



ICDF Networks

June 2021

Dance Movement Therapy and Healing

Wrapped In His Love.

“Put on the garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness” Isaiah 61:3



Photo: <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/linda-harrisorio>

The ICDF Dance Movement Therapy & Healing Network is made up of people throughout the world who facilitate healing for individuals and communities through the use of dance / movement and other expressive arts.

Our members include: performers, choreographers, storytellers, dance/ music/ art and drama therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, mental health, disability, aged care, rehabilitation and community workers, nurses, teachers, pastors, missionaries, youth and children’s ministry workers.

Looking at Jesus' healing through a Dance Movement Therapy lens

In 1992, three years after completing a Master's degree in Dance/Movement Therapy, Mary Jones asked me to be the network co-ordinator for the Dance Therapy and Healing Network. The Focus Networks were just being founded. I was working as a dance movement therapist and mental health consultant with older adults in nursing homes and was a member of a Christian Dance Group "King's Tapestry" in Calgary, Canada. In the first issue of the Dance Therapy newsletter that I edited, there were two articles, one by Jennifer de Leon, a professional dancer and psychotherapist from New Zealand entitled "The Healing Dance" and my article "Is there a Biblical Foundation for Inner Healing through Movement?" I looked at the accounts of Jesus' and his disciples' healing encounters to see if there were any similarities between them and the approaches I used as a dance movement therapist. It was very encouraging to see how much movement played a part in Jesus' healing and that techniques which I thought of as dance therapy or psychotherapy principles were demonstrated and modeled in his way of healing. Almost thirty years later I have revised that article, included some additional examples from my work and present it here.

In the Old Testament we see God acting to restore not only the physical well being but all aspects of a person's life. Psalm 107 describes God's constant love and the many ways he restores and heals people. He saves them from a life of little hope and direction (vs 4-9), from darkness and captivity (vs. 10-16), from sin, despair and inability to eat (vs. 17-22) and from death (vs. 23-32). God promises to heal people's relationship to their Creator (Hosea 14:4) and to restore their community (Jeremiah 30: 17-20). This holistic view of healing is also reflected in the New Testament as we see Jesus feeling compassion for the people "because they were worried and helpless" and healing people with "every kind of disease and sickness" (Matt 9: 35-36).

Meeting people where they are

In the Gospels Jesus used a combination of physical touch, movement, words and ritual to minister healing and people responded physically to his interventions. Jesus met people where they were. In Matthew 13: 10-15 he explains that he tells parables because people had stopped their ears and eyes and they were not able to turn to God of their own accord to receive healing. Jesus did not give up on them because they weren't able to receive His messages, instead He found a way to speak to them and challenge them through stories and actions. He ministered healing in the way the person could receive it and their receiving of it often included a physical action.

In the last 70-80 years dance movement therapists (DMTs) have worked with people for whom verbal psychotherapy was not as accessible because of their limitations or challenges. The verbally challenged groups they have worked with include children on the autistic spectrum, the brain injured, those with aphasia, the people with dementia, and those with delusional disorders and psychoses. They have also sought to increase expression and self awareness in those who Blanche Evan, a dance therapy pioneer, believed had "lost contact with his/her body and emotions" (Levy, 1988, p. 34). Movement has been a way of meeting all these people where they are, not demanding that they accomplish that which is impossible for them to communicate with others but instead finding meaning, connection, and expression through their existing ability to move and express feeling through movement. Many of the techniques used in dance movement therapy such as mirroring, use of symbols and rhythmic activity were developed out of a desire to meet the client where they were and enter their world in order to effect change.

Moving Differently after a Healing Encounter

In the Biblical accounts, I noticed that during or following a healing encounter with Jesus, the person often moved differently from the movement style dictated by their illness or disability. This change in movement



Photo: Laurel Bridges

Looking at Jesus' Healing ... continued

occurred either as they sought to receive healing, as a part of the healing process or as a result of the healing. For example, the woman with bleeding that made her untouchable in her society received her healing by stepping out and touching Jesus (Matt. 9:22). The man with a shriveled hand in (Matt. 12:9) was told by Jesus to stretch out a hand that could not be extended through his efforts alone. The act of healing freed him to do that which his affliction had prevented. Jesus took the hand of Jairus' daughter in Matthew 9 and urged her to rise and resume the kind of activities a healthy child would want to do. Through this process of healing Jesus restored her normal level of activity and movement expression. As soon as the lame man stood with Peter's help (Acts 3:1-10) his feet became strong and he expressed his joy in movement by leaping and walking. The people who were healed and their community believed in the healing more deeply when they could see a difference in the way they moved.

In my work as a dance movement therapist, I remember examples of people moving differently as a result of the healing experienced in movement therapy. One woman who was paralysed on the left side of her body would use her right hand to fling the left arm off her lap and out of her range of vision as we moved together in our first sessions. She would also call her paralysed hand 'stupid' and expressed anger that her left hand 'didn't work'. In the last DMT session she clasped her left hand in her right and used the right hand to move both arms together in front of her. The way she saw herself also changed after a series of DMT sessions. The participants were asked to draw a picture of themselves at the first and last of the eight sessions. At the first session, her self portrait was an incomplete sketch of a body without limbs but after the last session she drew a picture of herself sitting in her wheelchair with both arms and legs (the left arm is still smaller in the drawing).



Self Portrait, 1st DMT Session



Self Portrait 8th & final DMT Session
(Client drawings in Bridges, 1988)

One man with severe dementia in another group was no longer able to speak and often moved very little in the DMT group for men. In a session on Remembrance (or Armistice) Day after I had given the men poppies, played World War I and II music, and led them in movement and reminiscence, he moved much more actively throughout the session. At the end spoke clearly stating "I lost them all, my mother, my father and my sisters in the Blitz". That was the first time he had spoken in the group or moved so much. That information about his experience in the war had previously been unknown by the nursing home staff. Moving together with other veterans of the wars to war time music possibly enabled him to process his grief and speak about his loss.

A movement response is not only seen in accounts of Jesus healing. Action was also a way of realizing or experiencing a spiritual truth. God's provision was realized in the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-13) when the apostles actually started dividing and handing out the boy's lunch. Peter was able to understand more fully his difficulty trusting in God's protection in the storm not while he sat in the boat but when he stepped out on the water and felt himself beginning to sink (Matt 14: 22—32).

Looking at Jesus' Healing ... continued

A Variety of Methods to Reach People

We see Jesus using a variety of methods to reach people – words, movement, touch, or a combination of all three. He spoke healing to them by commanding them to “be healed”, “rise up and walk” etc. or confirmed through words what they were experiencing in their bodies as he did with the sick woman. “She touched his cloak and her bleeding stopped at once; and she had the feeling inside of her that she was healed” (Mark 5:29). Jesus confirmed her feeling when he told her “My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your trouble” (vs. 34). After his death, his disciples prayed “Lord, reach out your hand to heal and grant that wonders and miracles be performed through the name of your holy servant, Jesus” (Acts 4: 30, Emphasis mine). They had seen Jesus perform many miracles through touching the person in need of healing. He had touched the eyes of the blind (Matt 20:29), healed the soldier’s ear through touch after Peter had cut it with his sword (Luke 22:51), anointed people with oil, and blessed children through touching them (Matt. 19:13). A combination of words and movement were used by him in several incidences. Jesus asked the blind men what they wanted and once they spoke their desires, he touched their eyes and restored their sight (Matt 19:13). The crippled woman in Luke 13:10 was healed after eleven years when she was touched by Jesus and he told her she was free. Her response was to act on the healing by straightening up.

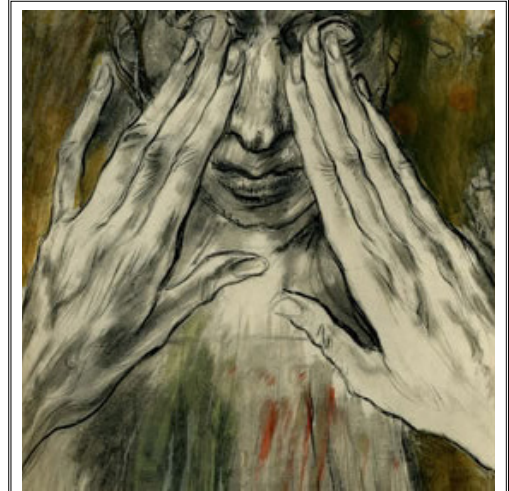


Illustration: Eduouard Léon Edy-Legrand, Jesus Healing the Blind Man. circa 1950. Illustration from La Bible, ed. Maurice Robert.

From its beginning in the pioneering work of Marion Chace in the 1940s, dance/movement therapy has used a combination of movement, sound and touch to engage the person in their healing process, increase their self awareness and help them to acknowledge the change that has occurred. “Through continual verbal narration, accompanied by dance movement and vocalization, she (Chace) united the group and clarified its directions and intentions at all times” (Levy, 1988, p. 31).

Communicating Empathy through Words and Movement

Jesus was able to read the thoughts of the people he encountered and could communicate great understanding and acceptance when he spoke healing to them even if they had not asked for healing in words (e.g. sick woman in Mark 5). Touching someone in their place of pain, as Jesus did in two of the healing encounters, is a powerful way of identifying with the person and help them feel understood. Jesus used mud and touch to heal blindness (Mark 8:22, John 9: 1-12). He touched the ears and lips of a deaf man who was also unable to speak (Mark 7: 31-37). By touching them as he restored the man’s ability to hear and speak may have helped the man accept and believe in this healing.

Although therapists can not know other’s thoughts and motives as Jesus does, we can communicate deep understanding and acceptance. “Kinesthetic empathy”, a technique that dance movement therapists use to allow them “to sense and respond to the client’s emotional state of the moment” (Dosamantes-Alperson, 1984, p. 278) helps us identify with our clients. We communicate our desire to understand their pain and validate their feelings by joining the client’s ‘dance’, moving in a manner that has similar qualities or feelings to their movement style.

Use of Symbolism in Healing

Jesus modeled the importance of symbolic ritual in healing. Putting his fingers in the deaf man’s ears and touching his lips as he brings healing has a symbolic quality. With the man possessed with demons (Mark 5:1-20) Jesus commanded them to go into a herd of pigs and the tormented man was able to see them drowned and destroyed. We often need symbols to help us understand and believe in a sudden transformation like the one this man would have experienced. Art therapists may have their clients make images of their abuse to help the person regain some sense of control and distance from an abusive situation. I had a dance therapy client who used a large magenta coloured cloth to represent a difficult experience in her life. At the end of her dance with it she gathered it up and gave it to me to take it away.

Looking at Jesus' Healing ... continued

One of the primary expressions of faith for all Christian denominations, the Lord's supper (Matt 26, Luke 22, Mark 14) is a symbolic ritual Jesus gave to us and asked us to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). By eating a piece of bread (or host) and drinking wine or juice Christians express their desire to be very close to him and become more like him and remember Jesus' sacrifice of death for us. It is also a ritual that involves a physical response. We stretch out our hand to receive the bread and wine and, in many denominations, we express our willingness to commune with God and His people by walking forward to receive these symbols of Jesus' body and blood. Rituals can also be a way to outwardly show what we feel deeply inside. The woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany (Mark 14: 3-9) showed her love for him and honoured him. Jesus explained this anointing as a symbolic act of preparation of his body for burial.

We who can not actually hear or see Jesus in the physical sense can use rituals to express our love for him when it is difficult to express, experience or receive that love through words and thoughts. Jesus modeled the foot washing for his disciples and asked them to "do likewise (John 13: 1-20) to communicate to the apostles the importance of not just talking about service but actually being servants in ways that may have felt demeaning.

Symbolic interaction and dramatic acting out of a story or situation are used extensively in dance movement therapy (Levy, 2005, p. 22). In a DMT session the symbols often emerge from the client's movement or their use of a prop, for example a cloth may become a baby or a ball may be labeled "a hot potato" by the clients as they throw it back and forth. We can also bring many objects into a session or workshop and invite them to choose which ones to move with. These objects can become symbolic for them and represent something of personal significance.

In addition to clinical work as a dance movement therapist I have presented numerous prayer and healing through movement workshops in the last 30 years to Christian groups. Prior to dance movement therapy training I had apprenticed with the Sacred Dance Group of Boulder (later Sacred Dance Ministries International) for 2 summers and have been very influenced by Paula Douthett's work.

In my workshops, I often included movement experiences that involve them choosing and moving with an object alone or with others. Its use can assist the participants in experiencing God's love, gaining new understanding of their situation or past, receiving direction from God, and experiencing increased freedom. Often, I have no idea the impact an object will have on the participants and am amazed at how God has spoken to them through them. When selecting objects of nature for a workshop in Australia I gathered many types of wildflowers, leaves, sticks, thorns etc. I asked the participants to select 1-2, spend time looking carefully at them, sketch and move with them. Then they described the objects to a partner as if the object of nature was a person by using "I am _____" while describing it. The partner would then read the description back to them.

Martha Graham premiered "Lamentation" in New York in 1930. It is a solo piece where the dancer is seated on a bench and the movements are an expression of grief. Graham is frequently quoted as having said: "Dance is the hidden language of the soul".

Photo by Herta Moselsio. Acquired and digitized 2001 by the US Library of Congress Music Division.



Looking at Jesus' Healing ... continued

In the nature objects collected prior to the workshop, I had included several stems of the Golden Wattle Flower or Acacia which is the national flower of Australia and grows profusely almost as a weed but as a Canadian, I was not aware of its significance. A woman who selected it was very moved by what the Holy Spirit had showed her. She remembered offering the flower to her mother as a child as a token of her love only to have the mother throw it away as a common weed. God used that symbol to assure her of her great value to Him even when others devalue her and she felt Jesus' pleasure when she presented that flower to the cross.

A woman who has frequently attended my workshops throughout the last 30 years explains below how God spoke to her through several of the symbols I had put on the floor for the participants to select from during an experiential in a workshop many years ago:

"My experience that day was very insightful and healing for me. I was struggling with a spirit of self criticism causing me to feel that I ought to be more than I am and that I wasn't good enough for God. From among the props that you had placed around the cross that morning, there was a solitary rose lying there. I felt myself being drawn to a red rose as though God was saying to me, "this is how I created this beautiful perfect rose just like I created you." Then I noticed a rope lying among the props and I picked it up and started winding it around the stem of the rose, basically choking the life out of the rose.

Again, I sensed God saying to me that this is what I'm doing to myself when I don't accept myself for the person he created me to be. It was such a sad sight to see the rose all wrapped up like this but then to my surprise, I noticed that one of the rose's green leaves was poking out through the rope. It brought me to see that this leaf represents God's life is still in me and he loves me. And that it is his life that makes my life to be a beautiful offering.

25 years later this beautiful object lesson continues to teach me that, despite how I might be feeling, it's God's love and life in me through Christ that gives my life meaning and purpose and most of all I am his beloved and he is mine and his banner over me is LOVE."

Workshop participant in the 1990s

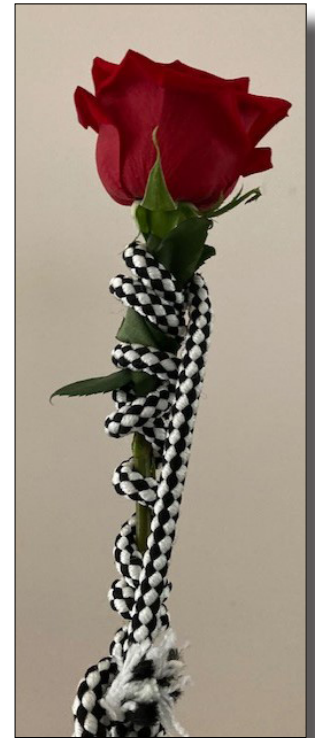
When I wrote the first article comparing stories of Jesus' healing with dance therapy approaches, it was important to me as a relatively new dance therapist to connect my work to Biblical models. I am revisiting this article almost 30 years later now that I have retired from work as a clinical dance movement therapist but occasionally still facilitate workshops in Christian settings. I am blessed when I think about all the ways that God has taken my encounters with clients and workshop participants and met them in their places of need. He has filled the approaches I have used with His grace and healing sometimes in ways that I did not expect.

Laurel Bridges

MA (DMT), MA (Couns. Psych.), BC-DMT (Retired)

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Dancing through the valley of the shadow of death

Once in a while we have the privilege of witnessing a miracle and we are blessed to experience and share in the miracle as it is taking place in the lives of Diane and Andy Hobelaid. We pray and rejoice with them as they continue their journey

25 May 2021

We are doing a dance through the valley of the shadow of death these days - one filled with laughter, tears, intimacy of the minute care needed. My husband is dying. Our marriage began with a dance, and we have danced through health crises as we have gone - sometimes with just a swaying and rocking, or one arm carving through the air. As we seek the Lord through this He provides strength and grace, and I feel as if we are crowd surfing, not on people's hands as much as people's prayers for us.

This is a dance of rapprochement - Andy approaches the edge only to pull back and have a very good day, when it is possible to think that perhaps this isn't true - that he's going to recover by a miracle. But the miracle is that we have yet one more day to come together and express our mutual love in tender ways. The tide turns and ebbs, and each wave takes us closer to the end and I think of Reepicheep in *The Dawn Treader* (C.S. Lewis, 1955) who sails east from the end of the world into Aslan's country.

Myself I dance between hope and peace, and desire, both to prolong our life together, and to end his suffering for once and for all. I am finding my dance sometimes is expressed by words, rhythmic, rarely rhyming, that express the deep realities of the journey. We will dance our goodbye, and I know my husband will find a better suited body to continue the dance in the Kingdom, and that I will soon follow. But in the meantime, I will dance.

27 May 2021

Yesterday, Andy sat up by himself after weeks of hanging on the brink of death - he has had several days of being brighter and asking to eat and drink - and suddenly a miracle! So much so that the palliative doctor, and the nurse and the nurse practitioner came over yesterday and they think he has passed a milestone - whereas they thought he was within hours of death a week ago, they now expect a full recovery. It would seem that his inability to take his meds (which were many) has resulted in his recovery from an induced toxicity - and the Lord is healing him.

So strange. Our priest came to administer the anointing of the sick last week, and asked me what scripture passage I'd like - so I chose the story of Lazarus. I chose it because it has been meaningful to me in the context of the death of my grandfather - I read in it that Jesus raised him so that those around him would believe that he had power over death. If he could raise the dead on this side of the hedge, surely he would do the same on the other side. This morning, the Lord impressed on me - that indeed, he still had power on this side of the hedge! Hour by hour, Andy has improved. We put on music and danced a dance of joy yesterday - him from his bed, and me around his bed! God is good!

14 June 2021

Further update - Andy has continued to improve in his function - never fast enough for him - but I watch in wonder! He is now standing up on his own, and beginning to take a few steps with support. His cognition has returned, and while his speech has been affected quite seriously, we are able to hold a reasonable conversation if I fill in the blanks. So while this article began being written in the midst of that thin place near death, it has turned around completely, by God's grace, and we are on a new path, that leads who knows where.

Diane Hobelaid



Photo: Diane and Andy

Dance Movement Therapy - “Impossible for me but possible for God: surrender the limitation and receive the authorization to dance”

A practical guide to restart your holistic movement and healing

Photo: Susana Guiragossian



In these times, humanity - in most of the world - is witnessing profound changes in their lifestyle. We all experience marked fluctuations in our ability to move and move through known spaces and to which we belong. As Christians, we feel the effect of the changes: perhaps we have become ill, we have lost loved ones, work, relationships and even the use of the places where our life of faith in community and ministry develops. We “dance” to the rhythm of openings and confinements that strengthen us, but also limit and weaken us.

1. WEAKNESS IS MANIFESTED AS A STING IN THE BODY

When Christians who dance, surrender, and accept their limitations (of any kind) at the Lord’s feet, He transforms them into a testimony of His power. Why? Because through that recognition, it enables him as His son to fulfil the mission granted.

It should be said that this principle has value for dance as for any other ministry that is received.

In dance ministry, the body is entirely involved. However, the Lord sometimes allows pricks in the health or environment, so that the Christians learn to express themselves and minister in obedience within the limits He has, so that the only one who takes the glory is Him.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 (NLT) «even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.»

Now you can ask yourself, what are the limitations or emotional, spiritual, relational, ministerial or of any other type of problem that take away the joy to dance and reflect on it.

2. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, HIS POWER IS SHOWN IN THE WEAKNESS OF HIS CHILDREN

To consider yourself as limited to dance in the human order is to recognize that you are not perfect and that you cannot do everything you want if He does not approve it. It is like recognizing that you have better qualities for some activities and not so much for others. Therefore, one and the other are done with different degrees of success and results. The same thing happens in dance, you can have more or less physical dexterity for different reasons: training, age, heredity, health, etc.

The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:7 (NLT) «However, he has given each one of us a special gift[a] through the generosity of Christ.»

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) says «So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.»

In James 4:6 we can read «And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”»

Imagine that you are before Jesus who has given His promise to redeem the world, reflect on your need to mentally and emotionally acknowledge each of your physical limitations at the foot of the Cross with total humility and sincerity.

Impossible for me but possible for God ... continued

3. WEAKNESS MAKES IT POSSIBLE WHEN I GIVE MYSELF IN OBEDIENCE TO YOUR SERVICE

When dancing is a call from God to your life, He always calls His children in the conditions in which they are. The key is to obey and find the mission and direction to that call. It may be that the Lord would make them dance for Him - serve Him - like Paul with his thorn in the flesh and yet still serve Him faithfully and fervently. Paul recognized that God had allowed his health to be weak in order to recognize that everything he did as work was thanks to the strength that God gave him each day by grace.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT) «God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.»

☑ *Having recognized and surrendered your limitations, ask God to allow you to dance and move within those possibilities. Yes, possibilities. To show you the options that are within your pleasing and perfect will for your children, one of whom is you.*

We understand that today is the time to repair the vital rhythm through the temple that God gives us - our body - reinforcing and rekindling the connection with the Holy Spirit that lives in us. He wants to give us a new move, a new understanding of the time that we have to live to have life in abundance by his grace and so that, through our testimony, others can approach the total restoration that Jesus offers. As humans it is an unattainable task but in God it is possible.

Susana Guiragossian

DMT-R, Psychotherapist, Psychologist, PhD candidate

Leaping Lazarus - John 11

Celebration of Healing

Leaping Lazarus,
bandages flying
around your head;
your dance,
wild with joy.
What have your eyes seen,
closed three days
in death?

The blaze of God's face,
his glory.
Then dance, Lazarus,
dance.

Pat Lewis

*First published in "God's
People on the Move", 1988.
Pat Lewis was a founding
member of the Christian
Dance Fellowship of Australia
and has since passed away.*



Illustration: Duccio di Buoninsegna (c 1255–1318), The Raising of Lazarus (1310–11), tempera and gold on panel, 43.5 x 46.4 cm, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX. Wikimedia Commons.

Dance movement therapy enhancing cancer experience reflection

Underpinned by the idea that Dance movement therapy process is able to enhance the revelation of the body-stored memories, I have conducted a study with women with breast cancer. Findings not only unveiled women's breast cancer experiences at different periods but also indicated that the process with created body shapes has broadened women's understanding about their experiences. Results showed that women went through reflection and gained self-awareness on their previous breast cancer experiences. After the research study, I have facilitated the same designed dance movement therapy activity with 13 women of cancer survivors.

The following is a story shared by Jacky (anonymised), one of the participants. In the process Jacky gained her awareness about the experience. She named four separate periods in her experience, the panic, the treatment, the reorganising and the up flying periods. She described the panic period as the time full of shocks, worries and questions. During the treatment period, she mentioned about the feeling and changes in the body. She felt tired and her legs were swollen. After the treatment, it was the reorganising period from where she began a new journey of rehabilitation. The final period, she named it as an up flying stage. Jacky regained the energy and spirit to moving on. She reflected her relationships with people, self and God. She treasured her life more than before.



Photo: Angela Leung

From my experience, dance movement therapy undoubtedly gives participants a creative and transformative self-understanding experience. At the same time, the dance therapist holds the space and provides a safe environment for the exploration. Dance therapy not only contributes to improve psychological, physical, cognitive, and relational situations but also enlightens an individual's reflection on spirituality.

Figure 1. Panic period

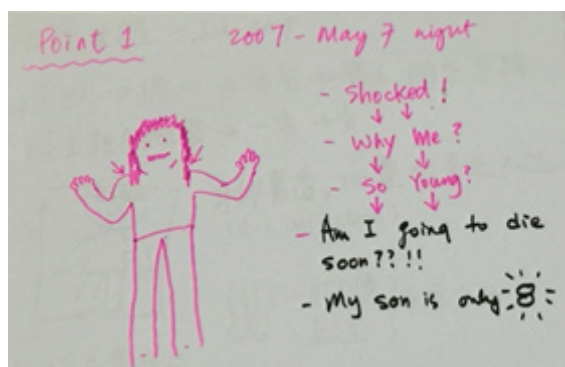


Figure 2. Treatment period

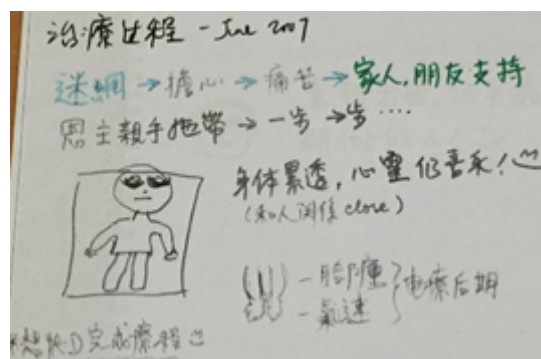


Figure 3. Reorganising period

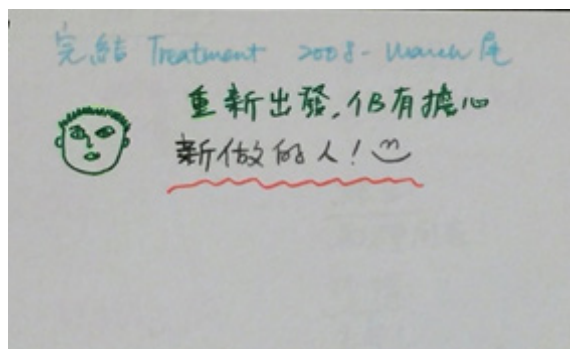


Figure 4. Up flying period



Angela Leung

PhD; DTAA (Prof DMT, Clin DMT); ADMP UK (R-DMP)

Inner healing: Testimony of the legacy of Paula Douthett

Having spent many years in a dance studio perfecting the classical ballet and contemporary techniques, I began teaching in various schools in the UK and overseas. Some years later I was invited to attend a workshop and presentation given by Sacred Dance Ministries International (SDMI). The Holy Spirit spoke quite clearly to me, 'I want you to lay down your gift on the altar'.

Some years later I became a member of Sacred Dance Ministries, living in community and ministering in the UK, Switzerland and Germany. It was a very rich, intense and a blessed time for me. This was where I wanted to be ... learning how to lead workshops and to be introduced to 'Inner Healing' using movement and dance to bring release and wholeness to the body, soul and spirit.



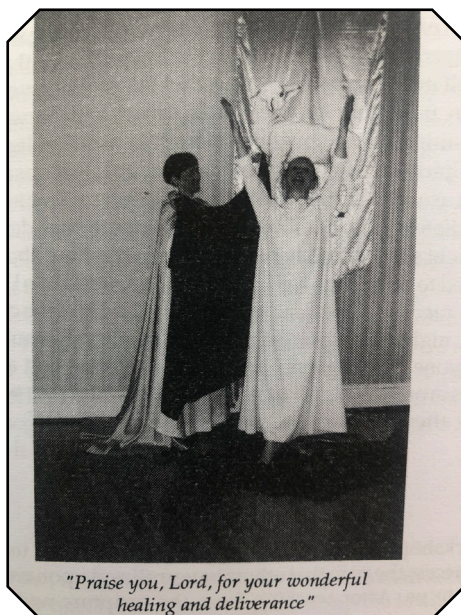
Photo: Caroline Hutchings

Paula Douthett, founder of SDMI, always shared from her own experiences and these formed the theme for each workshop. The theme was then illustrated in movement and dance. People were encouraged to respond - this made a connection and in so doing brought about an engagement, emotionally and spiritually, leading to a dynamic in which people were invited to use creative tools bringing healing and release.

In the booklet 'Christian Dance Therapy' written by Paula Douthett, she writes that she is grateful to God for Marian Chance for her pioneering work with mentally ill patients. Paula writes, 'The two main differences between dance therapy as it is practised in contemporary society are: 1] The conscious awareness of The Lord's presence in the work and that God is the healer. 2] Christian Dance Therapy is not just for people with mental illness- but for all God's people' [Page 17 Christian Dance Therapy-- Healing for the Body of Christ]

To have been able to 'leave my gift on the altar' my gift has been enlarged by The Holy Spirit. Movement and dance is a language used so powerfully to bring healing and joy to so many, and to HIM.

Caroline Hutchings



"Praise you, Lord, for your wonderful healing and deliverance"

The photo above is from a movement piece using a net, to show bondage, but now being set free. The photo shows Jane Wheel (left) and Caroline Hutchings (right).



"Who can heal this black void in my heart?"

The photo of Paula Douthett is from her Testimony Dance 'Motherless Child: Who can heal this black void in my heart?'

Photos: From Paula Douthett's booklet 'Through In-depth Workshops; Worship and Healing'. [Part 111.]

Dance as an expression and prayer of healing

Over the years since I started leading dance prayer and worship workshops and teaching CaraMayan movement meditation to Scripture, there have been people who have testified to experiencing healing both physical, emotional and spiritual. I have also found healing myself through each of these avenues. My mentor in this area was Paula Douthett who for many years led healing workshops around the world and in many CDF/ICDF conferences. She has now passed on so it is up to us who have experienced her workshops or who have known healing in dance from other sources to share this gift with others. It is a powerful tool, as is acknowledged by scientific research, because it is wholistic, involving body, mind, soul and spirit. We are physical beings and using all our senses involves us, helping us to let down our guard and enter into that healing space. Workshops usually include music, props and other visual set-up, movement and words as well as the presence of others that all help to stimulate our senses and give wholistic experiences. CaraMayan is an exercise program but uses music, scripture and dance-based movement to enable the exercise to be spiritual and expressive rather than just a physical expression.

The following poem, written during a personal crisis and in the aftermath of 2011, came out of a dance I choreographed on the story of Ruth as she felt herself a refugee in a foreign land and came to know Yahweh's healing and provision for both her and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Unbeknown to me at the time I was dancing it, the towers were falling in New York and the dance became an expression and prayer of healing both for me and also the world situation.

Mary Jones

The Healing Dance *Ruth*

It came as a challenge -
"You need to make a dance for healing", she said.
How could I have known
that the night I finished it
and danced it several times as prayer
was the fateful morning of September 11
in downtown New York.
As I danced out the grief and mourning
For my own still painful loss,
suicide planes
slashed headstrong into two tall towers
exploding fireballs
shattering the confident control
that named
the World Trade Centre.

The image still haunts -
watched over and over in mesmerized
on a billion television sets around the world.
Slow motion fall,
sinking straight down
floor on floor
into the ground;
bodies pitching,
falling silently through suspended space
to certain death below.
Dust and ashes -
fragments of crushed bodies, buildings,
fill the air
pilling high the ground
where moments ago
stood a thousand busy offices and shops.
Now -
just smoking rubble.



Photo: Mary Jones

Two weeks later
 I was in New York -
 a planned vacation
 to visit family.
 Everywhere were memories
 of the missing -
 presumed dead.
 The photograph and candle
 in the window of the house next door;
 the flowers and verses tied around a lamp-post
 or covering the ground by a monument.
 I asked if I could dance my prayer
 in a service of healing
 at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery.
 This was the church my son attended
 and where so many dancers
 had performed down the years.
 The service was more crowded than usual
 and people were weeping.

Two months later
 the year is ending
 and we hope that the rumble of thunder
 we hear over the water
 will bring rain.
 We have been through
 the bombing of Afghanistan,
 thousands fleeing,
 while near our own shores
 boats bearing refugees
 were turned away
 no room at the inn this Christmas.
 And then the fires started.
 As people sat down to Christmas dinners
 Infernos roared their way through bush and paddock -
 160 houses left just smoking cinders
 of family treasures and hard-earned comforts.
 "Twenty years to get it just the way I wanted -
 and now there's nothing", the paper quoted.
 Even here, three hours drive away,
 smoke clouds the horizon
 and dead cicadas line the high tide mark
 along the beach.



Photo: Mary Jones

I danced the prayer again in November
 to open an end of the year Showing at College.
 "You need to give it away", she challenged.
 "Reach up as if your life depended on it;
 feel your feet dig into the earth.
 Now take that precious seed, that gift,
 and share it".
 Yes!
 There it was.
 I had been searching for the end,
 never feeling it quite right.
 There was still uncertainty and loss.
 But here was joy at a fresh start,
 confidence in something to give,
 a new seed sprouting.

The rain came,
 sweeping across the water,
 suddenly hitting our beach house
 with wind and hail.
 Soon the blackened stubble of burnt out bush
 will sprout green shoots.
 The piles of rubble will be gone
 and the city slowly move on.
 Memories
 seared, sealed,
 sort through meaning,
 healing
 feeding on shared moments
 of understanding.
 I remember the dance;
 and my arms making the shelter overhead
 become a door of hope
 for the new year.

Mary Jones
 January 02

“Transformation”

A group of us received an invitation from a First Nations pastor to fly to a southern Alberta reserve. We went as a team of seven pastors and me. I set up what is called “The River of Healing” and, after sharing my story, I told people to write down the burdens they need to release and encourage them to walk the river to the cross.

Many walked through the river and then three women balked. They represented three generations: grandma, daughter and granddaughter. All three stood screaming, wailing and crying at the beginning of the river. They put one foot in, took it out. Put another foot in, took it out. Unable to step into the river, they did this for 45 minutes. Finally, when they began to walk, with each step they shook, wailed in grief and clung to each other for support. They stopped many times to cry and rest on each other’s shoulders. But they made it through. It took them two and a half hours.

There was a marked change in the women when they reached the end of the river. Their faces beamed. They were free, filled with joy and laughter, sharing an infectious happiness they had never before experienced. In their new-found freedom their steps were light, as if their feet were on holy ground. Both grandma and daughter shared stories of devastation in their families.

They both had lost their husbands, one by suicide and one by murder, their bodies swept away in the current of an actual river on their property.

It was surreal to hear their story. I felt a deep sadness for them and was grateful that I didn’t know the circumstances before I asked them to walk the river. I was even more grateful that they had conquered it. They were powerfully touched, healed and set free! Along with everyone, I was in awe, but I also marvelled at God’s omniscience. I felt so small before Him, realizing I was a participant in His will, His leading, His ministry and His plan. His wonderful plan of healing—body, soul and spirit! I give Him all the glory!!

Belma Vardy



Photos: “The River of Life” as presented by Belma Vardy on different occasions

The ICDF Dance Movement Therapy & Healing Network:

- connections - dialogue - research - information - mentoring and resources - networking in many languages

To become part of the Network contact ... franbaletutor@gmail.com

... icdfworld@gmail.com

Reflection on three women's experience of renewal and revitalisation through Classical Ballet

Two years ago, I was given the opportunity to instruct an Adult Ballet Class at one of the studios I teach at. Several women responded to the advertisement and joined the class. During the welcome discussion the women shared why they wanted to attend. Some of the reasons given were improving fitness and strength, posture and flexibility, working on coordination and balance, and finding a gentle way of exercise to manage one's ageing body. Some even added with a laugh that they hoped to 'shed some of the unwanted fat'. However, since we started, more personal motivating reasons for joining emerged. This was a direct result of the social interaction which happened during the class (and the coffees after) such that it helped them to feel a sense of community or even kin-like relationships with the other people regularly attending the classes.



Photo: Corinne (left) standing next to her exam pupil

“I want to get back into ballet again!” proclaimed one of the participants at the start of the first class. From a young age she was trained professionally in classical ballet, but had stopped her training in her late teenage years. She hoped to re-discover her ballet ability at the age of 64 whilst facing the challenges of an ageing body and a double hip replacement. She was determined to include classical ballet in her recovery process in order to improve her physical strength and mobility. In our conversations during and after classes, we often discussed how there is a sense of kinship in our love for ballet as we both experience the quickening of the heart through the connection with the eternal (a sense of being outside of time and space) whilst dancing. The participant soon expressed that she wanted to take her ballet classes to a higher level, and work towards an RAD Ballet exam. She was determined to improve and rediscover her technical abilities, and hold onto her love for dance expression. Hence, she decided to work towards the RAD Grade 6 examination. Aided by the advice and support of her physiotherapist, and implementing safe dance practice during class by adapting some of the exercises to accommodate the physical limitations, we worked towards achieving her goal. There were times when doubts crept

in, and her steadfast spirit faltered, wondering why she was trying to achieve an RAD exam in the first place. However, her strength and resilience persevered and she crossed the finishing line this June when she accomplished her RAD exam. Her dance class colleagues were very supportive of her and cheered her on throughout the preparation process. Her journey and determination were a great inspiration to us all and we all celebrated together and shared in her success. She had achieved what she set out to do. By improving her physical strength and mobility, she was able to re-discover her love for ballet, increase her technical skills, was happy to lose some weight in the process, and ultimately was able to find a mature artistic expression through dance within a safe and supportive community.

“Dancing was always an activity I enjoyed doing, no matter what style or in what setting” one of the other participants recounted. Formal dance classes had not been an option for her due to living in many different countries throughout her married life. When she arrived in Australia however, she stumbled across the advertisement of the adult ballet class sent out by her daughter's dance studio. She recounted her daughter's participation in ballet classes for many years, her love for dance and the sudden, unexpected turn of event when the daughter discontinued attending ballet class. As a mother she was intrigued to find out more about ballet. By doing so, she hoped that she could gain a more educated perspective on classical ballet and through that connect with her daughter with a deeper understanding. When she first joined the ballet class, I was fascinated to see how much she enjoyed herself. She often stated how much she personally gained by participating. Being a beginner, she was amazed at how much concentration, focus, attention and mental application was required during the ballet class. With a whole-hearted laugh she would recount how challenging it was for her to think

Reflection on three women's experience of renewal ... continued

and act on so many different levels at the same time: 'I know!!! Just to execute a simple action, you have to think about what the arms are doing whilst the body is moving in one direction, and the legs might go the opposite way, with varying dynamics. In addition, the movement has to match the beat of and respond to the music. And to top it all up, you need to add artistic quality; and of course, it all needs to look easy, graceful and elegant!' Throughout her attendance she showed much perseverance. She would film the exercises with the sole purpose of practicing at home. Eventually she settled into the flow of the class and the increased familiarity with the exercises helped to build up her confidence. And to her surprise she shared with us that just recently her daughter told her that she would be open to take up ballet again and continue on with the next RAD Ballet Grade after her HSC (whilst pursuing a career in Media Arts and Film).

"Mum, this is not how you do it!" the children of yet another participant would say to her, all three of her children having attended dance classes throughout their childhood and teenage years. Although they would tease her for attending the Adult Ballet Classes, her resolve was to continue. "I love my ballet" she would say to

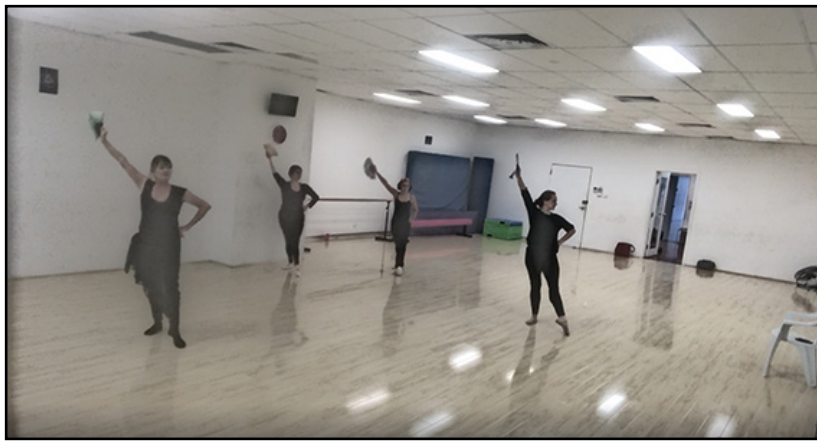


Photo: Dancers from the adult class taught by Corinne

us. When she was in class, she demonstrated a positive and can-do attitude. She learned the basic ballet vocabulary very quickly with a natural aptitude for movement. Compared to her other regular exercise routines, she found that the adult ballet class offered a more holistic approach which involved the mind, emotions and personal expression. And learning a variety of different choreographies was an extra bonus. She was adamant that she did not attend ballet class because of her children and their involvement in dance.

Learning classical ballet has been something she always wanted to do. At times she talked

about her youngest daughter who is showing great talent for dance and is trying to pursue a career in dance. We often discussed the challenges and limitations her daughter and many other young artists and dancers across the globe are facing due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Being able to talk and discuss current issues with akin mothers in an understanding community offered respite and a welcomed support.

Each of these women brought their rich and amazing live experiences to the Adult Ballet community. It was in the sharing of those different stories that we were enriched by each other. Each participant has grown and undertaken a journey of renewal, and has been revitalised by participating in an artistic culture. Whether they were beginners learning new material and ballet technique, or previously trained dancers re-discovering ballet afresh, each of them was able to progress and improve in the areas they set out at the beginning, and more. They encountered other women seeking a new way of self-expression and artistic growth – and experienced joy, acceptance and encouragement along the way.

Corinne Urquhart

RAD (registered) | DDTS | DTAA (Prof DMT) | MMA

Other related reading:

Dancing while Aging: A Study on Benefits of Ballet for Older Women
March 2020

Anthropology & Aging 41(1):83-94

DOI:10.5195/aa.2020.209

Rachyl Pines

University of California, Santa Barbara

My healings though dance

My name is Rosemarie Smith and these are my stories of the healings through dance that have impacted my life as a child and an adult. In 2002 I started studying a Grad Dip in Dance Movement Therapy at Wesley Institute at Drummoyne, NSW, Australia. In the second semester I thought I had the flu and visited by GP who referred me for a series of bloods and scans. That day he sent me to our local hospital. After a week of more tests, scans and nuclear procedures, I was given a diagnosis of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma stage 3. I was given two lots of chemo one being a trial of 6 treatments, my last one was on the 31/12/2002. My Oncologist/ Haematologist gave me very little hope of surviving.

The Lord gave me a scripture from Exodus 14:13-14 “Don’t be afraid. The Lord himself will fight for you. You won’t have to lift a finger in your defence.” Which was so good as I was too weak to even lift a finger. The peace that surrounded me was incredible as I was in perfect peace that others thought was denial.

In January 2003 Wesley invited me to attend the summer school subject of Sacred Dance which was part of my studies. I spoke to them and explained that I could not stand let alone dance, I was so weak and frail. The head of Dance told me that the whole of the Institute had been praying for me and believed that the rest of my healing would come from attending the week-long intensive course. I agreed and said that I might have to sit for the week.

The first day I had to sit and participate. As the week progressed, I was able to physically engage and as part of our assessment for the subject we needed to put together a testimony dance. My dance consisted of going through my journey of the cancer and ending in me throwing my wig across the room to indicate the beginning of my new life’s journey and inviting the other students to join me in some free dance.

I started the week sitting on a chair and by the end dancing, empowered by the dance and prayer, my healing was on the long journey to a full recovery. My Oncologist/Haematologist took 9 years to close my file, as he would say at every consult that my cancer could come back at any time. I have survived him.

My journey of surviving cancer allowed me to support the Religious Education Teacher in my local High School and talk to the students for 16 years till Covid 19 about my story of cancer and facing death. It had many positive effects on the students and staff. My Dance Movement Therapy allowed me to work in aged care where I was blessed to work and have my mum in the session for the last 2 years of her life.

Looking back as a child at the age of 8, I was lacking confidence and my posture was poor. My mum sent me to ballet, tap and modern dance classes. It was my safe place, where when I danced, I was able to be free to be myself. It was a wonderful time and I realised later that it was my coping mechanism. My 11 years of dancing was a major part of getting into Wesley. I am a Professional Member of DTAA.

Dance is still very important part of my wellbeing and I continue to connect with others by zoom since Covid 19. As I write this a piece of music came on and it transported me back to my childhood and ,of course, I had to get up and do the dance.



Photo: Rosemarie Smith holding her wig

Rosemarie Smith

DTAA (Prof DMT)

I AM A DANCE MINISTER

by Angela M Grayson

I am a dance minister

Dance: an outward expression of an inner sensing

Ministry: a call to serve, a mandate from God of each individual's divine purpose

Dance is my ministry, my calling, my outward expression of the move of God in my life to bless the lives of others

I am a dance minister



Photo: Angela Grayson

Through my ministry in dance
I have authority to heal, deliver, intercede, war
and ignite

God has blessed me to use my body as a
moving expression of his word

To give visual interpretation of the shift
between heaven and earth

I am a dance minister

My mind, my soul and my spirit are filled with
the joy of dance

When I dance for the Lord, I feel closer to him
I feel honored that he chose to move through
me, around me and for me

When I dance unto the Lord, I know that I am
operating in my purpose

Dance is a part of me inside and out
I AM A DANCE MINISTER!

Angela M Grayson, PhD, LPC, BC-DMT, NCC