

# DANCE *for* PD<sup>®</sup>

## Training Module #5 (beta) Class design and structure

### This module will help guide you to understand:

- ✓ The basic approaches of structuring your class.
- ✓ The core elements and building blocks: sitting, supported standing, dancing across the space
- ✓ How to think about creating a flow: finding the right pace to energize, stimulate and reassure
- ✓ How to be flexible and use spontaneity

### Overview

This module will help you think about how to structure your class in a way that honors the structure of your favorite dance class, while keeping the important objectives of comfort, safety, progression and fun front and center. Remember: a Dance for PD class is modeled on classes that teach people how to dance, not a therapy session, so the structure should allow the participants to feel comfortable in their bodies and in the space, warm up progressively, and build upon what came before. That said, there is a fair amount of flexibility regarding class structure, and we encourage you to try out different formats as you go along. Striking a balance between comfort, flow, rigor and fun takes practice, time and a conversational approach; asking for feedback from the class after sessions in invaluable way to find out if your structure is beneficial and enjoyable. We suggest a basic progression, but also include possible deviations and detours that you may want to try.

### Key questions

How do I satisfy all of the different levels of ability and challenge in one unified class? What's the best way to start the class so that people feel comfortable? How much time should I spend sitting versus standing? How many different exercises or phrases should I try to fit into the class?

## Basic approaches

1. Welcome participants each week. Learn names. Try to get around to as many of them before class as you can. Make personal contact, and let them know how happy you are to see them. Many students have made a great, sometimes difficult effort to get to the class. Four things to explain to the group before a class: who to watch, modify if necessary, anything done standing can be done sitting, participation is being in the room.
2. Starting the class in chairs takes away any concerns about balance, and reassures the group that the pace will start off comfortably. The chairs create a sense of support, and may allow participants to experiment and expand their range from a steady and reliable base. But depending on the abilities and requests of the group, you want to be careful not to spend too much time in chairs. Ask for feedback about the desires of the group.
3. Starting the class in a circle creates a sense of community and group engagement, and breaks down the hierarchy between teacher and students so that everyone is working together. It can be difficult to know how to follow the leader in a circle (mirroring or following behind), so explain that either is fine and sit out a bit towards the center of the circle to demonstrate.
4. You can practice things in the chair that you might do standing at the barre, in a circle, or walking across the floor.
5. Using a ballet barre, or standing behind the chairs and using them as barres, provides an excellent supported transition between seated movement and standing movement.
6. Exercises that move across the floor should come at the end of the class, when participants are warm and have been developing an awareness throughout the class of balance, weight shift, coordination, and

## Want to learn more?

## Please join us at a training workshop!