

The art and science of dance/movement therapy: dance is life

Edited by Sharon Chaiklin and Hilda Wengrower

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First published in Spanish, translated into English, and now about to be translated into Korean



This wonderful reference book was so exciting to read that at first I read late into the night! I highly recommend it for any dance therapist's bookshelf.

The book was first published in Spanish to address the lack of dance therapy literature in the Spanish-speaking world, where interest in dance therapy is growing. It presents a cross-cultural perspective on dance therapy practice and theory through chapters by authors who are experts in their field, and who come from America, Spain, Israel, Australia (Heather Hill) and Argentina.

The art and science of dance/movement therapy is intended as a training resource for students and those working in the field and wishing to deepen their knowledge, and to further the understanding for others with related professional or personal interest in movement, dance and the pertinence and usefulness of dance/movement therapy.

Dance/movement therapy evolved in the 1950s, formalising the creative and healing potential of dance and improvisation, recognising movement as the expression of feelings and concerns. Currently, the interrelated 'bodymind', along with concepts of *embodiment* and *attunement* are

becoming recognised within psychotherapeutic disciplines.

The basic theories on which dance/movement therapy (DMT) is founded are reiterated in the introduction.

The four chapters of the first section on basic concepts of dance movement therapy are written by Sharon Chaiklin, Hilda Wengrower, Diana Fischman and Joan Chodorow.

A succinct history of dance and of DMT is given with the chapter by Sharon Chaiklin entitled '*We dance from the moment our feet touch the earth*'; Dance/movement therapy is distinguished by its relation to the art form of dance, 'which supports and encourages creativity..... using the body, oneself, in an active way.' I loved reading this chapter and I wish everybody could read these words about what dance therapy is about.

Hilda Wengrower discusses concepts of creativity and artistic involvement, particularly from psychotherapeutic perspectives applicable to dance/movement therapy. Wengrower emphasises the multidimensional experience of dancers: dance integrates the physiological, cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural aspects of the person, and psychotherapy currently is concerned with this multidimensionality.

Diana Fischman makes *enaction* and *embodiment* central to her chapter: *Therapeutic relationships and kinaesthetic empathy*. Enaction means that 'we can only know by doing'; that 'the mind is embodied in the whole organism, embedded in its environment'; much of affect is a self-and-other event. DMT, bringing a person's movement patterns to a conscious level, and offering the possibility of change through new intersubjective experiences, is effective as it works with integrating organic experience.

Joan Chodorow discusses the relationship between emotions and imagination, in order to show the comprehensive way in which dance/movement therapy draws from intrinsic

forms of imagination. The Jungian perspective sees affect as primary, amplifying drives and motivating memory, thought and action: Partly conscious- triggered by everyday experiences- emotions reverberate with unconscious archetypal image- imprints.

Chodorow mentions the neurochemical work of Candace Pert on receptors vibrating in unison; similar processes that release patterns of instinctive behaviour in animals; and Mirror neurons and the movement- dependent nature of neural connections, through interactions and self-movement and other learnings from the field of neuroscience about embodied experience support dance therapy and related fields of study. The nature of image, too, is more than visual, being experienced and imagined through all the senses - Chodorow's vivid word - pictures evoked the imagery feelingly through my senses. The creative, connective, modulating and healing roles of joy and interest, and their expression are described along with another five basic emotions. Examples from dance therapy show the psychological development functions of the intermingling of the emotions leading towards self- reflection and the central Self.

Section two *the path from theory to practice* presents a skilful and informative collection of dance/movement therapy applications with diverse client populations, from families and early childhood to those with eating disorders, brain injuries, psychiatric or oncology issues. Heather Hill contributes a chapter on her work in Australia with older people with dementia. She emphasises recognising and respecting the whole person, and includes examples of her work and research into it. I was struck by two references in the chapter to the enduring effects for clients of moments of interaction and of the sense of self in dance therapy, despite enormous cognitive and sensory loss: the moments of reconnection with the whole person, and the sense of the enduring nature of the moments of such experience within the person, are the remarkable outcomes of the kind of responsive, sensory-nourishing, creative work that dance/movement therapists do. Here is evidence of the unity of body-mind-spirit. The individual chapters in this section would be interesting and informative to professionals working in related fields, or to colleagues in multidisciplinary teams.

Chapters in the third section, *Aspects integral to the practice of dance/movement therapy*, give

detailed overviews of the application of Laban's work, the Kestenberg Movement Profile, and Emotomics, in assessing movement. Of Laban's work, Elyssa Queyquep White writes that it maintains 'the principles that make up the dance-phrasing, rhythm, and 'how to put steps together, etc.' and that 'it helps to further this understanding by giving us infinite possibilities using spatial patterns and dynamics', allowing the focus to be on the mover's expression and communication, giving 'life, understanding and meaning to their dances'.

The section ends with thoughtful chapters on the vital need for self-awareness and continual self-education to enlarge our cultural consciousness as dance/movement therapists, and of the importance for the profession of research: information is given on formulating clear research questions; a suggestion to be willing to pay for independent professional editing assistance in order to acquire a 'clear, coherent, expressive scholarly 'voice' ' necessary for written articles that are presented for publication; finally, a call to be supportive of skilled research workers.

In her foreword, Miriam Roskin Berger reflects on the generation of meaning, common to art and science, through the exploration of patterns in time, space and movement, and on the richness of this dual focus of dance therapy. *The art and science of dance/movement therapy: dance is life* is a very fine, rich, valuable resource for advanced study, as well as for students in training and for professionals in fields related to mental health. The book is beautifully structured as a reference, and reflects the breadth and depth of dance/movement therapy, in a most accessible way.



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