

Book Review

Hill, H. (2009). *Invitation to the Dance* (2nd ed). Stirling, Scotland: The Dementia Services Development Centre.
First published 2001
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Reviewed by Donna Newman-Bluestein



Invitation to the Dance is a highly practical guide for staff who wish to bring dance to people with dementia. Dr. Heather Hill has packed a lot into these 48 pages, including a clear rationale for dancing within a

person-centered context and many concrete suggestions for structuring dance sessions, i.e., dance ideas, themes, music and props. The accompanying CD offers several melodic pieces of music by Ian Cullen, good for stretches, warm ups, and relaxation and several pieces of livelier folk music from around the world by the Shenanigans. But most of all, Hill has filled this book with her enthusiasm for and extensive experience in dancing with people with dementia.

While Hill invites staff to build on their own experience with dance, she makes it clear that this book is not aimed at creating a dance therapy program, which requires graduate level training in dance therapy. On the other hand, the values inherent in her structures are much more than simply getting folks dancing, but rather reflect her deeper values and understanding. Beyond the how-to's of dance, Hill includes factors which contribute to a successful group, "whereby energy levels are raised, attention and focus are created, and individuals become awakened beyond themselves to the group." She discusses ritual beginnings and endings, timing, group dynamics, and how to elicit ideas from participants. The guide is colored with the real life stories of people with whom Hill has danced. Her concrete examples demonstrate how participating in her dance groups result in participants' enhanced sense of empowerment, self-esteem and ability to temporarily disregard pain.

The slightly revised order in this 2nd edition makes it that much more useable. This edition offers updated full color photographs and expanded sections on music and props. Including properties and qualities of the props will help the would-be leader understand better which props to use to evoke particular qualities and ways of moving.

One of the most beautiful concepts in this lovely guide is the idea of mutuality between people with dementia and their care providers, acknowledging that leader and group members are "essentially co-dancers." Yet because of participants' disabilities the leader has to be sensitive in "creating opportunities for success rather than failure."

With the increased interest in dance in the population at large and increased understanding of the value of this type of embodied and meaningful activity for people with dementia, this book is an excellent resource. Hill's love for dancing with people with dementia comes pouring through and is sure to inspire staff, dance therapy students and therapists alike.

Donna Newman-Bluestein, BC-DMT*, LMHC, has been involved in taking groups as a dance/movement therapist for more than 30 years. She has worked with children and adults with mental and physical illness and chronic pain. But her main specialty is working with the elderly, where she explores the joys of working with this population.

Ed. Note: BC-DMT means Board Certified. ADTRs from the US will now have this title. We understand that the requirements are the same, but the change was made because the concept of being 'board certified' is easier to understand than 'registered'.

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