

Dance Movement Therapy

An Experiential Introduction

What is Dance Movement Therapy?

- “DMT is a relational process in which client/s and therapist engage in an empathic creative process using body movement and dance to assist integration of emotional, cognitive, physical, social and spiritual aspects of self.” – ADMPTUK
- A relational process: two or more people engaging in a therapeutic relationship based on empathy and trust, this relationship is the foundation upon which psychotherapeutic change occurs
- A creative process: the artistic aspects used in DMT, i.e. dance and creative (improvised) movement, similar to the creative process used by some dance artists. **HOWEVER**, the dance and movement aspects of DMT are **not taught!**
- The integration of emotional, cognitive, physical, social and spiritual aspects of self: all of these layers of the human experience can be accessed through the act of embodied movement

What are the key theories that support this practice?

- Embodiment: bringing the body and mind together, coming into and being in the body
- Feminist/phenomenological approach: moving away from the Cartesian idea of mind/body dualism (I think therefore I am) which places the mind at the top of the hierarchy, towards embodiment (I feel/experience/sense therefore I am), which values the lived experience and the wisdom of the body; a feminist lens takes into consideration the autobiographical, relational and sociopolitical layers of the human experience
- Humanistic approach: meeting the client where they are in that moment, accessing mirror neuron system

What are the guiding principles of DMT?

- The body, mind, and emotions are interconnected and the three are mutually influential: any changes experienced physically or in movement are reflected in emotional or psychological changes.
- Non-verbal communication: movement is our first form of communication and one of our first experiences in life, starting even before birth (around 3 months from conception) and before other senses develop. We continue to develop our sense of selves through the non-verbal communication (mirroring and attunement) with our primary care giver.

Laban Movement Analysis

- Movement = personality: personality is the collection of a person's behaviors, and behavior is enacted through movement
- Laban Movement Analysis: a system of analyzing and talking about movement using non-judgmental language
- Effort qualities: weight (strong/light), space (direct/indirect), flow (bound/free), and time (quick/sustained)
- Connecting these to personality: weight = intention, space = attention, time = decision making, flow = emotion and relationship

What client groups/ populations might a DMT work with?

- Mental health and trauma: in-patient (acute), community (enduring), private practice
- School: built into framework, individual sessions, short term interventions
- Complex and Multiple Learning Difficulties: within school setting, individual basis, community settings
- Senior/dementia care: community, long term care, retirement residences, etc.
- Physical rehabilitation centers
- Immigrant/refugee populations
- Detention and correctional facilities
- AND MORE!

Options for training

- Canada: NCDT or West Coast DMT alternate route training programs to register with ADTA
- US/UK/Europe/Australia: MA level training programs (resource on DMTAC website)
- entry requirements: vary from program to program, but generally require background in dance OR psychology, experience in mental health, BA

Resources

Books

- *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Wellbeing* - Vicky Karkou et al. (editors)
- *The Meaning of Movement: Developmental and Clinical Perspectives of the Kestenberg Movement Profile* – Judith Kestenberg-Amighi et al.
- *Dance Movement Therapy: A Creative Psychotherapeutic Approach* - Bonnie Meekums
- *Dance Movement Therapy Theory, Research and Practice* - Helen Payne (editor)
- *Developmental Movement for Children* - Veronica Sherborne
- *Beyond Words: Movement Observation and Analysis* - Carol-Lynne Moore, Kaoru Yamamoto

Journals

- Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy
- American Journal of Dance Therapy
- The Arts is Psychotherapy
- E-Motion (ADMPUK quarterly journal)
- Creative Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Websites

- Dance Movement Therapy Association of Canada
<https://www.dmtac.org>
- Dance Movement Therapy Ontario <https://dmto.org>
- National Centre for Dance Therapy (Quebec)
<https://grandsballets.com/en/national-centre-for-dance-therapy/the-centre/>
- West Coast Dance Movement Therapy (British Columbia)
<https://westcoastdmt.com>
- American Dance Therapy Association <https://adta.org>
- Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK
<http://admp.org.uk>
- European Association for Dance Movement Therapy
<http://www.eadmt.com>