



The American Dance Therapy Association and Dance/Movement Therapy*

Dance is the most fundamental of the arts, involving a direct expression of one's self through one's body. It is an especially powerful medium for therapy.

Based on the assumption that the body and mind are interrelated, dance/movement therapy is defined by the American Dance Therapy Association as the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration of the individual.

The dance/movement therapist focuses on movement behavior as it emerges in the therapeutic relationship. Expressive, communicative, and adaptive behaviors are all considered for both group and individual treatment. Body movement simultaneously provides the means of assessment and the mode of intervention.

Dance/movement therapists are employed in a wide variety of facilities as well as private practice. They address the needs of a broad spectrum of people, including those with specific disorders and disabilities.

The ADTA was organized in 1966 to establish and maintain high standards of professional competence among dance/movement therapists. This includes developing and promoting education and training focused on our body of knowledge for dance/movement therapists. The ADTA provides avenues of communication among dance/movement therapists and professionals working in related fields to increase global awareness, utilization, and acceptance of dance/movement therapy.

Professional training of dance/movement therapists occurs on the graduate level, and the Masters is the terminal degree. The ADTA publishes a list of colleges and universities that provide appropriate education and training, and the association has established an approval procedure for granting recognition to those institutions that fulfill the guidelines for graduate degree programs.

The ADTA holds an annual conference, and supports chapters, regional groups, conferences, seminars, and workshops. The ADTA also stimulates communication among dance/movement therapists and with allied professions through publication of the *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, a newsletter, timely monographs and bibliographies.

As of February 1999 the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) and the ADTA have outlined a formal affiliation that designates the ADTR credential in dance/movement therapy as a counseling specialty credential. This agreement allows dance/movement therapists who meet the educational and training standards under the agreement to have a special application option for taking the NCC exam, thereby allowing ADTRs who have met the educational and training standards under the agreement to apply for the NCC credential.

*extracted from ADTA Clinical Brochure (1999)



Dance/Movement Therapy Fact Sheet

- † As defined by the American Dance Therapy Association, “dance/movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual.”
- † Dance/movement therapy emerged as a distinct profession in the 1940s.
- † The American Dance Therapy Association was formed in 1966. It maintains a code of ethics and has established standards for professional practice, education, and training.
- † Dance/movement therapy is an effective treatment for people with developmental, medical, social, physical, and psychological impairments.
- † Dance/movement therapy is practiced in mental health, rehabilitation, medical, educational, and forensic settings, and in nursing homes, day care centers, disease prevention, and health promotion programs.
- † Dance/movement therapy is used with people of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds in individual, couple, family, and group therapy formats.
- † Entry into the profession of dance/movement therapy is at the master’s level. The title *Dance Therapist Registered* (DTR) is granted to entry level dance/movement therapists who have completed a master’s degree, which includes 700 supervised clinical internship hours. The advanced level of registry, *Academy of Dance Therapists Registered* (ADTR), is awarded only after DTRs have completed 3,640 hours of supervised clinical work in an agency, institution or special school, with additional supervision from an ADTR.
- † As of February 1999 the National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC) and the ADTA designated the ADTR credential as the appropriate counseling specialty credential in dance/movement therapy.
- † The membership of the ADTA includes approximately 1000 dance/movement therapists in 48 states and in 23 foreign countries.
- † The ADTA publishes the *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, a quarterly newsletter, monographs, and bibliographies.
- † The ADTA maintains a website at www.adta.org, and offers a listserv via the Internet.



Examples of Recognition of Dance/Movement Therapy by the Federal Government

- † Dance/movement therapy, art therapy, and music therapy were included in resolutions issued to implement the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, P.L. 94-142 (1975) amended in 1986 and 1990, and later renamed *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.
- † Dance/movement therapy, art therapy, music therapy, and psychodrama were represented on President Carter's Commission on Mental Health (1977).
- † There is a Federal Civil Service Classification for Creative Arts Therapists (art, dance, music, and psychodrama).
- † Dance/movement therapy, art therapy, and music therapy were included and defined in the *Older American Act Reauthorization Amendments*, P.L. 102-375 (1992).
- † Dance/movement therapy received a Title IV grant, number 90 AM 0669 from the Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC (1993) to research "Dance/movement therapy with Older Individuals who have sustained Neurological Insult." Findings of the study strongly suggest that dance/movement therapy improved the functional abilities of the participants on a number of variables, i.e. balance, rhythmic discrimination, mood, social interaction, and increased energy level.
- † The office of Alternative Medicine of the National Institute of Health awarded one of its first exploratory research grants to explore dance/movement therapy for those with medical illnesses (1993).
- † The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) of the Department of Health and Human Services released a Program Memorandum (Transmittal No. A-95-8, June 1995) recognizing that dance/movement therapy, art therapy, and music therapy may constitute covered elements of a partial hospitalization program in Medicare facilities.



Dance/Movement Therapy for Infants, Children, and Adolescents*

All infants and children share the phenomenon of a rapidly changing body through which they experience the world. They learn about the world through body experiences that integrate their emotional, social, physical, communicative, and cognitive development. Dance/movement therapy provides such experiences for children and youth of all ages.

Dance/movement therapists who specialize in working with infants, children, and adolescents bring a sound knowledge of developmental and group theory, in combination with well-honed skills in non-verbal observation and movement behavior assessment.

The emphasis of dance/movement therapy on nonverbal body-level communication makes it an ideal treatment choice for a wide variety of populations ranging from normally developing infants and children to those who struggle with conditions such as:

- Failure to thrive
- Sensory and cognitive impairment and physical disabilities
- Developmental delays, and pervasive developmental disorders
- Attention deficit disorder (with/without hyperactivity)
- Learning disabilities
- Behavioral problems
- Emotional disturbance
- Trauma

Infants and young children at risk can also benefit from the inclusion of dance/movement therapy in early intervention programs. Parents and family members are included in the treatment to support and enhance the growth of the child, and to improve the functioning of the family.

Through movement observation and interaction, the dance/movement therapist meets the child on a primary, nonverbal level, which helps the child to develop a positive and realistic self-image. Upon entering the child's symbolic movement world, the therapist helps to expand communication skills, creating pathways from nonverbal to verbal dialogues. As a result of this process, self-awareness, awareness of others, coping skills, and the ability to form relationships can all be improved.

Movement is the language of children. Motivation for learning is intrinsic because of the inherent pleasure in movement. The concreteness and immediacy of movement make it an ideal medium for learning basic concepts, and for developing the motor skills necessary for self-care and work. For youngsters with disabilities it can help foster independence, and for all children it can enhance feelings of competence and self worth. Dance/movement therapy is a joyful process which enables children to engage in meaningful exploration of the self, the environment, and others. Children may experiment with generalized motor patterns and movement dynamics, and learn to adapt them to a variety of situations.

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Dance/movement therapy with children and adolescents is utilized within general and special education, in public and private schools, and in mental health settings. It fosters creative self-expression, and provides safe and effective options for relating to others and coping with the environment.

Movement assessments and evaluations yield important information about abilities and difficulties in many areas, including:

- Perceptual motor development and fine and gross motor coordination
- Verbal and nonverbal communication
- Impulse control
- Body image
- Socialization skills
- Emotional expression
- Ability to maintain boundaries
- Attention span and on-task behavior
- Critical thinking skills, problem solving, and creativity
- “Multiple intelligences” and cognition

Dance/movement therapy is provided in group and in individual sessions, both of which support the development of the child, including the acquisition and transfer of skills in many areas. Movement interventions may set limits within which children can learn to control impulsive behavior, and to increase their ability to focus and sustain attention, which are essential in developing cognitive potential. Dance/movement therapy supports individuals with disabilities, those at risk, and their non-disabled peers in meeting educational and therapeutic goals.

Dance/movement therapy includes a wide variety of approaches, such as expressive movement, creative dance, role-playing, and a blend of structured and improvised movement experiences.

Dance/movement therapy is effective in helping youth deal with highly charged social issues and emotional complexities; assisting in the treatment and prevention of conflict, peer violence, and abuse. It can also be integrated into assertiveness training and health programs, enhancing sensitivity to diversity and cultural differences.

As adolescents wrestle with identity and gender issues, body image problems, and eating disorders, dance/movement therapy can provide an experiential process through which individuals can express themselves, discharge feelings in a creative and safe way, release tension and reduce stress, establish trust, and develop meaningful relationships.

In addition to direct contact with children, dance/movement therapists work with teachers, parents, and administrators, providing training and consultation.

*extracted from ADTA Clinical Brochure (1999)

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