

# DANCE *for* PD<sup>®</sup>

## Training Module #6 (beta) Exercise design

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

- ✓ The basic elements and ingredients of what makes an effective and enjoyable exercise
- ✓ How to mine your techniques to take what you already know and adapt it
- ✓ The Dance for PD repertory—and help you learn classic exercises to serve as a template
- ✓ Principles behind designing new exercises: sources for enlivening your repertoire

### Overview

When designing exercises for our classes, we think like dancers, not therapists. Choreography that demands clear rhythms; coordination of different body parts; articulation; specific dynamics; hand and foot specificity; facial expression; use of the imagination; character work (pretending to be someone else); balance; good posture; smooth mobility from one position to the next; grace; and spatial awareness: these all seem to be most beneficial for this class. In designing your exercises, it's important to think about *how* you will teach them. You want to have as much flexibility as possible, so that you can break your phrase down into small pieces to teach it so that everyone feels comfortable. Exercises are stylistically and culturally specific, but the useful principles are the same. So although a Dance for PD class based on western classical forms may look very different from one based on bharata natyam, the building blocks the teacher is using to engage participants' bodies, minds and spirits are the same.

### Questions

What are the elements of my dance style or technique that I should emphasize for this particular population? What technical aspects should I include or avoid? What do I think about when I'm designing a combination? Where do I start?

## Knowing the basic elements

First, let's consider the Dance for PD® 10 points of why dance is helpful for people with PD:

1. Dance develops flexibility and instills confidence.
2. Dance is first and foremost a stimulating mental activity that connects mind to body.
3. Dance breaks isolation.
4. Dance invokes imagery in the service of graceful movement.
5. Dance focuses attention on eyes, ears and touch as tools to assist in movement and balance.
6. Dance increases awareness of where all parts of the body are in space.
7. Dance tells stories.
8. Dance sparks creativity.
9. The basis of dance is rhythm.
10. The essence of dance is joy.

These principles should serve as a guide as you plan your own exercises.

As you think about what to do in your class, it may be useful to think about several more conceptual building blocks. Remember that just as in any dance class, a combination in your class might be designed to address several of these concepts. For example, an exercise that builds rhythmic awareness might also focus on a dramatic qualitative change. Or an exercise that focuses primarily on coordination might also tell a good story. But these are some important ingredients, with numbers that correspond particularly strongly to the points above:

- Coordination: different parts doing different things (Points 2, 5, 6)
- Dynamic changes: soft and hard, sharp and lyrical, loud and quiet, round and angled (2, 4, 7, 8)
- Variation: percolating a phrase through various qualities, moods, environments (2, 4, 8)
- Music/rhythm: emotional tone of the music, physical manifestations of different rhythms and meters (2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10)
- Isolation and integration: movements that focus on one part and movements that involve many parts (2, 5, 6)
- Hands, feet, face, neck/head: all not tight in people with PD and need special attention

## Want to learn more?

## Please join us at a training workshop!