

Summary of survey responses from TCA Chat, April 15, 2014: "Why Won't that Person Dance with Me?"

The following is a general summary of responses, not a comprehensive listing.

Women—17 responses

The reasons I won't dance with someone include:

1. We dance different styles (i.e., open vs. close, etc.).
2. Personality perceptions: negative disposition, seems unfriendly/intimidating, openly critical of my dancing, seems to think he is a tango expert.
3. Hygiene and appearance: Body odor, cologne, alcohol, tobacco, too sweaty, shabbily dressed, he's too tall or short for me to dance with comfortably.
4. Awareness and respect: Repeats moves that are uncomfortable/difficult for me to follow (and he doesn't sense this); uncomfortable embrace; dances repetitively; lack of awareness of partner, connection, creativity, and musicality; poor balance.
5. Floor craft: Dances wildly, doesn't respect or seem aware of other couples on the floor.
6. *Codigos* (etiquette): Doesn't use the cabeceo, talks too much while dancing.
7. He doesn't participate in the tango community—doesn't mingle, converse, or show interest in others.
8. He prefers to dance exclusively with 1-2 partners.
9. I'm not dancing with anyone during this tanda because I'm resting.

I think some leaders don't want to dance with me because:

1. We dance different styles (I like close/open embrace; he likes the opposite).
2. Personality perceptions: I talk too much when I dance.
3. Hygiene and appearance: Body odor or cologne; my appearance or style of dress; my weight, height, or age.
4. Our connection is poor due to differences in technique, musicality, or height.
5. Our levels of technique are different: Whether this is a real or perceived difference, one of us is more advanced than the other, and one of us may be intimidated.
6. Familiarity: I'm not one of his favorites; he doesn't know my name; he thinks I won't dance with him.
7. He has others he wants to dance with first.
8. He's not dancing with anyone during this tanda because he's resting.

Men—16 responses

The reasons I won't dance with someone include:

1. We dance different styles (i.e., open vs. close, etc.).
2. Personality perceptions: She has a sense of entitlement; she's aloof, critical, or rude.
3. Hygiene and physical attributes: Body odor, cologne, different heights.
4. Technique: Her technique doesn't improve and she doesn't seem to try; she hurts me physically when we dance; she has a reputation for hurting others (unled boleos, kicks, etc.); she has a poor connection to her partner/the music.

5. *Codigos* (etiquette): Doesn't use the cabeceo, cabeceos too aggressively (e.g., staring or "stalking").
6. I have my favorites for specific orchestras; she's not on my dance list for the evening.
7. I'm not dancing with anyone during this tanda because I don't like the music or am resting.
8. I'm not familiar with her.

I think some followers don't want to dance with me because:

1. We dance different styles (I like close/open embrace; she likes the opposite); I don't dance elaborate steps.
2. Personality perceptions: She doesn't like me; I look grumpy; she's a snob.
3. Physical attribute preferences: Age, height.
4. Different levels of technique: She's more advanced than I am.
5. Familiarity: She's worried about dancing with someone new; one of us is a newcomer or has low status in the community; she's afraid of me.
6. She doesn't like the way I dance.
7. She's not dancing with anyone during this tanda because she doesn't like the music or is resting.
8. She is involved in conversation.

Comments from the discussion

Sam's idea in suggesting this as a topic was to get what every leader would like every follower to know and vice-versa.

Anonymous comments from audience members at the end of the women's session:

- Many women who are new to tango do not turn down men when asked because the men are doing the women a favor by asking them.
- One person said she has never turned anyone down and that it's very hurtful when people turn her down or do not ask her.
- The cabeceo can protect both leaders and followers from feeling ashamed, embarrassed, hurt, etc.
- Some men feel uncomfortable interrupting women who are talking or on the phone, but interrupt anyway because the women may not be tuned in to what's going on. Some men have been told that it's fine to interrupt a conversation a milonga; others said the social acceptability of interrupting varies by community.
- Show of hands: How many women wouldn't mind being interrupted in conversation to be asked to dance? Almost every woman raised her hand.
- It's important to pay attention to the music and whom one would like to dance with for that tanda. There's a small window of opportunity to grab the ideal partner for that music.
- The follower needs to show eagerness to be asked, not just at the end of the cortina, but also at the end of the first song.
- One person said she has a deeply ingrained cultural difficulty with the cabeceo because of looking a man directly in the eye (cultural message: You'll get into trouble doing that).

It's hard for her to cabeceo someone she does not know; she is most comfortable with people she already knows.

- One person said a friend of hers who was new to tango reacted flirtatiously to the cabeceo and did not hold the man's gaze, but rather looked away coquettishly and back to him again, missing the opportunity to accept the social invitation.

Anonymous comments from audience members at the end of the men's session:

- What does "low status" (see presentation) mean? One person said there's a pecking order akin to being a freshman. People who are new to a community can have that feeling; it's natural.
- The "Connections are important ..." comment on the last slide refers to the embrace/connection. Sometimes the connection is really great one week and maybe another time it's a disaster. That's normal; it's like having a different mood every day.
- We're fortunate to have this large, friendly community. The Santa Fe community tries to emulate Albuquerque's community dance ritual.
- Others hear many comments from outside Albuquerque about how friendly and welcoming we are. Some men always ask a new woman to dance and vice-versa.
- One person said that when he was a beginning/intermediate dancer, there were 3-4 women in the state he really wanted to dance with, but he could tell they really didn't want to dance with him, so they avoided him completely. Eventually he got to dance with them and realized that they were just avoiding dancing with him; it wasn't that they didn't like him. It was nothing personal.
- A few people may carry grudges for a long time that are hard to forget.
- There isn't any reason to be unkind; unkindness is something one doesn't forget.