



WE ARE  
DANCERS



We are a group of current and former dancers in New York City. We created this booklet to empower dancers by providing information, support, and resources.

We meet regularly in New York City to support each other and build community among dancers. If you are a current or former dancer and would like to join us, email us at [wearedancersnyc@gmail.com](mailto:wearedancersnyc@gmail.com), or find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/wearedancersnyc](https://facebook.com/wearedancersnyc).

"I LOVE DANCING BECAUSE  
I'M FREE TO MAKE MY  
OWN SCHEDULE AND TAKE  
TIME OFF WHEN I NEED IT.  
IF I GET BORED AT ONE  
CLUB, THERE ARE ALWAYS  
OTHER CLUBS THAT WILL  
HIRE ME." – Ramona

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# SAFETY

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We're all concerned with safety at work. Clubs might have poor security, guys can try to follow us home, and we've all heard about girls being robbed or assaulted. Sure, it's true that the money can pit us against one another since we all have bills to pay, but when the situation requires it, dancers will take care of each other. If you do have a negative experience, don't be afraid to reach out to others for help and to warn them of the problem. Being aware of safety concerns is the first step in addressing them.

## IN THE CLUB

Many of us feel unsafe at work when rowdy customers try to violate our physical boundaries. If you feel unsafe, trust your gut and call security. If you're comfortable talking to management at your club, let them know if a certain customer causes you trouble.

## LEAVING THE CLUB

When you leave the club, be aware of your surroundings or walk with other dancers or staff for added security. Make sure you have car service phone numbers in case you decide to use them. This is important if you find yourself in a situation where you have been drinking or are not sure if you can get home safely. If you are waiting for a car service or a ride, wait inside until the car comes.

*"When it's late or super-quiet outside, sometimes I'll walk in the middle of the street rather than the sidewalk."*

*– Donna*

*"Before a shift, I always make sure a friend knows my schedule for the day. As soon as I get home, I send her a text that I made it back all right." – Stacey*



*"I took a self-defense class called Female Self-Awareness. It was super empowering and made me more aware of my surroundings and how to behave in different situations."*

*– Vera*

*"I keep my phone in my hand, ready to dial my emergency contact person if I need to."*

*– Monique*

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We know that violence doesn't just happen in the clubs. We all know dancers who have had abusive partners or who have had trouble with boyfriends and other members of the family. Remember, no one has the right to beat or abuse you anywhere, anytime. If you find yourself in such a situation, check out the Resources section in the back of this booklet or look at our website for where to get support.

# HEALTH

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Staying healthy is important for anyone, but dancing can be especially hard on the body. If we're not healthy, we can't keep working. Dancers may be good at taking care of others, but we also have to take care of ourselves.

Our website has information for dancers about breast care, safer sex and STI testing, nutrition, hygiene, and drugs and alcohol. Sometimes people delay taking care of their health because they worry about the expense, but there are free and affordable options in New York City. Check out the resource section in the back of this booklet or look at our website.

Think of yourself as an athlete – your job is not just dancing, but pulling long hours on your feet, keeping a positive attitude, radiating great skin and hair. It's impossible to do these things without maintaining your personal wellbeing. Your body is one of your most important investments – treat it well!



*"I never drink at work. The bartender knows that "vodka soda" is just soda. It's nice because I get a drink commission without having to get drunk—and the bar makes money off me too. Also, it's a zero calorie drink!"*

*– Honey*

*"I always keep healthy snacks in my locker and drink lots of water. It keeps my skin clear, and when I'm drinking it helps prevent a hangover."*

*– Chanel*

# BEAUTY

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While looks certainly aren't everything when it comes to being a successful dancer, they sure are an important factor. One thing to remember is that strippers come in all shapes, ages, sizes, and colors, and there's a customer for everyone.

At the same time, there are some "types" of girls who get hired more easily in certain clubs. Especially in Manhattan, it's often easier to get hired if you're young, thin, and white or a light-skinned woman of color. If you don't fit that type, you may have fewer options for where to work, and you may have to work harder to make your money.



This can be a tough industry to work in and it's easy to start to feel bad about ourselves — or our coworkers — when we face this daily pressure to look a certain way. Of course, we all know that the days when we feel hot are often our best days on the job, and New York City is a great place to snag spa deals, great haircuts and blowouts, discount waxing and hair removal, and even explore surgical treatment if you choose that route. (Check out our Resource section for some stores and salons we like!)

But if you find yourself spending a lot of money just to fit in at work, make sure it's worth it to you — that you are making that money back and then some. You may be able to spend less, make more, and feel better about yourself at a club that's more relaxed. (See our Choosing a Club section.)

*"As a dark-skinned black woman, the number of clubs I can work at are limited. Even though I walk in looking fine, management just sees my race and automatically tells me they aren't hiring. I know that's not true, because my white friend may have just been hired at that same club!" - Stacey*



*"Because I'm a thicker girl, I've had trouble getting hired at some of the higher-end clubs. Actually, when I was working in Manhattan, the manager would stand and stare at me while I ate lunch and would sometimes criticize me and my size when he saw me eating. It felt pretty awful." - Jennifer*

*“Once I had a customer who told me he liked older dancers like me, but that they were hard to find – too many of the girls were young and he thought they were immature.” – Isabel*

# *KNOW YOUR RIGHTS*

As dancers, many of us think we have no legal rights, whether because we work off the books or because we are afraid that people won't take us seriously.

But dancers have legal rights like other workers. If you are having a problem at your club, or you have questions about a legal issue, you can get free and confidential legal assistance from attorneys at the Urban Justice Center by calling 646-602-5617.

Or check out the Know Your Rights section of our website for more information about your rights as a dancer.



# *FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS*

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Dancers are not just dancers – we are daughters, sisters, mothers, girlfriends, and wives. But sometimes our work gets in the way of our personal relationships. And our personal relationships can get in the way of feeling positive about our income and work. Dancing can be hard to explain to those we love. Maybe your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't respect and appreciate what you do. Maybe you feel guilty about lying to your parents or kids about what you do. You are not alone—all dancers deal with these issues at some point.

If you're looking for community or support, join our email list or find us on Facebook and come to a meeting.

<http://wearedancersnyc.com/>



## PARENTS

Many parents have a specific idea of what they want their daughters to do with their lives—whether it's going to college, getting married, having kids, or getting a specific kind of job. Working as a dancer may not fit into your parents' idea of what's "normal" or "respectable." Even if your parents don't judge you for being a dancer, they may be concerned for your safety if you are working late at night in an unsafe environment. For these reasons, many of us struggle with whether to tell our parents about our jobs. In the end, you know what's best for your personal situation.

*"At first my mom said she was cool with it, then she started to be funny about it. She would bring it up in conversations whenever we had a fight, like it was a way to bring me down. Then she ended up telling my dad, which I was really unhappy about. He didn't need to know." - Cindy*

## KIDS

Dancing can be a great job for moms, especially single parents with busy lives. Dancers have flexible schedules and we work fewer hours, so we have more time to spend with our kids. Also, dancing pays better than a lot of jobs, so we can provide a better standard of living for our kids, and might make it possible to be a better mom. But society tells our kids that it's bad to have a mom who's a stripper. This can be hurtful and hard for us to deal with.

## KIDS

It's hard enough to talk to kids about sexuality—talking about what we do for money just makes it harder. Some of us choose not to tell our kids about our jobs. Maybe we don't want them to be confused or hurt by what we do. Maybe we don't want them to get teased at school because other kids found out their mom is a stripper. Others may decide to be totally honest and tell our kids everything. Others may choose a midway point.

*"My son is 8, and this is the one job that gives me the flexibility to take time off if he needs me, or be there when he leaves for school in the morning. I tried office jobs before but I can't really handle the bullshit as a single mom."* – Jennifer

# PARTNERS

Does your girlfriend make you feel guilty about your job? Does your boyfriend think dancing is easy money? Does your husband stay home playing computer games while you hustle to pay the bills?

Lots of people are OK with dating a stripper to begin with. Maybe they think it's hot. Maybe they even come to the club and tip you. But once the relationship gets serious, that's when a lot of partners start to get jealous. They may start to say that working as a dancer is like cheating. At the same time, they are probably still happy to spend your money.

Dancing is hard work and we deserve respect. If our partners had to do what we have to do to pay the bills, they would stop trying to tell us it's easy money.

*"My boyfriend knows where I work and respects it. When we met, I was stripping, and he wouldn't try to change who I am just because I'm with him now. He knows we all gotta do what we gotta do." – Honey*

# *FILING TAXES*

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You may be wondering whether you need to pay taxes at all, or about your likelihood of 'getting caught' if you choose not to file.

Check out the Filing Taxes section on our website to help you figure out what you need to do to avoid being audited by the IRS or facing prosecution for tax evasion. Our Financial Resources section also has a list of dancer-friendly accountants and financial advisers, including low-cost options.





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# *SAVING MONEY*

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It's hard to save money as a dancer because you never know how much money you're going to make in a night, never mind in a month. You might make \$300 one night and only \$30 the next night. You might even lose money to the club some nights. When you have a great night, it can be tempting to splurge and spend it on stuff you don't really need. But if the club is dead next week, you might find yourself struggling to buy groceries. And what if you injure yourself, or have a baby, or you just get burned out and have to take a break from dancing for a while?

Saving money can help you avoid that end-of-the-month scramble to pay rent. It may even help you save money for long-term goals like vacations or a college fund for your kids.

Check out our website for information on:

How to spend less and save more

Where to keep your money

The rich stripper stereotype

Accessing public benefits



## *CHOOSING A CLUB*

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New York City has no shortage of clubs to work at. While many clubs in Manhattan have higher house fees and tip-outs and only hire certain “types” of women, there are several clubs in the outer boroughs that hire women of a range of colors, ages, and body types. Clubs also vary on their requirements regarding shifts and champagne rooms, as well as on the level of physical contact with customers. Websites like [stripperweb.com](http://stripperweb.com) are great resources, but sometimes visiting a club to talk to (or simply to observe) the women who work there is the best way to find a club that’s a good fit for you.

# *REMEMBER...*

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Dancing is a real form of labor! People may think of it as 'unskilled' work, but as dancers, we know the level of skill, stamina, endurance, and courage it takes to do the work we do. As dancers, we are proud of the strengths we've developed working in NYC's strip clubs. That's why we're working together to help create a world where all kinds of workers are treated with respect.



# *RESOURCES*

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For a complete list of resources, visit our website, [wearedancersnyc.com](http://wearedancersnyc.com). A few useful resources are listed below.

Safe Horizon (NYC) –  
Domestic Violence Project

Free immigration and family legal matters assistance to survivors of domestic violence and crime victims.  
800-621-HOPE (4673)

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center  
Health clinic providing non-judgmental, free/low cost medical and mental health services.  
356 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011,  
212-271-7200

<http://wearedancersnyc.com/>



Lifebooker.com

A listserv that sends out amazing daily deals at salons and spas. Up to 70 percent off massages, facials, manicures, pedicures, and haircuts

Marlena Sonn, CFP(r),  
Christopher Street Financial.

Dancer-friendly financial  
and investment adviser.

212.405.1619,  
800.262.6644, ext. 1619

Urban Justice Center  
646-602-5617

Free legal assistance for dancers

Stripperweb.com

Online community forum for dancers  
all over the world.

Check out **wearedancersnyc.com** for lots more information and resources for dancers in English, Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese.

Visita **wearedancernyc.com** para más información y recursos para bailarinas en Ingles, Español, Ruso, y Portugués.

Confira **wearedancersnyc.com** para muito mais informações e recursos para os dançarinos em Inglês, Espanhol, Russo e Português.

Загляните на нашу страничку **wearedancersnyc.com** для более полной информации.



