

# Step back and dance

If you've watched *Dancing With the Stars* or *So You Think You Can Dance?* you will understand that great dance combinations require more than just talent. It's the way the two people move together that dictates the strength of the partnership. And so it is with successful relationships.

In most relationships one partner tends to move towards their partner while the other steps back. It's called the pursuer-distancer cycle.

Do you find yourself always initiating opportunities for togetherness or time to talk about the relationship? Or are you the person who needs more space than your partner, especially after an argument?

The person who makes the moves towards their partner often feels they are always seeking. The person who moves away may feel overwhelmed by the fact that their partner is always demanding something from them.

Partners who distance may have felt swamped and overwhelmed emotionally as children and they can take this attitude into their adult relationships. Partners who pursue may have felt that love and attention were withheld from them as children, and they try to get it from their adult relationships. The fears of each partner can lead to a power struggle between the two "dancers".

There is a simple solution: pursuers have to back off a bit and give the distancer some space. The distancer partner then needs to step in and initiate connection, say by a hug or meaningful conversation.

It is very important for relationship equilibrium that the distancer makes the first move if the pursuing partner provides adequate space.

What underlies this dance is that both the pursuer and the distancer may not trust that their partner wants to keep "dancing" with them, and that they may prefer a different partner.

This is where a leap of faith is needed. We all fear rejection and vulnerability but it's only when we let ourselves be vulnerable to our partner that real intimacy will happen.

The stage is set for relationship growth when one person does what doesn't come naturally, and it's even better when both do it.

## Survival tips

- **Couple relationships often have a pursuer-distancer pattern, so some fine-tuning may be needed to keep both partners happy.**
- **If a pursuer chases too hard for the increased intimacy, the distancer simply withdraws further and it becomes a dance of frustration**
- **The best dancing is about give and take. Give your partner adequate space if you are a pursuer. Move towards your partner if you are a distancer.**