

# DANCE

Based on the presentation “Creating Diverse Dance”  
by Boni Boswell



## Getting Started

There are many types of movement and settings for dance expression. Dance does not have to be intimidating. It is important for someone with a disability to understand that there is no right or wrong way to dance—it can be creative, expressive and individualized. Creative educational dance can be used to provide the experience and knowledge to move in ways that express personal perspectives and ideas. Whether you begin in an educational setting, enjoy dancing on your own, or desire to take a class to learn more about dance, consider some of the following ideas:

- ? When considering a dance class, observe the class and talk to the instructor about your strengths and needs. A good instructor will be able to capitalize on strengths and adapt movements or use movements that are easily achieved.
- ? Additional time may be necessary, with or without instruction, to become comfortable with dance movements and understand how these might be affected by a disability.
- ? Keep in mind that the movements performed by individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities may appear different, but should be accepted as an extension of traditional dance and celebrated appropriately.

## Benefits of Dance

Increases range of motion  
Improves strength and flexibility  
Socialization opportunities  
Increases coordination  
Improves muscle control  
Reduces stress  
Enhances self esteem  
Promotes creativity

## Adaptation Ideas

- ? Dance movements have endless adaptations depending on the abilities and limitations of each individual.
- ? Movements as small as “turning or tilting of the head” can be demonstrated by those with limited movement.

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- ? Mobility devices, such as wheelchairs and crutches, can be incorporated into dance sequences.
- ? Modifying the use of basic dance elements in terms of time, space, and force can make movements more achievable.

## Helpful Hints to Increase Success

The following hints may be helpful for dance instructors when including people with disabilities in a dance class or group:

Hint #1: Design the movement sequences so that they include developmentally appropriate movements that are diverse and fun.

Hint #2: Begin with simple and brief movement sequences and gradually increase the complexity and length.

Hint #3: Don't assume specialized or individual instruction is needed because of a disability. In many cases, people with disabilities can be included in "regular" classes.

Hint #4: Present instructions in clear and simple language repeating and demonstrating movements if necessary.

Hint #5: Carefully attend to the composition of the group or class to ensure it is composed of participants with similar skills and interests.

## Resources

**National Arts and Disability Center**  
UCLA University Affiliated Program  
300 UCLA Medical Plaza Suite 3310  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-6967  
310-794-1141  
[www.nadc.ucla.edu](http://www.nadc.ucla.edu)

**Dance Company Websites**  
[www.ggggreg/dancingwheels.htm](http://www.ggggreg/dancingwheels.htm)  
[www.axisdance.org](http://www.axisdance.org)  
[www.fullradiusdance.org](http://www.fullradiusdance.org)  
[www.streamcommunication.com/danceability](http://www.streamcommunication.com/danceability)