

We were in the doctor's office considering knee replacement surgery for my wife, an art teacher at an elementary school. He showed us X-rays of her knee, and discussed with us the treatment possibilities. One side of one knee was very badly damaged, and he suggested that a partial knee replacement would give her perhaps up to ten years of improved performance. Then he asked a simple question.

"What are your expectations for your activities after the surgery?" And I am sure that he awaited a typical response such as running, tennis, or hiking.

She surprised him, though, when she immediately answered, "I want to be able to dance with my students!"

I am sure that he had never heard that response before. But to Soozie, this was a critical need in her life – she needed to be able to show her kids how to express joy. And they, especially the kindergarteners, really love to dance! It was magical to them, and amazing to watch. They begged for attention to show off their fancy footwork, which of course looked more like random spasms of all of their various arms and legs and even heads. One of her first graders, named Rashob, told her, "I am the greatest dancer in the world! Everybody loves me!" Who was she to argue with him?

The important thing is that nothing worries these children when they are dancing. Soozie has to let them dance to energize them in the later part of the school day, as they typically start to wear out about that time. But she has certain rules that they must follow:

- 1) they can't touch anyone unless they are holding each other's hands
- 2) they can't run

They must stand behind their row of chairs to dance. They say, "Ms Soozie, watch my feet!" They cannot stop the flow of creative movement. And then little Sarah would say, "Thank you for dancing with me, Ms Soozie!"

Once during some kind of "dress-up" day, one of her little friends (Stevie) came in to show off his costume. He was dressed as a banana, and posed for several pictures. He insisted on "busting some moves" for her on the floor (though these were performed very slowly). Then he got very serious and said, "Ms Soozie, I got a problem! I need help fast! I gotta go to the bathroom!" He couldn't get out of his costume by himself, but she was able to "peel" it just in time.

If you follow the Peanuts cartoon series, you know how Snoopy dances with reckless abandon. The children show the same exuberance until they are told that they cannot dance by older children or adults. The Peanuts Christmas video has dancing along the same line, and we have fun imitating some of the moves. Someone has said, "Dance like no one is watching," and I believe that is the story of David's great dance¹. He didn't care who saw it or judged it.

I can't dance at all, probably because I was never encouraged when I was at the malleable age, but after seeing Soozie's kids dance, I realize that real dancing is not a matter of putting feet on the floor in a certain well-defined pattern, but rather openly expressing the joy of life. Out of the feet of babes...²

1. 2 Samuel 6:12-15
2. Matthew 21:16 (KJV)