

# Dance therapy

Dance has been a part of everyday life since the early past of mankind. Ritual dances were an integral part of preparation for hunting, the birth of a child, marriage and other important events. Through rituals associated with movement and dance, primitive societies had the opportunity to cope with elusive realities. In the Middle Ages, we can meet dance processions, which were supposed to protect the participants from epidemics. Nowadays, however, dance has moved from the level of everyday life to the level of sport, entertainment and art. From a general point of view, dance is a movement through which we can express our own emotions, communicate with the surrounding world and express an opinion on a certain topic.

## History

The emergence of dance therapy is connected with the development of modern dance (turn of the 19th and 20th centuries), which, unlike classical ballet, emphasizes the expression of emotions through movement, the authenticity and spontaneity of expression. Dance therapy combines these elements with knowledge from psychology and psychotherapy. The first use of dance as a therapeutic tool is associated with the period after the Second World War, when it was used as a means of communication with patients in psychiatric hospitals who were not willing and able to communicate verbally.

## Usage

Dance therapy is classified as part of psychotherapy for patients who have problems with verbal communication and expressing their own feelings, who have poor emotional expression or special concerns about their bodies. It is used to support the emotional, psychological and social integration of individuals. It helps the patient in getting to know his own body and the movement manifestations associated with the emotional state. In dance therapy, emphasis is placed on naming the action and connecting the movement with the environment and emotions. Therefore, it is necessary to create an environment where the patient can safely express his own feelings, especially non-verbally. The relationship between the therapist and the client is also important, the therapist does not primarily communicate with the client verbally, but through movement, therefore mutual understanding is necessary. In therapy, movement is created through improvisation, which allows a person to discover new ways of moving the body. According to some opinions, the source of inspiration is our unconscious. Thanks to this, the dance becomes a manifestation of the client's inner feelings, ideas and thoughts that have been suppressed.

## Goals

The goal of the therapy is to help the client in better orientation in relationships, whether with the environment or with himself. Specific goals vary according to the needs of the patient, but we can include both the achievement of emotional and physical integration of the patient and the ability to express his feelings in an acceptable way, as well as the improvement of the internal image of the body and its boundaries in space. Dance therapy also tries to enrich the client's movement expression, help control tension in the body and impulsive behavior. Furthermore, dance therapy can help people who have problems with identifying their own feelings, accepting their own body or managing anxiety and stress. The therapist's task is to recognize the parts of the body that the client is not using or using incorrectly and to teach the patient how to deal with the emotional conflict by determining an objective physical shape.

## Organization

The main development of dance therapy in the world occurred in the second half of the 20th century. In the United States, the development of dance therapy was mainly supported by the dancer Marian Chace, who began to deal with the method of communication through dance and collaborated with St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington. In 1966, she became the first president of the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA). A foundation that supports the educational, scientific and artistic development of dance therapy was named after her. All therapists, psychologists and dancers who were involved in dance therapy were based on her work. In Europe, the main place of development was Great Britain and France. In Great Britain, movement diagnostics research was carried out in collaboration with ADTA, but ideas of "non-American" origin were also applied here, especially the work of Rudolf Laban, one of the founders of European modern dance. In 1982, the Association for Dance-Movement Psychotherapy (ADMP) was founded in London. In France, the concept is quite different from the previous ones, the concept of dance therapy is manifested as a so-called primitive expression, which is inspired by the naturalness of the dance of natural peoples and indigenous cultures. At the end of the 20th century, the European Association of Dance Movement Therapy (EADMT) was established. In the Czech Republic, the term dance therapy is mainly associated with psychogymnastics, which combines elements of dance, pantomime and gymnastics. Psychogymnastics was mainly dealt with by PhDr. Hana Junová. In the years 1996–1999, dance therapy training took place in the Duncan Center in Prague under the guidance of therapists from ADTA. We can also meet courses focused on primitive expressions. In 2002, the Czech Association of Dance and Movement Therapy was founded, which is a non-profit organization that deals with the support of the education of dance therapists, the creation and observance of the system of their accreditation, as well as the improvement of information about dance therapy among professionals and the general public. The Czech Association of Dance and Movement Therapy is a member of the European Association of Dance and Movement Therapy.

# Conclusion

The application of dance therapy is wide. It is also one of the methods that we can use in medical rehabilitation, especially for older people who are no longer physically fit. It is a misconception that clients must have a natural gift for rhythm. The therapy uses natural movement, which has a positive effect on the psyche and is not physically demanding. Group dance therapy is a suitable means of social therapy. That is why I consider dance therapy to be a suitable method for elderly people or psychotic patients.

## Links

### Related Articles

- Physiotherapy
- Psychotherapy

### Source

- American Dance Therapy Association (<https://adta.org/>)
- Association for Dance Movement Therapy UK (<https://admp.org.uk/>)
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London, UK (<https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/>)

### References

- ČÍŽKOVÁ, Klára. *Tanečně-pohybová terapie*. 1. edition. Triton, 2005. ISBN 80-7254-547-7.