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## Sample Lesson for CaringKind connect2culture– June 22, 2020

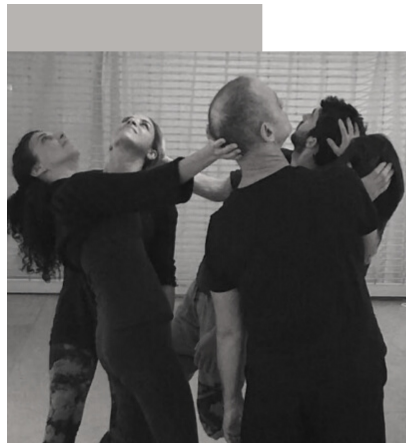
Using music to awaken kinesthetic awareness and expression

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We know that even for people with advanced dementia, recognition of and memory of music remains<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, procedural memory (kinesthetic memory – ie. riding a bicycle, playing a musical instrument, dancing) is more resistant to decline and can serve as a way to connect in a meaningful way when language (explicit memory) has been affected.

Although there is still a relative paucity in research exploring the effects of various forms of dance practice on neuroplasticity in the aging population, several studies have promising results, which reflect the qualitative results dance educators have observed in practice. Some of these studies<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> had reported increased brain volume as well as increase in a neurotrophic factor BDNF correlated with promoting neuronal growth when older adults

participated in programs of learning increasingly challenging and novel choreography. Another study<sup>5</sup> reported significant improvement in cognitive flexibility following instruction in “contemporary dance”, or as reported, a combination of guided improvisation and self-created dance.



**MAKING  
NEW  
CONNECTIONS  
THROUGH  
DANCE**

In today’s activity we are using music and dance to bolster procedural memory. Drawing on our sensory abilities (the senses), our kinesthetic abilities (our “body memory”) and our empathetic abilities (the way we feel and connect), we explore individual and group creativity in movement, while connecting to our executive functions (of naming, analysis and memory). As a result, we are supporting **making new connections in our brains through a creative exploration of the art of movement.**

The following activity can be done alone or with friends and is adaptable and accessible to all abilities!

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## **MATERIALS**

If you have Spotify, open this playlist to access some pre-selected music: [PLAYLIST](#)

Otherwise see if you can find the following recordings:

- Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64: Dance of the Knights (Sergei Prokofiev)
- Walk to School (Philip Glass)
- Allegro prestissimo from Sonata for Two Cellos (Jean Barrière, Yo-Yo Ma, Bobby McFerrin)

Do you have another piece of music that you'd like to try in this activity?



## **WARM UP**

**Your body is your instrument. It is recommended you always warm up before engaging in physical activity.**

Take a moment to find your body in space and tap into your internal body feeling. Notice your breath. And how your body feels. Any aches. And places where you feel tension. Or areas where you feel at ease. Observe them without judgment.

Do this in silence or with some music you enjoy. Explore STRETCHING – in various ways.

Reach and expand your body and allow it to release. Allow yourself to yawn and stretch your face and voice. Explore FLOPPING or DROPPING, allowing your body to be loose and heavy.

See what happens when you lift an arm and let it drop. Explore SHAKING. Shake a hand. And arm. A torso, A leg. A foot. Shake your entire body. STOMP your feet on the floor.

CLAP your hands. TAP your body. Feel your body in space. REST. Notice your body feeling now.

## EXPLORE

Seated, laying down or standing in a neutral, easy position...



Play the song you selected. You can listen to the entire song, or you can stop it after 30 seconds. If it is comfortable for you, close your eyes. Listen to the music. Allow it to wash over you and through you. What do you hear? Does this song evoke any feelings for you? Do you find that your body wants to move in a certain way when you hear this music? You don't have to move, but try to **NAME** the feeling or action that comes up for you.

### Write it down

Did you come up with any **FEELING** or **ACTION** words that this song evoked for you? Write them down. If you are doing this with a friend, ask them to share any words that came up for them.

Look at your words. If you wrote down a **FEELING** like *cheerful* can you identify an **ACTION** word that evokes that feeling? I.e. **BOUNCE** or **FLUTTER**?

### Listen again and allow your body to move with the music...

Now play the song again. This time keep your eyes open and allow your body to move along with what you hear in the music. Maybe new actions come up for you. Try them out and see how they feel in your body.

If you are dancing with a friend, take turns: allow one of you to dance and the other watch. See if the person watching can **IDENTIFY ACTION WORDS** from what they see you dancing! Now switch.

Add any new words to your list. Perhaps your list would look something like this:

BOUNCE	POP
FLUTTER	BUBBLE

## CREATE

Now that you have a list, take a look at it. Do any of the words stand out to you?

If you are with a friend, do this together. Have a discussion. Perhaps you each had some favorite actions that you enjoyed – maybe because of the way they felt when you danced them or because you enjoyed seeing your friend dancing them.

**PICK THREE ACTIONS**

## Put it together into a dance!

Using your three actions, make a dance, alone or with your friend. Maybe each of you can make a dance to the same actions or you can make one together.

- Decide how you will BEGIN – ex. in stillness, in a certain shape, on one side of the room, seated or standing?
- Now decide the ORDER you will dance the actions.
- Decide how you will END – ex. in stillness, in a certain shape, on the other side of the room, seated or standing?

Now try it out! Practice it a couple times.

## SHARE

### It can be very fun to share your dance!

Even if it's just for yourself! Put on the music and dance your entire dance, from BEGINNING, through the three actions, to the ENDING.

If you are dancing with a friend, dance it together or perform for one another.

Think about how what you did made you feel. What did you enjoy? If you are dancing with a friend, what did you see and appreciate about their dance? Did it make you hear or appreciate something new in the music? Share it with your friend or if you are dancing alone, take a moment to journal about it.

**If you want, record your dance and share it with friends or on social media! Tags: #connect2culture #groupbodydance #magdakaczmarska #AgingIsALifelongProcess**  
**[@MagdaKaczmarisk4 (Twitter); @magdakacz2013 (Instagram)]**

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