

# One-Page Summary

## The Mirror is Lying to You: How to Work With Your Body, Not Against It

According to a 2020 survey by Minding the Gap, 55% of the dancers surveyed reported high levels of social physique anxiety. Social physique anxiety is the unease someone feels when they believe they are being judged on their appearance. This can impact dancers' body image and their self-esteem.

### Classroom Exercise

Spend class or rehearsal time asking dancers to focus on how movements **feel** rather than the way they **look** in the mirror. You can ask dancers to face the back of the room, cover the mirrors, or turn out the lights.

Ask dancers, while they're dancing, to reflect on internal sensations as they're performing familiar movements instead of thinking about external appearance. This can help dancers focus on movement from the inside out, rather than worrying about their external appearance.



### Physical appearance perfectionism

A recent study found that physical appearance perfectionism is a predictor of social physique anxiety. Physical appearance perfectionism is exactly what you think it is. And it's something many dancers struggle with. The same study found that body compassion negatively predicted social physique anxiety. In other words, cultivating body compassion can be a big help for the 55% of dancers who are experiencing high levels of social physique anxiety.

### Body compassion

Body compassion is a term that was coined in 2013 by psychologist Lindsay T. Murn. According to this definition, body compassion is, "reflecting self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness to one's own body compared to judgmental, critical, isolating and over-identification with negative feeling and emotion." In other words, treating our bodies with the "common humanity" with which we would treat a stranger can go a long way towards helping dancers struggling with their body image.

### The "social" aspect of physique anxiety

One big factor of social physique anxiety is the "social" aspect. Dancers who might struggle with this connect their physical appearance to their need to make a good impression on dance educators, choreographers, and peers to receive positive feedback, casting, and evaluations. The more we, in the dance community, and in our individual communities, can separate a dancer's physical appearance from the attention or preference we give them, the more we can support dancer body image and overall mental health.