

Description of the Movement & Dance sessions

DanceMoves is a Cambridge-based company passionately committed to extending the life-affirming and therapeutic benefits of dance to healthcare and community settings. DanceMoves creates tailor-made dance projects in consultation with health professionals and with a focus on assisting the management and alleviation of health problems and promoting wellbeing. Crucially, DanceMoves delivers high quality, enjoyable and friendly dance encounters that encourage meaningful human communication.

Our approach provides the following benefits:

- Existing rehabilitation programmes are supplemented, aiding recovery
- Participants have improved physical confidence
- Participants with physical and / or cognitive difficulties become more resilient
- Participants gain emotional and social support from working in small groups, providing networks that combat isolation and loneliness
- Participants report increased wellbeing through enjoyment, creativity and self-expression

The dance and movement sessions have been devised to deliver good and healthy movement experiences to patients. In addition the aim of the session is to encourage health practitioners to absorb and learn new skills in relation to their patients whilst simultaneously feeling the benefits themselves. Whilst the sessions can be therapeutic for patients and staff alike, they are not intended as therapy sessions.

A key focus of the sessions is to facilitate opportunities for staff to foster new and different relationships with their patients. The project offers staff the chance to bring their patients into a non-clinical space, to enjoy a non-medicalised approach to healing and well-being. We remember who we are, and we reconnect through the pleasure of sharing our stories. Creating dances with the people we look after brings a richness and resilience into the caring relationship.

Motivation, engagement, resilience, and understanding of holistic health - these are empowering and imperative abilities for people to have in order to get better. Especially the elderly, who commonly suffer from depression, disorientation, and apathy when entering hospital - particularly when staying for a length of time. It is important to find a means whereby they can build positive relationships with their health carers and regain a sense of their value.

The aim of the movement sessions is to facilitate increased range and ability of movement. The intention is to invite patients into a movement practice that they can access at the level most appropriate to themselves. For example, for some patients, movement may take place whilst in a wheelchair. For other patients it might be appropriate to dance traditional, remembered dance steps such as the waltz or the foxtrot.

At all times it is essential that patients are made to feel comfortable and in control of their own movement. There is no expectation or desired outcome outlined by the dance artist and co-leading health practitioner. By focusing on the positive potential of how we can move, how we want to move, side stepping assessment of what's wrong, we open ourselves to the wisdom of the body-mind connection and our body's innate ability to heal. Step by step we find our way to moving more fully, generously, with vigour and vitality. Through music and simple movement - following breath, tracing melody with fingers, improvising and creating, we move, and we realise our capacity to experience more, feel more, express more.

It is well established that the arts go some way in creating the right healing environments and providing the right processes to help people heal. Dance is an arts form that deals directly with the body, and as such is extremely well placed in hospital to provide healing and wellbeing. Using imagery, metaphor, and of course, music, patients and staff alike become more flexible, more open, more fluid, - nourished, energised, connected and focused. Moods shifts, bodies release pain, tension, paranoia and anxiety. Not many people can resist the cajoling voice of Nat King Cole, or the doleful wail of Elvis. The restorative order of Bach. The still important heart-feltness of the war songs.

Pain relief, stress reduction, relaxation, better hospital coping skills, enhanced hospital experiences, healthier life choices - these are important skills every patient needs. Importantly, these are the same tools tools that can help hospital staff cope with the demands of pressurised work loads.