

## HOW TO TACKLE HIP PAIN AND FLEXIBILITY ISSUES.

Expert  
Advice

## HIP HELP

I have hip pain that is hindering my flexibility, and glucosamine and chondroitin supplements don't seem to help. How can I make the pain go away?

—Ariana Gast

Pain in the front (anterior) of your hips, where your thighs meet your pelvis, is a common problem for dancers who train intensively. For younger dancers, the cause is usually not the hip joint itself, but rather the fatigue or injury of the muscles that move the hip joint.

There are four main hip muscles: the rectus femoris and sartorius in the front of the thigh, and the psoas and iliacus above the pelvis. When you injure one or more of these muscles, they spasm, or tighten up, to protect themselves. Muscles in spasm will pull on the hip joint, make it less flexible and cause pain. The problem can worsen with time, so consult a sports injury specialist or physical therapist right away for treatment.

All dancers, especially those with an injury, should warm up their bodies *before* starting dance class warm-up. Arrive early to jog in place for five minutes to get your blood moving, then stretch your injured area. After class, ice your injured area for 10-15 minutes. You mentioned glucosamine and chondroitin, which are over-the-counter joint supplements thought to repair and promote reformation of cartilage in your joints. These supplements may help the pain associated with joint injuries, but take a number of weeks before you feel any relief, and will not heal a muscle injury.

—Jack R. Giangulio, DC, backstage chiropractic physician for Ballet Pacifica and California Riverside Ballet

## FLEXIBILITY FRUSTRATIONS

I love to dance, but I'm not very flexible. I want to major in choreography in college and become a choreographer, not a performer, but I'm afraid I'll be looked down on because of my lack of flexibility. Should I even consider a career in dance at all?

—Gwen Sheppard

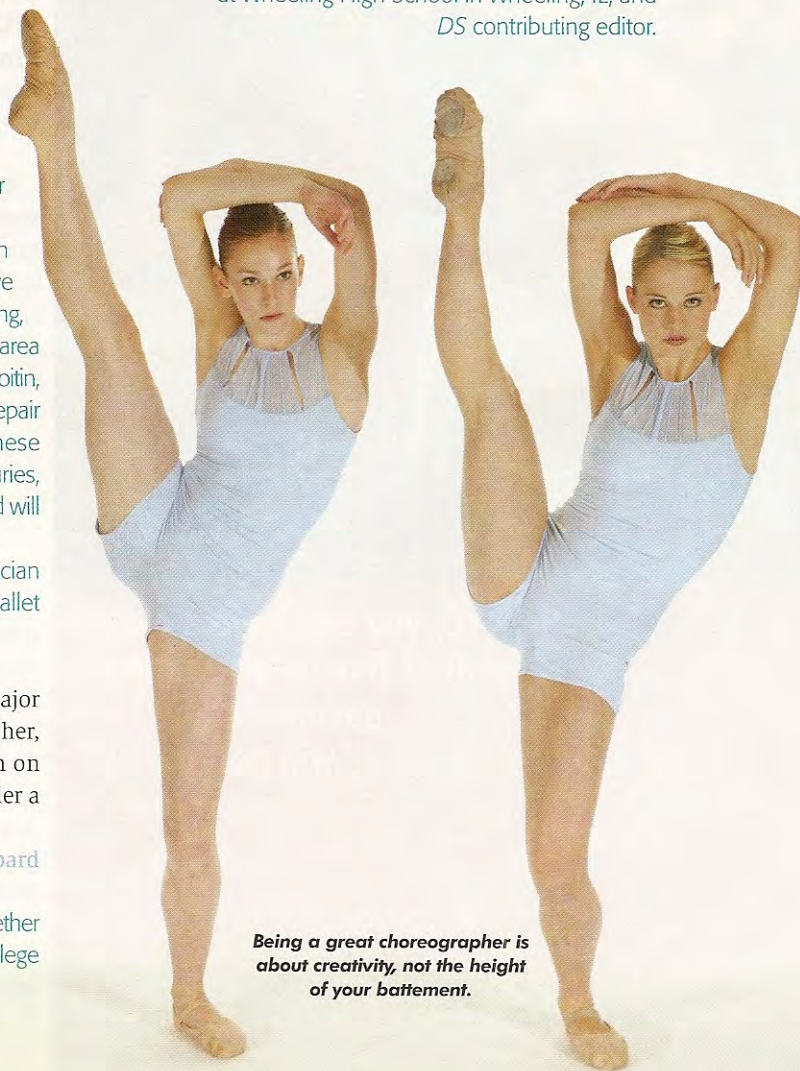
Of course you should! Your flexibility is not a measure of whether or not you have the ability to choreograph. But since all college

dance programs require technique classes, you should work with your current teacher on increasing your flexibility.

Focus on your potential, not your limitations. A choreographer's creativity is more important than his or her technique or flexibility. In my experience teaching choreography at the college and high school levels, some of the most memorable works were created by those who think outside the box, not just those who are great dancers. Explore what type of choreography you are interested in: Do you see yourself in musical theater, traditional concert dance or the commercial dance industry? After you decide, research college programs that offer choreography emphases that match your interests.

Choreographers must know how to work well with people. Your choreographic vision becomes a reality only when you can clearly communicate your ideas with dancers and the audience. Capitalize on what you can offer and remember that desire and determination go a long way.

—Diane Smagatz-Rawlinson, MFA, dance teacher at Wheeling High School in Wheeling, IL, and *DS* contributing editor.



*Being a great choreographer is about creativity, not the height of your battement.*