

Ariathney Coyne

Linz, AT

Healing through dance: A review of the past and a look into the future

In the past decades there has been a vast amount of research investigating the effects of dance in improving motor and cognitive skills, as well as overall quality of life. In particular, research has focused on dance interventions for people with physiological and/or psychological conditions, such as Parkinson's Disease or depression. In the majority of cases dancing provides significant benefits and participants report a positive experience (Houston & McGill, 2013).

In a simplified model, these positive benefits can be ascribed four-fold:

- 1) Participants are performing physical exercise, thereby improving balance, mobility, coordination etc.
- 2) Dancing involves cognitive and emotional stimulation, such as remembering a specific sequence of motions, or expressing certain emotions through movements.

- 3) Throughout the dance class participants are listening, processing and moving to music, which in itself can be health-promoting (Pereira et al., 2018).

- 4) Dance sessions provide an opportunity for participants to gather as a group to socially interact, bond and share experiences.

Overall, dance programs provide a range of benefits, are noninvasive and relatively low-cost. Nonetheless, the clinical application of dance interventions is not widespread and research groups emphasize the need for higher-quality studies, which validate the efficacy of different dance styles and the safety of such programs (Shanahan, Morris, Bhriain, Saunders, & Clifford, 2015).

As the community moves forward with research and practical applications there are two important aspects to be considered. First, the importance of allowing individuals to choose which style of dance they

would like to practice. This would provide a heightened sense of autonomy, and in turn could lead to a lower dropout rate throughout the dance program. Secondly, emphasizing the application of research findings in a practical setting. This means finding ways to integrate the existent research findings within relevant population groups, thereby actively promoting greater access to dance interventions.

SOURCES:

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SHORT BIOGRAPHY:

Ariathney Coyne's first contact with dance began with her classical ballet training at the Vienna State Opera Ballet School. She continued dancing at an amateur level, whilst completing her Master's in Neuroscience at University College London. Currently, she is attending Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität as a Master student in Movement Research. She ultimately wishes to combine the knowledge from her scientific studies together with her artistic interests.

CONTACT:

Frau MSc Ariathney, Coyne
 Studentin Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität
 4040 Linz
ariathney.coyne@gmail.com