

Judgment and Balance

Every single thing I do as a square dance caller requires Judgment and Balance. I try to use good Judgment and Balance throughout my program. Sadly, on occasion, the judgment I use is BAD Judgment. I openly admit that I've made my share of completely boneheaded moves. In those cases, I try to learn from my bad judgment and not make the same mistakes again.

I use Judgment and Balance deciding when to arrive at a dance. I don't want to show up late and end up rushing to get set up. I also don't want to arrive so early that I am waiting in the parking lot 30 minutes before the first club member shows up.

I use Judgment and Balance in setting the sound levels of my voice and music. While many consider me too loud, I always want to be heard. I want the squares in the back of the hall to hear my calls with clarity. I also want the music to be loud enough for people to enjoy it. Too often, I go in to a dance and can barely hear the music. No music = No dancing if you ask me. When I do get the occasional complaint about my volume, I often find it comes from someone in a front square. Depending on the person, I use my judgment to either adjust my volume, or suggest that they might enjoy the dance a little further back in the hall.

I use Judgment and Balance as I set the dancing pace. Generally, I set all my music to play at 125 bpm (beats per minute). If I find myself calling to a bunch of college kids, it might be appropriate to kick the speed up a few bpm. If I'm calling to a particularly older group, or on a carpet, or in a hall with terrible acoustics, I'll often have to slow the pace down to compensate.

I use Judgment and Balance in my choreography. I want to be challenging enough to keep it interesting, yet not so challenging I constantly break down the floor. (see the 80/80 Rule.)

Judgment and Balance are important in programming my dance. I try to offer a variety of music types and song styles. I don't want to play banjo's and fiddles all night long. I also don't want head banging music throughout the program. I try to find the appropriate mix of "crooning" songs to compliment high energy songs during the evening. Again, this Judgment and Balance will be dependent on the dancers and/or audience. I'll probably skip the Lenny Kravitz at the senior center while you'll never hear me sing "Old Grey Bonnet" at the college mixer.

Judgment and Balance don't end at the dance. I use them when accepting dates. (Is this dance within my ability?) I use them when setting my fee. (I don't want to gouge a failing club...but I don't want to give my services away either.) I use Judgment and Balance in advertising, continued education, and working with my local caller and dancer associations.

Judgment and Balance are the foundation of every aspect of my square dance calling career. I try to think things through and consider what ramifications my decisions will have. It is an ongoing issue that constantly needs refinement and I openly admit that I do not always succeed. I do hope, however, that my Judgment and Balance are getting better with time.