

Social Dance and Trauma Healing

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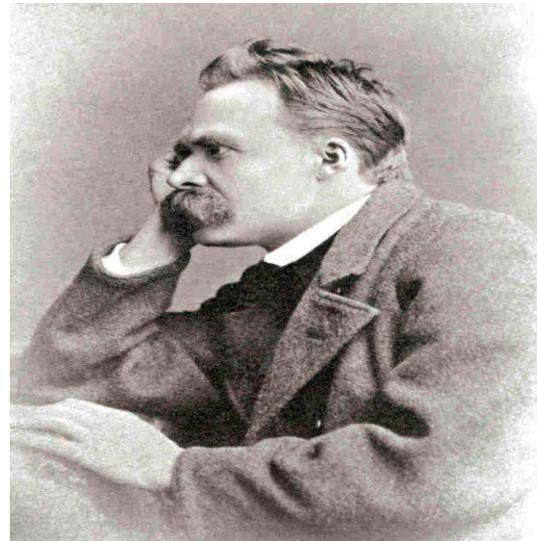
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September 21, 2016

“We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once.”

“I would believe only in a God who knows how to dance.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche



Session objectives

- Note general connection between dance and health/well-being
- Review key principles of “movement therapy”
- Identify favorable features of social dance as a treatment modality
- Consider common obstacles to incorporating dance in treatment
- Get an experiential “taste” of dance (time and participant willingness permitting!)

Specific health benefits of dance

Improving physical functioning and mobility

- Cardiac and respiratory endurance
- Lower limb stamina
- Balance
- Coordination
- Posture

Specific health benefits of dance

Developing cognitive functioning

- Working memory
- Sensorimotor functioning
- Attention span
- Concentration
- Tactile performance
- Reaction times



Specific health benefits of dance

Reducing mental stress

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Self-image
- Self-rated life satisfaction
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of purpose



Specific health benefits of dance

Lowering risk of chronic disease and related disabilities

- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Dementia
- Breast cancer
- Parkinson's



Specific health benefits of dance

Actively participating in life

- Increase social interaction
- Expand social support system
- Deepen communication skills
- Broaden community and civic opportunities
- Stimulate senses
- Encourage reminiscence
- Motivate additional positive life changes



Clinical research findings

According to the American Dance Therapy Association (www.adta.org), clinical research establishes the effectiveness of dance to improve therapeutic outcomes in at least the following areas:

- Mood (depression, anxiety, vitality)
- Self-concept/esteem, body-image (cancer, children)
- Social/relationship skills (anti- violence/bullying)
- Capacity for empathy (e.g., staff caregivers)
- Stress management, self-regulation (trauma)
- Academic performance (e.g., reading fluency)
- Readiness for parenting (e.g., pregnancy support)
- Medical, psychomotor, neuro-functioning (PD, fibromyalgia)

Some studies

- Cruz, R., & Sabers, D. (1998) Dance/movement therapy is more effective than previously reported. *The Arts in Psychotherapy: An international journal*, 25, 101-104.
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Focus on trauma...

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- Kornblum, R. & Halsten, R. L. (2006). In-school dance/movement therapy for traumatized children. In S. Brooks (Ed.), *Creative Arts Therapies Manual*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

More...

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- Mills, L., & Daniluk, J. (2002). Her body speaks: The experience of dance therapy for women survivors of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 80(1), 77-85.
- O'Donnell, D. A. (2006). Meditation and movement therapy for children with traumatic stress reaction. In S. Brooks (Ed.), *Creative Arts Therapies Manual*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Singer, A. J. (2006). Hidden treasures, hidden voices: An ethnographic study into the use of movement and creativity in psychosocial work with war-affected refugee children in Serbia . In H. Payne (ed.) *Dance movement therapy: Theory, research and practice*. (101-111). New York: Routledge.
- Valentine, G. E. (2007). Dance/movement therapy with woman survivors of sexual abuse. In S. Brooks (Ed.), *The Use of Creative Therapies with Sexual Abuse Survivors*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Principles of movement therapy (why it works)

- Mind and body interact continuously
- Mind, body, and spirit form a unity (“self”)
- Conscious and unconscious movement affects holistic functioning
- Movement is communication
- Therapeutic movement can address self-understanding and promote integration, affecting all dimensions of the self simultaneously

Favorable features of social dance

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Structure
- Mind-body exercise
- Community
- Touch and healthy sexuality
- Self and interpersonal awareness

Social dance treatment issues

- Touch tolerance (the “Tango test”)
- Structure tolerance
- Error tolerance
- Social interaction/group tolerance
- Presumption of adequate (if not “healthy”) levels of self-esteem, social competence, and mind-body integration

Practitioner challenges

- “But I can’t dance!”
 - “Stretch,” modeling, rapport-building
 - Good news: You really need not know very much
- Instructional resources/cost
 - USA Dance, local studios, itinerant instructors; video; rates are negotiable
- Facilities/equipment
 - Gymnasiums, community centers; in fact, any flat surface without a shag carpet!
 - iPod, speaker, playlists; any clothes that don’t bind, any shoes that don’t stick (or no shoes at all!)

Shall we dance?

- Waltz/rumba
 - Box, turning box, underarm turn, side breaks
- Cha-cha
 - Basic step, open break/underarm turn, crossover break
- Swing (East Coast)
 - Basic step (closed and open), underarm turn, she goes/he goes
- Line dance (Mambo)
- By the way.... It's National Ballroom Dance Week!