

I Feel Better When I'm Dancing



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Defining Dance

Dance is the art form in which human movement becomes the medium for sensing, understanding, and communicating ideas, feelings, and experiences. Dance provides a way of learning; one that develops communication abilities, problem solving techniques, and creative and critical thinking skills along with kinesthetic abilities.

How To Use This DVD

I Feel Better When I'm Dancing contains six different dances that can be easily utilized in practice. Each dance on the DVD is taught through step-by-step instructions that can be easily followed. The dances can be used with any population and in any setting. Adaptations can be made for each dance for different physical, cognitive, sensory, perceptual, and psychosocial concerns. Some of the adaptations include providing a chair for individuals who are unable to stand, using visual cues for individuals who are unable to hear instructions, and providing tactile feedback for individuals who are unable to see what they are doing. It is important to make sure that the client understands what they are doing and that you take your time to help them through the movements if they need additional time.

I chose to make this DVD because dance has been a huge part of my life since I was seven years old. Dance has always provided me with a way to express myself. Through this DVD, my hope is to encourage others to open up to the art of dance. I hope that even if someone does not feel like they are a great dancer, they can look past the technical aspects and just have fun. Who's ready to dance?

Benefits of Dance

There are many benefits of dance and it also provides a great alternative to aerobic exercising. Many performance components are addressed through dance. Studies have shown that dancing can help decrease anxiety, increase self-esteem, and improve psychological well-being. Dance is a physical activity in that it encourages you to move your body to music. This movement can help to improve muscle tone, strength, and endurance. As you raise your hands above your head or stretch your arms to the side, your body is able to work on postural alignment, joint stability, and crossing midline. During dance, your body is not the only thing that is working. Your brain helps to tell your muscles where to go, which in turn helps improve problem solving skills, motor planning, left/right discrimination, and concentration. Attention and focus are key when learning a new dance step, as well as memory in that you need these skills to know which leg steps first or when you need to clap. Awareness of your surroundings is very essential with dance. With dancing, you incorporate vision, hearing, and touch. You see the instructor in front of you giving directions, hear the music playing, and feel the ground beneath your feet. All of these factors contribute to the art of dance.

Performance Components Addressed:

Psychosocial

Motivation: Individuals may be more likely to choose to participate in dance as a movement rather than rote exercise. They will also be more likely to participate in a dance that appeals to them. If the person you are working with does not initially have a preferred dance style, show them the video to see which one they would be most interested in trying.

Expression of Emotion: Movement stimulates the whole being to express how one is feeling. By using the body to release the mind, individuals are more aware of their mind/body connection and begin to feel a wholeness. Individuals can clap their hands to represent joy and happiness or throw their arms in the air to represent anger and frustration.

Socialization: Dance can be performed alone, with a partner, or in groups. This contact can provide individuals a connection with others by requiring interaction in regards to the timing of the steps or the space required for a particular step. With this DVD you can encourage everyone to talk about what their favorite style of dance is.

Stress Relief: While exercising your body releases endorphins, which are hormones that fight stress. Dancing can be a great way for individuals to relax and help reduce stress. While using this DVD, you can encourage individuals to do their own dance if they are overwhelmed with following the steps.

Frustration Tolerance: Dancing can be used to address low frustration tolerance by changing the way an individual handles a difficult situation. Someone who doesn't tolerate even the smallest of frustrations can learn to express themselves through dance or listen to calming music to help them deal with a frustrating situation.

Physical

Postural Alignment: Individuals can improve upon postural alignment through dancing by standing up straight while performing ballet moves. If an individual has difficulties with postural alignment, pillows can be used to help encourage an upright posture.

Crossing Midline: Some dance moves require the arms and legs to cross midline. Dancing can provide a reason for individuals to cross midline by reaching to touch their right foot with their left hand. This can be graded down by slowly reaching across midline at varying increments until the individual is able to fully cross.

Reach: The body utilizes reach in dance by moving the arms and legs outside of the body's center of mass. An individual can be asked to stretch out their arms as if they are trying to touch the stars in order to encourage them to reach farther.

Coordination: Dance requires the body to coordinate the hands, feet, and trunk at once. Timing of the moves with the music requires additional coordination, therefore this can increase the difficulty of performing the movement. At the end of each video, the individual has the opportunity to perform the dance with the music.

Endurance: The individual's ability to perform a task for a long period of time is essential for many daily activities. Dancing can help develop and improve endurance by providing repetitive movements for length of time. If an individual has a difficult time performing a dance, they can complete half of a song and then work their way up to completing the full song.

Cognitive

Memory: Individuals can work on memory through dance by recalling steps, routines, and dance patterns. If an individual is struggling with a dance step, pause the video and provide tactile and verbal cues to assist in demonstrating the step.

Following Directions: In order to participate in a dance, an individual must be able to follow directions to complete a step. This DVD provides both visual and auditory instructions for the individual to follow.

Left/Right Discrimination: In order to complete movements, the individual will need to understand which side of their body is their left and right. For individuals who have a difficult time determining their left from their right, colors can be used for them to hold in their hand. For example, they are asked to raise the color blue, representing their left hand.

Motor Planning: Dancing requires the ability to carry out specific movements of the body in a sequence, therefore motor planning can be addressed. If an individual is having a difficult time performing a certain step, you can always change the move to another steps that they can perform or break the step down into smaller components.

Calculation: This component is necessary when determining how many steps that are needed to take to the right or how many claps they need to complete. With dancing, an individual can practice basic math problems of adding and subtracting to perform movements.

Sensory/Perceptual

Vision: This DVD also utilizes vision as a source of sensory input to follow the dance moves. Visual tracking and visual acuity, sharpness of vision, is used while watching the dancers on the screen.

Hearing: Dancing addresses hearing in regards to listening to the instructions or the music. An individual who struggles with hearing can still dance by using their vision to follow the steps and know when to clap or step to the side.

Touch: Touch can be utilized through dance by incorporating dance partners or different objects such as a chair or a ball. When dancing with a partner, it is important to know proper hand placement for the different dance styles.

Vestibular/Balance: Dancing requires a series of quickly paced melodic moves, therefore a dancer must learn to center their core. The ballet video in this DVD can provide a good basis for developing balance and core strength.

Proprioception: Dancing requires a good sense of body awareness to feel or know where an individual's body is in space so that they are able to accurately place their arm, foot, leg, or whole body into a certain position. To assist individuals who have a difficult time with verbal or visual instructions from the video, you can provide tactile cues to help them put their arm above their head.

Dances on DVD

Warm-up

Prior to exercising, it is essential for your body to warm-up as it is an important part of prevention of injuries. A warm-up dance is designed to improve performance and reduce the chance of injury by preparing the individual mentally as well as physically for movement. The benefits of a warm-up include increase in the flexibility of the joints, increase in breathing rate and heart rate, increase in internal body temperature, improved proprioception, and an increase in joint range of movement. Other types of warm-up routines include gentle jogging, marching, skipping, and gentle stretches of the large muscle groups.

Use in therapy: As an intervention, you can use this video as a warm-up exercise to help get the client moving to increase their heart rate and blood flow. This can be used as a preparatory activity to help get the client stretched and ready for functional activities.

Ballet

Ballet is an artistic dance form that is performed to music using precise and highly formalized steps and gestures. It is characterized by light, graceful, fluid movements. The benefits of ballet include an increase postural control, tone, poise and body awareness, reduction in stress, promotion of creative expression, promotion of flexibility, and an increase in core strength of the back and abdominal muscles.

Use in therapy: Ballet can improve balance and strength in the lower limbs. You can teach the client to stand tall like a ballerina and make sure to hold their shoulders back to encourage postural control. Also the light, graceful movements of ballet can be used to promote slow fluid movements for clients who have rigidity.

Hip-hop

Hip-hop dance refers to street dance styles primarily performed to hip-hop music. It includes a wide range of styles primarily breaking, locking, and popping. The benefits of hip-hop dancing include an increase in stamina, increase in heart rate, reduction of stress, and an increase in energy.

Use in therapy: Hip-hop can be used in therapy by encouraging clients to express themselves through the art of dance. If an individual is upset and is dealing with anger, hip-hop dancing can be a great way to relieve stress because it includes a lot of popping or locking of the body. The burst of energy that you get when doing hip-hop dancing can help reduce stress levels. Hip-hop can also be utilized in therapy through the use of beat-boxing and rapping as a way to express feelings and emotions.

Social Dances

Social dance is a major category or classification of dance forms or dance styles, where sociability and socializing are the primary focuses of the dancing. Many social dances are partner dances, but do not have to be. Social dancing has been proven to help reduce stress, increase energy, improve strength, increase muscle tone and coordination, and improve socialization.

Use in therapy: Social dances can be used in therapy to help an individual participate in society by learning popular dances that they will see at social gatherings to help improve socialization. Another intervention can include planning a party or event where the wobble or electric slide could be taught as an activity leading up to the event.

Seated Dancing

Seated dancing offers participants the ability to learn and enhance the movements in a seated position by providing a modified technique. Seated dancing, sometimes referred to as chair dancing, can not only provide emotional and creative benefits, but also provide healthy physical benefits like improved range of motion, muscle tone, and flexibility. Seated dance is a great low-impact alternative to exercise for individuals who have mobility impairments.

Use in therapy: Seated dancing can be used in therapy to provide individuals who are unable to stand a way of expressing themselves through dancing. Participating in seated dancing can help increase self-confidence in the individuals and improve general and psychological well-being. It also can be used to help muscle tone and strength, and overall functional ability.

Special Thanks

I would like to thank Milligan College for the opportunity to complete this project. The dancers from this dance video each attend Destination Performing Arts Center (DPAC) of Greenwood, SC. Thank you all so much for being apart of this DVD and helping me promote occupational therapy.

