How to Dance:
Eleven Keys

by Wali Ali Meyer from
Spiritual Dance and Walk by Samuel Lewis

1. **LISTEN.** Do not simply recite the sacred phrase. Listen to the other voices. Listen to the person directing the dance. When you begin to listen, your voice will automatically begin to harmonize. Find the center of the sound.

2. **FEEL.** The dances are designed to take us more and more into the universe of feeling. Stay with your feeling. If you go into the world of thoughts, don’t judge yourself; simply bring your concentration back to feeling. The heart center, found in the middle of the chest, is the natural place to begin.

3. **CONCENTRATE ON THE SACRED PHRASE.** The sacred phrase, sometimes referred as Wazifa or Mantra, centers the dance. We all say this together. The Grace of Allah can operate through the sacred phrase if we are willing to receive it, to let it be. With each repetition feel the phrase touching your being in a deeper and deeper way.

4. **DON’T BE AFRAID TO STOP THE DANCE.** This is for dance leaders, if the dance gets out of control, or just isn’t making it, it is much better to stop and begin anew. Learning is much more important than just doing.

5. **SIMPLE, RHYTHMIC MUSIC.** This can be a great aid. Guitar and drum are especially helpful. Musicians should emphatically resist going on their own. The sacred phrase must be uppermost in their concentration. The music should accentuate the natural rhythm of the sacred phrase. Drummers especially bear this in mind. The simpler the better. Don’t dominate the space. The sacred phrase should by far be the loudest sound. If you play your instrument correctly, no one will even notice you. Isn’t that wonderful?

6. **MOVE TOGETHER.** Restrain the exuberant impulse to make an individual expression. You will be amazed how much higher/deeper the dances are when you use that same energy to harmonize with the others in the circle. Feel your body fully. Then gradually or suddenly become the whole circle.

7. **WATCH YOUR BREATH.** Breath is life. Breath is movement. Voice is breath. Let breath breathe. Return to awareness of breath in silence between dances. Notice the subtle changes in breath brought about by each dance.

8. **ECSTASY.** These dances can lead to states of ecstasy. Joyously invigorating! In dances where you are brought to the center of the circle, especially soar. But soar with your whole being. Taste all the planes at the same time. If your feet are grounded on the earth then your head can be in the heavens.

9. **DEVOTION.** This is a grace. To willingly submit ourselves to Allah/God in Whom we move and live and have our being.

10. **AMIN (ah-meen).** This means, “So be it.” We say this at the conclusion of many dances. (Other phrases such as the Sanskrit “Svaha” are also used). The important thing is not to say it, but to mean it, to affirm it with one’s whole being.

11. **SILENCE.** There may be a silent meditation before the dance starts but if the participants are not experienced in this they may learn the meditation through dancing and also learn the dancing through meditation. As the sound and music of the dance stop, enter the silence. This is your opportunity to hear what has been created. In this silence one can absorb the qualities evoked during the dance. This is the most important part of the dance.

*All these words are in hope of your falling awake and finding the truth in your own self. You know your own experience better than anyone else. Be true to that. Don’t let anyone pull the wool over your eyes; neither be swayed from what you know by the opinions of others. Always be willing to learn.*

Hypocrisy may be the only sin. How wonderful it is when we actually feel like bowing in humility before the eternal truth. These dances can be worship: the celebration of the Divine Presence. The Sufis call this Akhlak Allah – acting as if in the Presence of Allah.
Welcome to
Dances of Universal Peace

These multi-cultural dances use simple music, movements, and sacred phrases; no musical or dance experience is required. Participants join hands forming a circle, and a leader teaches each dance, often providing background history about the tradition and dance.

The movements and phrases include themes of peace, healing, and the celebration of life's great mystery, helping create a sense of peace and community while celebrating the underlying unity of spiritual traditions on Earth.

Dances of Universal Peace were started in the late 1960’s by Samuel L. Lewis (1896-1971), a Sufi Murshid (teacher) and Rinzai Zen Master, who also studied in the mystical traditions of Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity. Lewis was deeply influenced by his contact and spiritual apprenticeship with two people: Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), the Master who first brought the message of universal Sufism to the West in 1910, and Ruth St. Denis (1890-1968), a pioneer of the modern dance movement in America and Europe.

Lewis, then in his early 70’s, began to envision and create the dances as a dynamic method to promote “Peace through the Arts.” From the early days and his original body of about 50 dances, the collection has grown to more than 400 dances which celebrate the sacred heart of religious traditions worldwide.

To locate dance leaders and events in your area, go to: www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org.