really important that we strive to convey the essence behind the movement, and in order to do that, we need to know where the movement is coming from.

(I'm going to talk mainly about hip movements here, but know that there is definitely a weight placement dynamic to rib cage movements and arm movements as well.)

Let's look more closely at a horizontal figure 8. We can stand with our feet placed right below our hip bones, and without shifting weight, execute a very small and tight figure 8. (Go ahead, try it. I won't tell your boss...)

So we can do that tiny little figure 8. If we don't shift our weight at all, it is rather small and uninteresting.

Now, let's do the same movement while thinking about shifting our weight. With feet still placed right under our hip bones, we're going to shift the weight to the right foot, to the ball of the foot specifically. Your right hip should naturally now be pointing itself at the right front corner of your space.

Now shift the weight to the heel of your right foot as you make a half-circle with your hip. Ta-da! We just did half of a horizontal figure 8. Now for the other side.

From here, without thinking too much about it, I want you to shift your weight to the ball of the left foot, then to the heel of your left foot as you make a half-circle with your hip. WooHoo! We just did a horizontal figure 8.

And you're thinking yeah, I've done that a thousand times.

But have you really?

Let's give this weight shift thing some cultural context.

It's hot in Cairo. I mean \*blazing\* hot, like 120F. So when the dancing starts up, no one is looking to do

any more work than is absolutely necessary. So they take it easy.

Go back and think about how engaged your muscles are when you do that tiny little no-weight-shift figure 8. You're using a whole lot of muscle and a lot of work to accomplish it.

Now think about shifting your weight to get the same movement from your body. It definitely feels different. It looks a bit different too, although they would be labeled as the same movement. The difference is that *you are using your skeleton to do most of the work for you.*

Which one do you think you'd rather do if it were 120F where you are?

Bottom line: Muscle-based movement vs. skeleton-based movement. The weight shift is one of the most culturally recognized dance movements in Egypt, but very few people talk about it because they don't think about it; they just do it. It is much more skeleton-based than what we usually think of here in the west.

And what exactly is it that they do? They shift first, then they move. Simple.

Now take that concept and start applying it to ALL the movements you know.

SHIFT-MOVE, SHIFT-MOVE, SHIFT-MOVE.

You'll be dancing like an Egyptian before you know it. ;)

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