

# An Overview of Dance/Movement Therapy & the Power of Movement



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## 1. What is dance movement therapy?

The American Dance Therapy Association defines dance/movement therapy as the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote the emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and overall well being. DMT is a form of expressive therapy that uses movement and dance as a tool for self-expression and healing. . It is based on the belief that the body and mind are interconnected.



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## 2. Historical background of movement therapy

Movement therapy, rooted in ancient civilizations, has evolved over centuries to encompass various forms of dance as a therapeutic tool. Dance/movement therapy has been a distinct profession since the 1940's. The pioneers of the movement saw the relationship of how the body and mind interact in health and illness. Whether it be a illness of the mind lwhich affects the body, or an illness of the body that impacts the mind and spirit, these early therapist saw the need to treat these issues.



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### 3. Theoretical frameworks in dance therapy

Different theoretical frameworks underpin dance/movement therapy, including the psychoanalytic approach, humanistic theories, developmental, transpersonal and cognitive-behavioral perspectives. These frameworks provide a holistic understanding of how movement, expression, and interaction in dance can promote healing, self-discovery, and emotional well-being for individuals of all ages and backgrounds.



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### 4. Benefits of dance therapy on mental health

**Benefits of Dance Therapy on Mental Health**  
Dance therapy has been shown to be a powerful tool for improving mental health by reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Through movement and expression, individuals can release pent-up emotions, reduce stress, increase self-awareness, social skills and build confidence, leading to a greater sense of well-being and emotional balance.



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### 5. Impact of movement therapy on physical wellbeing

Movement therapy not only benefits mental health but also enhances physical well-being, social connection and cognitive functioning. Regular participation in dance therapy can improve physical strength, flexibility, coordination, and overall fitness levels. By engaging in expressive movement, individuals can experience a holistic approach to wellness, nurturing both their mind and body for optimal health.



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## 6. Case studies illustrating therapeutic outcomes

Numerous case studies have shown the effectiveness of dance/movement therapy in treating anxiety, depression, PTSD and eating disorders. Overall DMT has been shown to help patients achieve specific therapeutic goals such as improving emotional regulation, increasing self-esteem, enhancing body awareness and building interpersonal skills. It's unique approach integrating physical movement with emotional expression allows individuals to access and process difficult emotions in a non-verbal way, making it especially effective for addressing a range of mental health concerns.



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## 7. Ethical considerations in dance therapy practice

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in dance therapy practice, ensuring the safety, privacy, and well-being of participants. Therapists must adhere to professional codes of conduct, maintain confidentiality, and obtain informed consent from clients. Additionally, it's essential to address power dynamics, cultural sensitivity, and boundary issues to uphold ethical standards in providing effective and responsible care.



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## 8. Incorporating dance therapy into clinical settings

Incorporating dance therapy into clinical settings involves aligning therapeutic goals with patient needs, creating a safe and supportive environment for exploration and expression. Therapists must adapt interventions to individual abilities, interests, and preferences, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-discovery through movement and creativity.



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## 9. Future directions in movement therapy research

Future research in movement therapy should explore the use of technology in delivering DMT, the neurobiological effects of dance on mental health, the integration of DMT into community based programs, and the long-term effects of dance interventions on mental health conditions. Additionally, studies should investigate the efficacy of specific dance styles for different populations, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practices to further establish movement therapy as a valuable therapeutic approach in clinical settings.



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## 10. Conclusion and key takeaways from the analysis

In conclusion, the therapeutic potential of dance, through movement therapy, is a promising avenue for improving mental health outcomes. Evidence-based research on dance interventions and various dance styles can enhance the clinical application of movement therapy for diverse populations. Embracing this holistic approach to healing can create meaningful shifts in mental health treatment paradigms. Let's continue to explore the healing power of dance and its potential impact on mental health.



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### Resources:

1. American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) website: [www.adta.org](http://www.adta.org) Provides information on training programs, conferences, and resources for dance/movement therapy professionals.
2. International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association (ISMETA) website: Offers resources and information on somatic movement therapy approaches within the field.

### Research Articles:

1. Karkou, V., & Sanderson, P. (2006). Arts Therapy-dance: Research and practice London: Routledge.

These resources can provide valuable information and insights for psychiatrists interested in incorporating DMT into their practice or for further understanding of its benefits and effectiveness in mental health care.



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Books:

1. "Dance Movement Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice" by Helen Payne
2. "The Art and Science of Dance/Movement Therapy: Life is Dance" by Sharon Chaiklin and Hilda Wengrower
3. "Dance/Movement Therapists in Action: A Working Guide to Research Options" by Robyn Flaum Cruz
4. "Foundations of Dance/Movement Therapy: The Life and Work of Marian Chace" Edited by Susan L. Sandel, Sharon Chaiklin and Ann Lohn

