

Dance/Movement Therapy & the Older Adult



“Mourning, frustrations, joy and laughter can be ritualized in group movement, allowing for emotional release and group bonding.”

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) with the Older Adult is conducted in senior centers, adult day care programs, assisted living residences, skilled nursing facilities and in mental health settings. DMT is easily adapted for older adults across the spectrum of physical and cognitive ability.

Dance/movement therapy groups foster an atmosphere of physical and psychological safety in which the elderly can maintain a sense of self-worth and a measure of revitalization. DMT groups also directly counter the isolation many elderly experience by fostering a feeling of belonging and providing a greatly needed forum for social interaction, mutual support and exchange.

Stories and memories are shared with accompanying gestures and are made into poetry, songs, and dances. Free association is encouraged while the therapist maintains a cohesive group rhythm. Individual's capacities and incapacities are explored and accompanying feelings are expressed. Mourning, frustrations, joy and laughter can be ritualized in group movement, allowing for emotional release and group bonding.

DMT provides what research supports as being essential in warding off mental decline in the older adult: physical activity and cognitive and social stimulation. As a mind/body approach to mental health, DMT uniquely addresses the physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs of the older adult by providing a safe, supportive environment for all to express their feelings and share life experience through movement.

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“Dance/movement therapy is the psycho-therapeutic use of movement which furthers the emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration of the individual.”

-American Dance Therapy Association

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