

# Understanding the Body, Shape, Space and Dynamics of Movement.

## Laban Movement Analysis and the Bartenieff Fundamentals



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Movement is a language that few of us truly understand and use to its maximum potential. Its functional and expressive components extend beyond the standard anatomy and biomechanics of the human body. Rudolf Laban's work provides us with a language for analyzing, describing, understanding, observing and creating movement. His work was extended by Irmgard Bartenieff and others, and has powerful application to physical movement and body therapies as well as the arts.

The movement patterns, concepts and principles of the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ teach a sense of ease, efficiency, and expression in movement and have a relationship to the developmental movement patterns of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering work. Movement initiation and sequencing, connectivity, weight shift, breath support, stabilization and spatial tension are key concepts in their close relationship to developmental and functional movement patterns.

The direct impact of this work is to establish dynamic alignment, coordination, strength, flexibility, mobility, kinesthetic awareness, expressivity, and reduce physical injury. These concepts and this foundation is the basis of my own work in Movement Therapy and Movement Psychotherapy in my practice.

The expressive and functional presence that is created through the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ can be

used to look at other components of movement analysis. The Laban system considers three other areas for observation: Shape, Space Harmony, and Effort (dynamics). Through exploring these areas one can discover how to vary movement dynamics and investigate the body's options for shaping itself and projecting itself in space. The Laban system will provide practitioners with insights into personal movement styles, and increase awareness of what movement is communicating and expressing.

Laban Movement Analysis is a tool which can enhance the work of anyone who works with the body and movement. For example, it may be used in different ways by:

**Therapists** who can use it to illuminate non verbal behaviour and support diagnosis;

**Bodyworkers** who can may use it to analyze client patterns and create treatment plans;

**Dancers/choreographers** can expand movement vocabulary, clarify style, and create new ideas;

**Actors/directors** can use it to create character, style and relationships;

**Teachers** can activate, motivate, and concretize learning and creativity;

**Athletes/coaches** who can use it to identify skill issues and plan sessions;

**Business managers** may use it to interpret communication styles and to build teams;

In my years of private practice I have worked with clients with a broad range of ages (9 to 70 plus) and psychophysical needs, such as chronic pain, whiplash injuries, back pain, psychosomatic illnesses, personality disorders and motor development delays. Although I have trained extensively in several disciplines, including Dance Therapy, BodyMind Centering, and the Pilates Method, I have found that Laban Movement Analysis and the Bartenieff Fundamentals™ to be invaluable as the basis for almost every treatment plan I have executed.

*Sandra is a Certified Movement Analyst and Registered Movement therapist with post graduate qualifications in psychotherapy. She is also a Senior Certified Pilates Method Practitioner. See what's on for information on training in this area.*