

# When You Do What Makes You Come Alive, Everyone Wins

*Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. – Howard Thurman*

This is one of my favorite sayings. No one can say it better than Howard Thurman. But sometimes life experiences can say it better even than him.

I went dancing in downtown Charleston last Saturday night, and I met someone who was doing what made them come alive.

She (“R”) was going at the lindy hop with infectious joy. She was dancing like no one was watching, and she was pulling off expert moves with grace. R can't have been doing it for more than a few years, but she was clearly already sold on swing dancing as a way of life. I learned later that she dances something like twice a week – hardcore commitment from someone who I presume has studies or work.

I can do the simple six-count swing – nothing compared to the Lindy Hop. When I got a chance to join R for a song, I confessed my own awkwardness. I expected that I'd be a bit of a letdown compared to her more expert partners.

If I was, she didn't show it. She went at simple dancing with as much joy as she took on more complex steps. She encouraged me and showed no pretensions despite her skills.

I got the feeling that whatever happened that night, if R was dancing, she would be happy. She was doing the one thing that made her come alive.

That wasn't just something that made her night a good one. It added life to my own. It made her a great dancing partner for a lot of people that evening. And (with some help from the other dancers) it brought a new level of life and cheerful openness to almost everyone in the room.

People typically think that making the world a better place has to come from a place of sacrifice, duty, pity, or concern. R wasn't coming from any of those places. She was eager to chase down the feeling swing dancing gives her. I'm pretty sure she was going at it without much thinking about anything else – including other people.

We were all better off because she was. And we're all better off when we do what makes us come alive - whether it's swing dancing or sword-fighting or dolphin-training (if you do any of the above, let's be friends. You are an interesting person).

Of course, that's no original insight. But taking a spin on the dance floor with R was a singular experience of that truth about life.