

DANCE *for* PD[®]

Training Module #2 (beta) What to expect

This module will guide you to:

- ✓ Be aware of and comfortable with your students' potential limitations so you can focus on teaching them to dance
- ✓ Set the stage in a way that makes people feel safe, comfortable and ready to enjoy their experience
- ✓ Accept the fact that not everyone is going to be able to succeed in everything that you give
- ✓ Learn to ask for and listen to feedback from participants
- ✓ Think about relationships with support group leaders, neurologists and caregivers. They are good sources of information if you have questions

Overview

Parkinson's is a difficult disease to codify because it manifests itself in so many different ways in different people, and in different ways in the same people at different times. There is very little logic to what you can expect to see in someone with Parkinson's. But this module will attempt to give you a sense of what to expect from your students so that you can lead your class with sensitivity—always—but without being thrown for a loop by manifestations that most people with PD just take in stride as a normal part of their lives. Remember that leading a Dance for PD class only requires you to be a dancer and a dance teacher—that's all. Dancers are, by nature, sensitive, intuitive problem solvers who are incredibly aware of the people around them. You don't have to have a thorough understanding of PD to lead the class.

Key questions

What are students like in class? What challenges do people with PD experience in a dance class and should I address them? What do I do if someone freezes in class? Why don't some people look like they're having fun? Are some elements of a dance class more challenging than others for people with PD?

Be aware of and comfortable with participants' challenges so you can focus on the dancing

It's true in most things that if you know what to expect, you'll feel more confident and be able to focus on why you're there: dancing.

Manifestation	Sensitivity
Parkinson's can make people stiff, and muscles tight. Often people with PD are clumsy and slow.	Be aware of the speed at which you teach exercises, and the tempo you use to demonstrate them. It is usually a good idea to go slowly at first, but also don't be afraid to pick up the tempo. A well-structured exercise to great music can get most people moving more fluidly, although not everyone will be able to keep up, and that's okay.
Parkinson's takes swing and logic out of movement.	Basic automatic movement coordinations that involve swinging the arms or oppositional movement are hard for most people to do. It's very important to work on these things in class. Your students will appreciate learning from you how to break down movements. You can expect actually to teach more than you might in other dance classes. It may take some people more than one class to be able to get the movements and some won't be able to for quite a while, if ever.
Parkinson's can affect the voice and speaking patterns	Give people time and space to say what they want. Don't rush them. Some people have trouble getting the words out, or they may speak slowly or much too fast, and be hard to understand.
People with Parkinson's can freeze and be unable to move.	They may be anxious about freezing, which is very normal. First, ask them how they usually deal with freezing; we are there to empower our students, not to take the role of medical attendants. One assist that usually works is to tell them to stop trying to move; take a deep breath and just take a minute to get calm. Then try putting your foot in front for them to step over, adjusting it closer or farther away. Ask if they have a favorite marching tune or song and sing it out loud. It often helps when you walk with them, holding arms with the back of your arm touching their side. They'll get the rhythm from your walk. Or you can try

	<p>rocking side to side first. Not every method works for everyone. Caregivers and other participants may have their own techniques and can help give you guidance.</p>
<p>As Parkinson's progresses, people need to take medication in order to move. When medication stops working, people may seem to switch off like a light and then on again after they take pills.</p>	<p>Participants move with much more ease when they're on (the medication has an effect) than when they are off. Many students schedule their medication schedules, which affect when they are on and off, to coincide with the class so that they get maximum enjoyment from the class (they want to be on for you!). Also keep in mind that just</p>

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