

ASPIRE

SENIOR

SOUL MOVES
& BODY GROOVES



WORSHIPARTS

ASPIRE 

ASPIRE – SOUL MOVES & BODY GROOVES

Senior lesson notes – best for kids over 10:

1. Dancing for Joy
2. Being in the moment
3. Dance promotes a health and active lifestyle
4. Dance provides connection to others
5. Dance is a celebration of our body
6. Dance is escape
7. Dance is meditation
8. Dance is the ultimate healing
9. Dance is prayer
10. Dance is a celebration of your soul

Note to teachers:

There are a lot of ideas here. Please feel free not to treat this as a strict script, just grab from it what grabs you, built in what is authentic to you, and run with that.

If you aren't much of a dancer yourself, consider going on the journey with the class members – do the exercises and report on your progress to them, it may be a way to disarm and engage them.

These notes are designed for senior students. In general, over 10. The concepts are more abstract, imply a more personal relationship with God, and the issues include body image and sexuality.

If you unsure about using what is in this version, check out the corresponding junior lesson and use whatever you feel best matches your group dynamic.

And thank you. The energy you all bring to Aspire is awesome and definitely an inspiration to us at head office.

All the best!

WEEK 1: SERIES INTRODUCTION & DANCING FOR JOY

'Praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord, praise the Lord.' **Psalm 150 4-6 NIV**

Outcome

To introduce the series ideas:

- dance can be an expression of spirituality
- everyone has a spirituality
- spirituality is usually associated with people's relationship to God
- depending on your faith path, dancing for joy can be seen as praising God or positive affirmation

Series Introduction

We are basing this term's motivational lessons on this article (hold up article) 'Dance is the ultimate spiritual experience.' (See *Printable Resources* on page 22)

You may have no idea what that means. Maybe you agree or disagree with that idea. It doesn't really matter whether the article is right, it's a good excuse to explore together why people dance, and what we can all get out of dancing.

At the end of the term, we will take a poll and see if you agree whether or not dance is the ultimate spiritual experience. But first we have to try and figure out what a 'spiritual experience' even is.

Discussion

Note: discuss these only if there is spontaneous interest, don't force it. Offer your opinion.

1. Does anyone have any idea what it means by 'spiritual experience'?
2. Do you agree that dance could be the ultimate spiritual experience? If it wasn't dance, is there anything else it could be?

Talking points / background:

- About Spiritual experiences
 - Spiritual experiences are your own experiences of something to do with the meaning of life, the universe and everything. They are the experiences that make us think about who we are, where we fit in, and what it all means.
 - For most people in the world, spiritual experiences are ones where they understand more about themselves in relation to God.
 - Salvos is a Christian organisation, and Christianity is a kind of spiritual experience.
 - These teaching sessions will talk about how some Christian ideas relate to dance. You don't have to be a Christian believer to be part of it however. Everyone has a spirituality.
 - Spiritual experiences are valuable and important, and can prepare us to handle the hard or significant things in life.

- About Dance

- Dance is uniquely human – babies move to rhythm and music even before they can walk or speak. Animals sometimes like to move to music with us, but it's not dance the way humans understand it.
- We believe rhythm, music and dance were invented by God, and that is why dancing is one unique way in which humans can understand how God thinks.
- Think about how dance is used in movies: to celebrate, to attract someone, to express romantic love, to mark a significant occasion or festival or express solidarity about a cause. People dance sometimes when they can't find words for an emotion or a significant moment.

Dancing for Joy - Introduction

Today we are going to talk about dancing for joy.

I'm thinking particularly about the happy dance you do just for yourself, not for anyone else. It's a way of connecting to what's good about being alive, whether that's your favourite part of your walk to school, a happy morning at home, or what you do when you open a Christmas present or hear some really good news.

Activity – showing off our happy dances

What is your happy dance? Take turns showing each other your goofiest happy dance.

When you are done, try to join some of them together or do them at the same time to make a group happy dance. Make a short video on someone's phone of your group happy dance.

Learning

You may not know this, but the Bible has a song book in it. It's called the book of Psalms, which is a book with many song lyrics and poems. Unfortunately, the music is lost, we have no idea what the tunes were.

But I guess the one I'm about to quote was a totally upbeat dance tune. It's the last one, psalm 150. It ends the book of Psalms like any proper musical, with a feel good moment and a dance routine. The lyrics are:

'Praise God with dancing! Praise him with guitars and flutes! Praise him with cymbals, especially the loud ones! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!' (Psalm 150 4-5, paraphrased)

You may not have thought about whether there is a higher power, or a God. But this song is saying that when you dance for joy, it's not only about the thing that is making you happy in the moment. It's saying that good things, goodness itself, happiness, blessing, call it what you will, has a source. And that source is God, who made everything.

I believe God made us and made joy, that he loves us and wants good things for us. I believe that when you are dancing for joy, you are actually praising God's goodness, whether you acknowledge God or not. And whatever you believe, take this from this lesson. Your happy dance is a spiritual connection to happiness. Please don't ever forget that feeling.

There will be times in life when you really need to find your happy dance again. You may think it's gone forever, but it isn't. You've probably already danced it many times, and will dance it many more. So even if you are in a moment where your brain says dancing it seems impossible, your body can remember it. Your happy dance was real and it can be real again.

For next week

Our homework is to dance for joy at least once between now and next week, and make a mental note or take a selfie so you can share it.

God bless you.

WEEK 2: BEING IN THE MOMENT

'Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.' **2 Samuel 6: 14-15 NIV**

Outcome

- To discuss being in the moment, good and bad aspects.
- Tell the story of King David dancing in the moment to celebrate the presence of God
- An introduction to the idea that having the Holy Spirit in us allows us to be in the moment with God.

Introduction

Our homework last week was to be able to share a happy dance either a story or a selfie. Is anyone up for that?

This week we're thinking about how dancing is **being in the moment**, and talking about the pros and cons of being in the moment.

We have various ways we talk about being in the moment:

- **YOLO** – You Only Live Once. This is kind of the motto of being in the moment.
- **Carpe Diem** – Latin for 'Seize the day'. It's sort of a fancypants version of 'YOLO'.

Both of these are things we say when we're considering joining in moments that are exciting or perhaps a bit risky. It could be something you've never done before. Maybe it's outside your comfort zone. If you decide to do it, you say YOLO or Carpe Diem.

- **Mindfulness** – An example of this is moments when a friend is having a crisis, so you drop your plans, put down your phone and give your friend, and the moment, your full attention. Mindfulness means getting rid of distractions and focussing on the present moment.
- **Keeping it real** – If you are hiding or avoiding something, a moment can get awkward and fake. 'Keeping it real' is a way of saying that sometimes being in the moment is about honesty.
- **Taking time to stop and smell the roses** – This recognises that mindfulness can be about appreciating positive, beautiful things. We sometimes get so haunted by the past, or worried about the future, that we don't appreciate the good things around us every day.

These ways of being in the moment are less showy and exciting than those YOLO times. But on the plus side, they help us live a richer and more meaningful life, where we can enjoy beauty, share our feelings with people we trust and be real.

Discussion

- Share some times that you have been in the moment.
- Are there situations where living in the moment is a bad thing?
- Do you feel like you are in the moment when you dance? What thoughts do go through your mind?

Talking points:

- Sometimes we justify impulsive risk taking or giving into peer pressure as 'being in the moment'. You have to balance the risks and possible consequences against the thrill of the moment. Make wise decisions for you, not others.
- When we are distracted and not focussed, we can make bad choices or miss opportunities, so it's useful to train yourself to be in the moment when you need to be.

Activity - the DVD Dance Game:

In groups of about 2-4, allocate one person to be the caller. They periodically call out instructions from the list below. The others improvise an everyday scene – suggestions below.

The calls operate like a DVD remote control – you have to do the following:

- **Record:** Do everything super nice, super polite, perfect for instagram
- **Not recording:** Do everything normally and messy like real life
- **Fast Forward:** Do everything in double time
- **Rewind:** Redo everything backwards
- **Slow Motion:** Do everything half speed
- **Stop:** Immediately stop whatever you are doing.
- **Pause:** Immediately stop whatever you are doing and glitch on the spot like a gif
- **Eject:** Lie flat on the floor

Scenes that could be used (feel free to improvise)

- Shopping for clothes and shoes
- Making, serving and eating dinner
- Playing a team sport (volleyball, cricket, basketball)
- An infomercial for exercise equipment
- Exploring an alien planet
- putting up a tent together and setting up a campsite

Learning

One of the best references to dance in the Bible is totally about being in the moment.

There is a great celebration day for the people of Israel, who God has a special relationship with. They have this holy box thing called the Ark of the Covenant. Long story short, it represents the presence of God.

They are bringing the Ark to the capital city, Jerusalem, after it has been lost for many years. So being in this particular moment is literally being with God himself.

The King of Israel, King David, loves God deeply, so he is overjoyed. There is a long parade with the Ark, all the people are there, music is playing.

David takes off all his kingly robes, he wears virtually just underwear, and he dances like a crazy man in sheer joy because of the presence of God. His wife is embarrassed when she sees him. He has no kingly dignity, but he doesn't care. He's too ridiculously happy to be king that day. He understands the significance of moment, and he is in it.

Today God is not present in the Ark of the Covenant any more (one good thing about being God is you can be present wherever you want to be).

Jesus promised is that God would be present in us. We call God-in-us the 'Holy Spirit'. If you believe Jesus' promise about God being present, remember this: King David celebrated the moment by dancing.

A great thing about having God present with you is that you can start to really understand what is going on. You can learn to be wise and insightful. The Holy Spirit can guide your steps moment by moment. You can learn to do a really awesome dance through whatever life throws at you.

Whether you believe you have the Spirit of God in you or not, dancing has something to teach us about being in the moment in life.

When we are in the moment we do our best connecting with others, our best listening and make some of our most important choices. So it is useful to learn to be fully focussed on the present moment when it's needed. If let ourselves be controlled by anger, laziness, peer pressure or general distractions, we might miss out or even ruin the most fun, beautiful or important moments of our lives.

WEEK 3: DANCE PROMOTES A HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

'She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong' **Proverbs 31:17 ESV**

'But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand' **Isaiah 64:8 ESV**

Outcome

Dance is a great workout and an enjoyable way to learn the habits of an active lifestyle. The bible teaches us that our bodies are beautiful works of God's creation and deserve care and respect.

Also, if you have a healthy active lifestyle you will learn habits of long-term goal setting and self-discipline that will help you power through life's challenges.

Introduction

We've called this series 'Body Grooves and Soul Moves' because many people think dancing is an activity where body and soul come together. For the first 5 weeks we're mainly focussed on dancing and our bodies, and this week we're talking about how **dancing promotes a healthy and active lifestyle**.

Discussion

1. If you dance in either an organised or casual way to be active and healthy, tell us about your routine. Demonstrations welcome!
2. List some benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.
3. What are some of the things stopping us being active and healthy?

Talking points:

- In Australia, participation in sports and healthy activities has increased in recent years, however the gap between boys' and girls' participation is widening, with fewer girls aged 12- 14 interested in sport.
- The habits you set up as you go from primary to high school can keep you healthy for years to come.
- Dancing is the second most popular sport activity for girls after swimming, with Netball third.
- Studies have shown that dancing makes you smarter – it literally improves your brain, especially as you get older <https://www.thealzheimersproject.org/2014/12/ballroom-dancing-and-alzheimers-can-dancing-make-you-smarter/>

Activity

2 Games:

Artist Model Clay - 3 players. One is a lump of clay - behind her is a second player who is a model. Model takes a pose, which the 'clay' is not supposed to see. The third player becomes the artist, who will model the clay after the model. The artist is not supposed to touch the clay, can't speak and it not allowed to show the clay what to do or to become. They can just point and wave hands to indicate how the clay should form. You can also optionally have a time limit.

When done, let the model inspect the artwork and see if details fit.

Loser Ball - A simple 'pass-the-ball' game, but with 2 twists: 1) no-one can catch the ball and 2) the group must be unbelievably supportive of the catcher's inability to catch the ball.

The ball is thrown to a person, preferably by naming that person ("here John") or some other way to focus the group on the catcher. He catcher misses the ball, drops it, fumbles, or whatever, as long as he or she fails.

The rest of the group does not 'booh', but finds something praiseworthy about what the catcher did. E.g. "Good move!", "Great energy!" etc.

Learning

We played Artist model clay to remind you that your body is a precious gift, a work of art.

We get bombarded on Instagram and in advertising with beautiful bodies. You may or may not think you measure up to that at different times in your life. It's certainly great feeling like you look good. But don't base your respect for your body just on how it looks, value how it works as well.

The bible says that God is the artist who made our bodies – he is the potter and we are the clay. God was there in our mother's womb, forming us. And if you think about it, it's a miraculous process.

When the bible describes a wise person it says 'she dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong'. Its describing a wise woman at that point, but it applies equally to guys. Most people enjoy dressing up and looking their best, but the idea here is that being healthy and strong by 'dressing yourself' in strength is a more lasting and useful way of valuing your body and having pride in yourself. And yeah, girls can be strong too!

So that's lesson one: value yourself by planning to be healthy and active. Plan to dance!

We played Loser Ball to remind ourselves that you don't have to be a great sportsperson or dancer to benefit from being healthy. Stick with it, make it part of your life.

If you train yourself to be disciplined in health and being active, that will help you power through emotional and spiritual challenges.

So that's lesson two: get in the habit of regularly being healthy and active. Making dancing a regular part of your week is a great fun way to form that habit.

For next week

Take a selfie or make a mental note of one active and one super lazy moment to share with the class.

WEEK 4: DANCE PROVIDES CONNECTION TO OTHERS

'Love is patient and kind, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or irritable. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do' **1 Corinthians 13:4-5 CEV**

Outcome

- Group dancing teaches us about being aware of each other and trusting each other.
- We'll learn that is a powerful example of how the bible teaches us we are to live with each other.

Introduction

Last week we were talking about dancing to stay healthy. Has anyone got active and/or lazy stories or selfies to share?

When you dance with other people, the group should be the winner. It is the opposite of competitive sport, or at least it should be. The more you connect, the more you bring out the best in others, the better you all are.

The article about dance being the ultimate spiritual experience describes it as an 'unconditional bond' with other dancers. Today we are talking about how dance provides a connection with others, and looking for lessons about how to get on with people.

Discussion

1. What do you have to do to dance well with other people?
2. What makes it go wrong?
3. Have you ever had the experience of meeting a new friend and clicking straight away? If so, what do you think made you connect with someone like that?

Talking points:

- Fred Astaire said 'Be able to adapt your style to that of your partner. In doing so, you are not surrendering your individuality, but blending it with that of your partner.'
- To connect with someone, you need to be aware of them, watching them, and you both need to be dancing to the same beat.
- A healthy relationship is about compromise – you don't lose your identity, but you respect and connect with the differences in other people, and you find common ground, both giving a little.

Activity - Alien dance party

Everyone stands in a circle. Someone starts to dance, feels it for a bit, turns to the person to their right and that person does their best to do the exact same dance. When the person who initiated the dance feels the person got it down they stop dancing and the other person goes on awhile till they create a new dance and goes to the next person. Quite intense and quite fun!

Learning

Christianity is not a complicated religion. Jesus gave us a really simple summary of how to live – he said there are only two rules to remember:

1. Love God as much as you capable of. With all your heart.
2. Love others as much as you love yourself.

He's not particularly talking about romantic or sexual love. He means we are going to be showing each other the kind of love we have for friends or family (when we are getting on with them!).

In fact, another part of the bible has a beautiful summary of what Jesus means by love. You might know it. It is one of the most popular and often quoted parts of the bible. It says:

Love is patient

Love is kind

Love is not jealous, boastful, proud, or rude.

Love isn't selfish or irritable.

Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do

Think about when you dance with a partner, or as a group. It will go worse if you are irritable or selfish. You need to be generous and calm to make it work for everyone.

If you are jealous, boastful or proud, you will be trying to stand out from the group. But the dance requires you all to be in sync to work, each playing your part equally, and moving as one when you need to.

If someone other than you has a solo, you must be patient and kind - let them shine. Because it makes the whole routine go well.

If we hold onto grudges and have hurts, the group won't work at all. We need a safe and place to work on mistakes and improve. It goes best if the group is affirming and trusting.

So the skills you need to connect with each other to dance as a group have a lot in common with the love Jesus says we need to have to live well with each other in everyday life. Patience, kindness, not jealous, boastful or rude, selfish or irritable, not bearing grudges.

I would say that is because Jesus is truth – his teaching about how to live is the way life was meant to be, the way that is best for us. And he has promised to love us with an unconditional bond.

But you have to make your own mind up about that. In any event, it's very good life advice, and something to remember as you do group work.

WEEK 5: DANCE IS A CELEBRATION OUR BODY

'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.' **1 Corinthians 6:19**

'My own vineyard is mine to give.' **Song of Solomon 8:12 NIV**

Outcome

- Quick review of the first four teaching moments, to emphasise that they have been about the body
- A discussion emphasising an appreciation of what our body can do for us, rather than how it looks
- Some Christian teaching about honouring God with our body, and not allowing ourselves to be exploited.

Introduction

Today we are looking at how Dance is a celebration of our bodies. This is the 5th week of this term, and this is the end of our 'body grooves' mini-series, before we look at 'soul moves'. We've looked at:

- **Dancing for joy:** finding happiness in our body, to tell our head to cheer up
- **Being in the moment:** how making sure we aren't distracted all the time can enrich our life
- **Dance promotes a healthy and active lifestyle:** keeping our bodies in tip top condition
- **Dance provides a connection to others:** the skills you need to dance together are also skills for living together

Our bodies are fantastic machines. They are designed to move and help us live life and achieve what we want to achieve. Dancing is fun, it is a celebration of who we are, of the pleasure of being alive.

Discussion

1. If you were forced to choose to lose one part of your body, what would it be and why?
2. What are some of your favourite activities? Name the parts of the body that you use to do your favourite things.
3. Is there someone you know who if you saw in silhouette or shadow, so you couldn't make out their face, you could recognise just by the way they move? What are some distinctive movements of some friends or family members?

Talking points:

- Positive body image is about being healthy and feeling good about yourself
- Ellen Degeneres: "to me, beauty is about being comfortable in your own skin, it's about knowing and accepting who you are"
- Nina Simone: "What have I got that no one can take away? I got my arms, got my hands, got my fingers, got my toes, got my liver got my blood, I've got life, and I'm gonna keep it."
- Our bodies don't stay the same through our lives. If we live a long life, we will have a kid's body, teen's body, Mum or Dad body, middle aged body, an old wrinkly body. So get used to the idea that the way you look doesn't define you,
- Your identity comes from who you are and what you do with yourself. Ultimately, we believe it comes from being created by and loved by God.

Activity – Mirror the Spirit

Preparation:

Print enough copies of these two lists so that each student will get either list 1 or 2.
(See *Printable Resources* on page 28)

List 1: Kindness, Gentleness, Self control, Disagreeable, Selfishness, Snobbery

List 2: Hatred, Fits of Rage, Envy, Joy, Peace, Patience
(Galatians 5)

Procedure:

Pair off and give each member of each pair either list 1 or 2. Tell them not to show the lists to each other, it's a guessing game.

They take it in turns to be the leader and the follower, and mirror each other.

Use the written words to improvise actions to be mirrored. After about a minute of mirroring (the leader can be time keeper). The person who is the follower has to try and guess what the word was.

Learning

What we do with our bodies is a reflection of the spirit that is inside us, just as we reflected each other in our exercise. When our bodies showed joy, kindness, gentleness etc.. we reflected the Spirit of God. When we reflected we showed anger, hatred and other things, we reflected a spirit of rebellion against God.

Christians teach that our bodies are temples. A temple is a building that has god in it, so its saying that our bodies are like temples because God's Holy Spirit lives in them. For that reason we are taught to reflect and honour God with our bodies.

We've mentioned before that that means not loathing our bodies, but valuing them as a gift from God. Honouring God with our bodies can mean being careful who we give them to. For example, I believe in marriage as the ideal place for sex, because it's the most trusting relationship, the one where you are both totally committed to each other.

The bible is not against love or sex, it has a whole book of poetry, the Song of Solomon, devoted to that subject.

But it teaches that sex should be about deep trust and love, not power. It teaches not to play games with it. In Song of Solomon, it is compared to our own vineyard, which is a place where grapes are grown. We own it, we control it, we decide who gets the grapes!

Physical attraction can be dangerously powerful force. It can drive people to commit crimes, betray everyone and everything else they love, to be violent, jealous or simply make each other miserable. So be careful. You should stay in control, and be wise about it

Whether you accept the Christian view of it or not, when you dance, appreciate your body, celebrate it, remember how enjoyable it is to be moving, in control, and loving the moment. And take the opportunity to tell yourself you are going to treat it wisely and right.

For next week

Practice some power moves to show who's boss of you, and be prepared to share them next week.

WEEK 6: DANCE IS ESCAPE

'Come to me, all of you who are weary and loaded down with burdens, and I will give you rest'

Matthew 11:28 ISV

Outcome

Dance can be a great, positive, way to escape from things that are worrying you. Many people spend too much of their lives trying to escape, often in less helpful ways. The problem with escape is that it is only temporary – eventually the dance is over.

We talk about ways to use the escape of dance not just to avoid, but to contribute constructively to issues and problems. We look at Jesus' promise to carry our burdens and worries for us.

Introduction

Last week we looked at how dance is a celebration of owning our bodies, and we were going to work on some power moves. Has anyone got any to show us?

This week we are looking at dance as an escape. Eminem said 'lose yourself in the music, the moment'. Music and dancing can be an escape from yourself and your problems – for at least as long as the music keeps playing.

Discussion

- When do you feel like you need to escape?
- Can you relate to dancing being an escape? What are some other ways you try to escape?
- When you eventually face life again, has escaping made things better or worse?

Talking points:

- Everyone needs to escape sometimes, but if it becomes a lifestyle, it can be a problem
- Dancing is a positive way of escape, many other ways such as too much time playing games or illegal substances, are more negative. As we have seen, dancing is good for your physical and mental health as well as being an escape.
- Sometimes what starts as escape leads somewhere new. Hip hop started as a way for African American youth to escape, to get together and not feel marginalised and subject to racism. But Hip Hop became the voice of African American culture, and arguably the most important musical genre today. When Snoop Dogg inducted Tupac Shakur into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame he said it became a way 'prove we weren't just characters from someone else's story book'.

Activity – Zombie escape

All the students except one are zombies. The leader has a drum, or similar to beat – once per second. Zombies can only take a step each time the drum beats. The human can move freely. But can't leave the room. Start with human and Zombies on opposite sides of the room.

The first Zombie to touch the human is cured, the person who was a human then becomes a Zombie.

Learning

Escaping is important sometimes. It gives us space to step back from our problems, just relax a bit, calm down, and have a bit of fun.

The problem with escaping is that, when it finishes, whatever you were escaping from will still be there. You can't spend your whole life on the run from life. The trick is to use the time escaping in helpful ways.

The ultimate way to escape your problems is to deal with them, and leave them behind you. But you can't always do that straight away.

Some ways escaping in dance can help with that are:

1. Like a holiday, use it to be refreshed and alert to face life again
2. Use the time to remember that there is life outside your problems, so you are inspired to face them when the escape is over. Sometimes life can become repetitive, like having a song stuck in your brain and dancing might break the rhythm and let you hear a new song.
3. Freeing your mind from worry can give you a perspective on your problems. It can make them seem smaller.

At the Salvation Army we get to know many people every year throughout Australia who have been doing all sorts of crazy things to escape their life issues, including drugs, crime, violence and homelessness. They don't come to us because these escapes work, they come either willingly or from the court system because they have made a mess of their lives.

Rather than escape the mess, it has caught up with them. We've seen again and again that Jesus offers all sorts of people an escape that lasts, that leads to a whole new, richer understanding of life.

Jesus said 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and loaded down with burdens, and I will give you rest'. He's promising that you don't have to handle life on your own. He's talking about a permanent and dependable rest, the opposite of restlessness. We believe it only comes from knowing God.

So choose dancing sometimes when you need to escape – it's a great option. But if you ever need to escape from escaping... I would say give your burdens to Jesus.

WEEK 7: DANCE IS MEDITATION

'You will keep in perfect peace those whose thoughts are fixed on you, because they trust in you.'

Isaiah 26:3, paraphrased

'Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life.'

Phillipians 4:7 MSG

Outcome

We'll explore dance as meditation. This is building on last week's lesson: as well as escaping our problems, dance can help us process and start to work on important issues.

The bible promises that focussing your thoughts on God, is a path to peace.

Alternatively you could try focussing on another image of someone you trust to be good and concerned for your wellbeing.

Either way, it is using dance as a form of spiritual activity and meditation.

Introduction

Last week we looked at how dance can be an escape – getting lost in music and movement can be a time to get away from pressures and problems in your life.

This week we are taking it a step further, and looking at dance as meditation.

Discussion

- Have you ever done meditation?
- Why do you think people meditate?
- Do you think dance can be meditation?

Talking points:

- Meditation has a lot of medical benefits, releasing chemicals to reduce stress, and boost the immune system. It literally grows your brain and increases blood flow to it.
- Many indigenous people traditionally dance to meditate. The ancient people of the bible are sometimes described as praising and dancing before god for long periods of time. And many thousands of years before the bible events occurred, the indigenous people of Australia were dancing into the night to connect with and praise God.
- There is a great indigenous dance show called Move It Mob Style that is definitely worth looking into <https://www.abc.net.au/tv/programs/move-it-mob-style/>
- One modern dance meditation movement called the 'conscious rave' where people dance to electronic dance music to deepen their awareness, rather than use substances to dull their awareness.
- Often you don't have to consciously think about a particular subject to meditate while dancing. You may find that after you dance, your mind has been doing work in the background, and you find some clarity or perspective on an issue you weren't even aware you were thinking about.

Activity – Dance Meditation

Preparation

Print out and/or post the dance meditation technique to the corps facebook page / website. We will also be putting a link on Toolkit suitable to circulate to students.

Dance meditation exercise: First, stand for a couple of minutes with eyes closed, breathing through your nose. Slow your breath and calm your mind.

Then, play some dynamic and rhythmic instrument-only music. Lyrics engage your thoughts, and the idea here is to quiet your mind.

Go into an expressive, improvised dance, feeling free to shout, hum along or even sing at the top of your lungs. Use your arms, change directions as you boogie, and don't be afraid to exaggerate movements. This is active meditation. Let the music and movement carry you, and distractions melt away by being as focused as you can on the dance.

Keep in mind a positive statement such as:

'I will love myself, and I will love others'

'Love is patient Love is kind. Love isn't selfish or irritable.'

'Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do'

'God my father will keep me in perfect peace, because I trust in him.'

'I lay down my burdens, to you my father God, give me rest'

Dance for 10 minutes, or until you get tired. Then lie down, close your eyes, and stay very still for a few minutes to complete this stress-relieving exercise.

Procedure

Distribute the meditation procedure and follow the instructions.

Learning

The bible promises God will keep us in perfect peace if our thoughts are on him.

And that is outside, in the universe, as well as inside our minds. It is talking about peace in the sense of no longer fighting God. Peace, not war with God. If you believe in God, it is a solid reason for a peaceful mind.

Another part of the bible talks about it this way:

'Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Jesus Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life.'

Modern medical science has confirmed that meditation has all sorts of benefits for us, but they really didn't need to. People have meditated, including by dancing, from time immemorial.

Meditation is focus. It does for the mind what being in the moment does for the body – it gets rid of distractions in your thoughts.

For next week

Try to find time to do the dance meditation at least once during the coming week. We've given you a choice of positive statements and statements about God to focus on while meditating – either will work, but if you are attracted to the idea of a solid reason for having a peaceful mind, try the ones about God's promises.

WEEK 8: DANCE IS THE ULTIMATE HEALING

'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds' **Psalm 147:3 ESV**

'Peter said to a man crippled from birth: "I don't have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" He grabbed him by the right hand and pulled him up. In an instant his feet and ankles became firm. He jumped to his feet and walked. The man went into the Temple with them, walking back and forth, dancing and praising God' **Acts 3:6-8 MSG**

Outcome

We'll look at how dance has been used to symbolise healing, and the role it literally has as therapy. We'll learn about the spiritual healing taught by Jesus, and how dance can be an expression of that.

Introduction

How did you go with dance meditation – hands up who did it during the week, and (if anyone) how was it? Does anyone have good tips for music to meditate to?

This week is called 'dance is the ultimate healing'. We've already seen that dance has some powerful advantages for the body:

- It is good for general health and fitness
- It has benefits for the mind and brain
- It helps delay aging
- It is great for your mood if you are depressed

As famous song from almost 100 years ago, 1928 called 'Shaking the Blues Away' said:

'If you are blue, it's easy to
Shake off your cares and troubles
Tell the blues to go, they may refuse to go
But as a rule, they'll go if you'll
Shake them away'

Or as Taylor Swift sang more recently: 'shake it off, shake it off!'

Discussion

- Can you think of examples of dance being 'the ultimate healing' in songs, TV shows or movies you've seen?
- Do you find dancing works to make you feel better? If yes... what's an example?
- It's hard sometimes to tell if you dance because you are happy, or because you are actually sad, and want to feel happy. Do you agree? When do you dance?

Talking points:

- In musicals, when people dance when they heal their relationships, or when they feel the bad times are over and they are optimistic about the future.
- The main way that dance is used as therapy is in treating depression, so dancing to feel happy. It works both ways.

Activity – Adjective game

Preparation:

1. Come up with a short movement phrase of about 8 or 16 or 32 counts.
2. Write down on individual pieces of paper, large enough for the whole class to read (A4), pairs of adjectives:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| » hot - busy | » stiff - flowing |
| » tired - excited | » wild - calm |
| » blue - determined | » bored – crazy |
| » angry - dreamy | » violent - cute |

Procedure:

Teach students the movement phrase and then have the students in groups of 1-3 draw one of the pieces of paper out of a hat. The students must then do the movement phrase twice, the first time with the first word in mind, and the second time with the second one in mind.

Get them to practice, and then to a beat, everyone gets to do theirs in turn. The teacher stands behind each group holding up their words so people can see the transformations they are attempting. Consider making a video of the combined dance.

Learning

The healing of dance is a bit like the healing in all our bodies – it's how we are designed to work. If you've ever had the flu, you get so miserable. You ache, life seems terrible. Then just when you think it's never going to go away, you wake up one morning and presto, it has gone.

The body healed itself. You feel almost stronger than you did before you were sick. You run down the street celebrating being better. It's the same if you cut yourself, or break a bone. Your body fixes itself. It's a little miracle every time.

If you ever want to think about how much more amazing God is than us, imagine an iPhone that self-heals the screen if you crack it.

The same creator God that built that healing power into us all has built a healing power into the universe. It says in the bible that he heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He heals all the danger, evil, selfishness, meanness, sickness, sadness and pain that we see in the world – and often see in ourselves too, if we are honest about it.

I believe that Jesus was God in a human body on earth – and he was the one who bought the healing. He did miracles of healing, to show us he had that power of God.

And when he healed people who had never walked before, they didn't just stand there. They danced, they leaped and they shouted for joy.

So if you dance, enjoy the healing it can give, the feeling of being well, alert, happy, strong and full of energy. Shake the blues away, shake it off.

But remember, if you feel that healing power of dance, sometimes it's good to think about where it comes from. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved and learn more about Jesus here at the Salvation Army, just talk to me or one of us about it if you are interested.

WEEK 9: DANCE IS PRAYER

Pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. **1 Thessalonians 5:17 MSG**

'...We do not know how we ought to pray - the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is.

Romans 8:26-27 GNV

Outcome

The bible says 'pray at all times', which includes when we dance. We'll look at dance as a way of wordlessly expressing things to God, a form of prayer.

Introduction

Today we are talking about dance is prayer.

Prayers are often read out by a leader, in church at weddings, baptisms or funerals, in front of a large group. Sometimes they are things you say to yourself, quietly in your own room. Some people have a daily prayer time.

The bible says we should 'pray always'. So its saying that while prayer includes those things, it includes much more as well.

We've talked a lot already this term about how dance is a way to tune into life, connect with other people and connect with yourself, where you are at.

When the bible says 'pray always', it's really talking about a similar sort of thing. So it's not hard to see how dance can be prayer.

Discussion

- What are some things that people pray about?
- Do people that don't believe much in God ever pray?
- Do you think prayer changes things?

Talking points:

- There are 4 main kinds of prayer:
 - Praise - letting God know that you love and acknowledge him,
 - Regret - admitting foolish or evil things you've done, and asking God to forgive
 - Appreciating - being grateful for the good things around you
 - Your stuff: things that you and people you are concerned about are going through
- Regina Spektor had a song that said 'no one laughs at God in a hospital' She meant that pretty much everyone prays sometimes, if they are overwhelmed or scared.
- If you say 'Gimme a million dollars God' and God says 'Nup', you might think nothing has changed. But you've talked to God – maybe that's a big change for you.
- Prayer is about you asking God for things to change, and also God showing you things to change. It runs both ways, but it does change things.

Activity – First Dance

Ask students what was the first style of dance they ever did and to do a step or short movement phrase that represents that style of dance.

If some did the same style, get them to base it on a move or a person that particularly inspired them. If it is **exactly** the same, eg: gangnam style, then they have to do a variation incorporating some of the moves they've learned this term.

Consider making a 'my first dance' video with each coming forward and performing the move.

Learning

We don't always have words for the things we are feeling. We could be full of joy, or deeply troubled, or anything in between, but sometimes we just don't want to talk about it, or don't have the words.

God understands this. It says in the bible 'We do not know how we ought to pray - the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is'

So if you dance to be healthy, to meditate, to practice or just for sheer joy; particularly during those times you are dancing just for yourself, you might like to try being aware of bringing those things to God.

People who don't believe in praying to God sometimes say that it is just talking to yourself. But there is nothing 'just' about talking to yourself. Self talk is a very useful thing to do.

Either way, it is important sometimes to be honest and express things wordlessly.

For next week

Preparation

- Print out a vote sheet just as the students are leaving. (See *Printable Resources* on page 29)
 - It says:
'Dance is the ultimate spiritual experience:
Yes | No (have a big checkbox)
- Say in one sentence the reason for your vote.'

Procedure

- Hand out the sheet and ask the students to fill it in for next week.
- Have some available at the next meeting for any who lost them or didn't fill them in.

WEEK 10: DANCE IS A CELEBRATION OF OUR SOUL

'You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy' **Psalms 16:11** **ESV**

Outcome

We are body and soul, these come together in dance, and they come together in Jesus' message to the world, dance helps us focus on, express and celebrate deep truths about life.

Introduction

We've been looking at the idea that dancing is more than just moving to a beat. It's something that has had meaning for humans throughout the centuries, to express feelings and desires, to mark progress through life, to connect in a profound way with others, with ourselves and with God.

We started with an article that was called 'why dance is the ultimate spiritual experience'. I wonder what you think about that now the series is ending.

Discussion

- Show of hands... who agrees that 'dance is the ultimate spiritual experience', who disagrees, who isn't sure.
- Share some of the reasons for your opinion
- Which activity did you enjoy the most?

Activity - Name game

Have students write their name in the air.

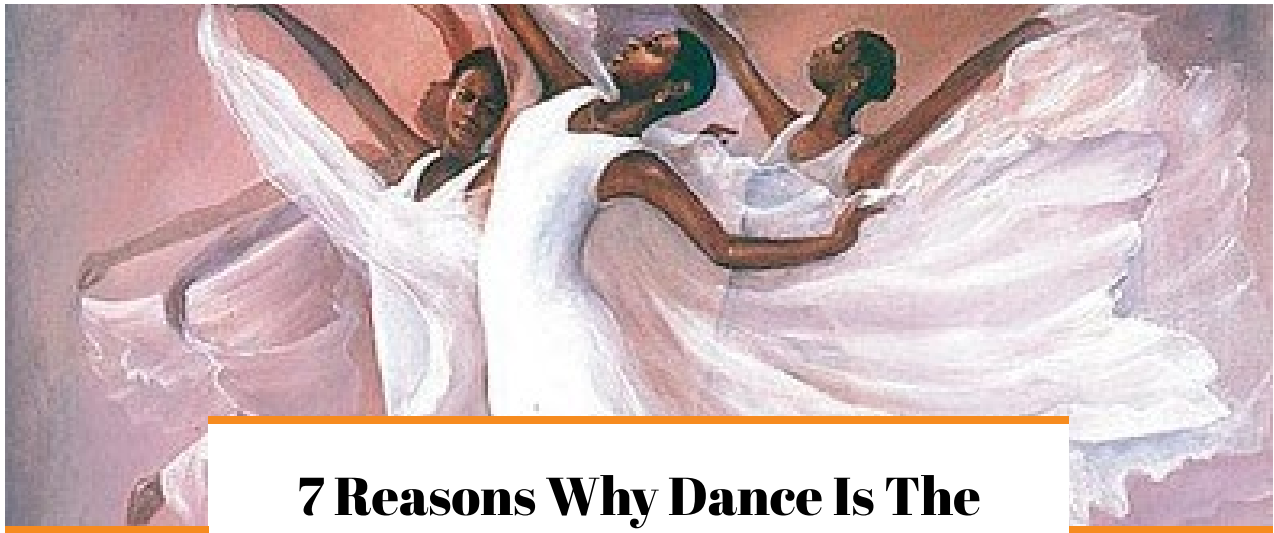
After everyone has done this ask them to do it with their non-dominant hand. Then assign groups of students a body part to write their name with and have the rest of the group try to guess.

First do it in place without travelling, then try to stretch it across the whole room.

Learning

We organise these classes because we know the love of Jesus, and want to show that love to you. We did an exercise about our names to remind us that God knows each of our names, knows us in a way only a creator can.

We are body and soul, these come together in dance, and they come together in Jesus message to the world. He was God in a human body, giving his body to death for us, so we can find forgiveness and know that, and that at the centre of our universe is a God who loves us and knows us. Dance helps us focus on, express and celebrate these deep truths about life.



7 Reasons Why Dance Is The Ultimate Spiritual Experience!

Dance is imagination brought to life! Dance is prayer. Dance is mediation. Dance is walking through the clouds, flying among the stars, gliding on the moon and experiencing the pure bliss of heaven on earth.

La'Toya Princess Jackson (/user/@princess) Jun 14, 2016
source: <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/dance-spiritual-journey>



Dance is imagination brought to life!
Dance is prayer. Dance is mediation.
Dance is walking through the clouds, flying among the stars, gliding on the moon and experiencing the pure bliss of heaven on earth.

Spirituality has always played a big part in my creative and artistic expression as a dancer and as a performing artist. I believe that dance is the purest form of spiritual energy that allows me to connect to a higher consciousness transcending time, space and reality. Dance is imagination brought to life and dreams are no longer mythical fantasies that can not be attained. When I began to connect my spirituality with my dancing I realized that the two had been intertwined, at least in my world, from the beginning.

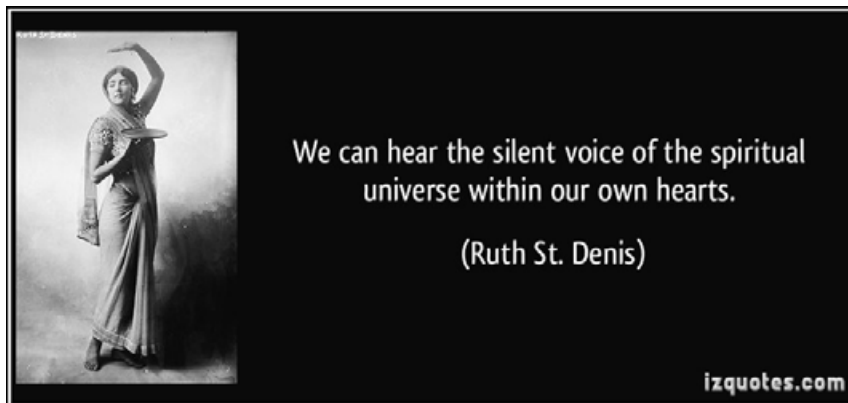


Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/juq5zbq1rkyq5p2/Dance%20is%20the%20Ultimate%20Spiritual%20Experience%21.pdf?dl=0>



Ruth St. Denis
http://libraries.adelphi.edu/files/2013/05/St_Denis_Catalog.pdf,
 a pioneer of modern dance, understood the connection between dance and spirituality. "The revelation of spiritual beauty in terms of movement is the natural and inevitable progression of life and art" is a quote that resonated with me when I read it in *The Vision of Modern Dance*
<https://www.amazon.com/Vision-Modern-Dance-Words-Creators/dp/0871272059>.
 Ruth St. Denis believed that dance should be a spiritual experience instead of a "simply entertaining or technically skillful."
<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Ruth-St-Denis>



When I examine my own spiritual and physical path as not only a dancer but also as a performing artist it all comes full circle. As a dancer, I utilize my body to communicate with the universe. I speak a language of communication with all creation and everything that represents the purest form of love which is a reflection of God. In those moments of movement I feel connected to God and it becomes a cosmic experience that can not be explained. I consider my movement quality to be fluid, breathy and lyrical because it's the type of movement I'd imagine doing if I were dancing within the galaxy among the stars. I truly believe that dance reveals the soul and here are **7 reasons why I think dance is the ultimate spiritual experience:**

Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/juq5zbq1rkyq5p2/Dance%20is%20the%20Ultimate%20Spiritual%20Experience%21.pdf?dl=0>

1. Dance is prayer - when you don't have the words to say simply dance and your heart will express the things that words can not.

Prayer is simply a conversation with God and dance allows you to have a direct line of communication to God. Dance provides an internal dialogue that is sacred within your heart, soul and spirit—giving you a direct line to the source.



2. Dance is meditation

According to Marieke van Vugt, writer of the article “The Mediation of Dance, or the Dance of Meditation” “meditation is the highest form of control over your mind.” Also meditation is about stillness, listening and having awareness. When you dance you have to have total control over your mind to execute the steps and you have to truly listen to what your body tells you which leads to number 3:



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<https://www.dropbox.com/s/juq5zbq1rkyq5p2/Dance%20is%20the%20Ultimate%20Spiritual%20Experience%21.pdf?dl=0>

3. Being in the moment

Dance allows you to be in the moment. In ballet class your mind can not wander. You have to be in the moment and fully present when you're at the barre and when you progress to center. During adagio and petite allegro you are always in the moment. Living in the moment with each step you take, fully present and intensely focused on perfecting your craft.



4. Dance provides an escape

Momentarily you can escape from the harsh realities of whatever it is that you're going through. When you dance you can cast all of your cares on the dance floor. The dance floor is your sanctuary. Whatever troubles you becomes a distant memory from the moment you step foot on stage or in the dance studio.

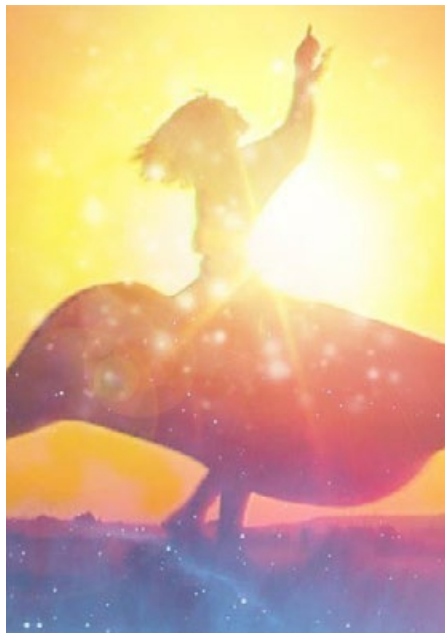


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5. Dance provides a connection with others

The best spiritual connection is the connection we have with others. When our spirits align and we experience movement together it provides the bliss we seek in the spirit of fellowship. The magical feeling of connecting to others in a higher dimension through the art of dance is what heightens the spiritual experience. It's metaphysical. Through dance you develop an “unconditional bond” with other dancers, with the audience—and when you touch the heart of others through the art of dance an emotional bond occurs.



6. Dance promotes a healthy and active lifestyle

One of the major components of dance is healthy living. A healthy body enhances a healthy mind. Health and spirituality go hand and hand. In the article “Spirituality and Health” it is mentioned that the mind, body and soul are connected and the health of the body affects the health of the mind.



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<https://www.dropbox.com/s/juq5zbq1rkyq5p2/Dance%20is%20the%20Ultimate%20Spiritual%20Experience%21.pdf?dl=0>

7. Dance is the ultimate therapy

Dance and movement help to provide emotional support and there are even dance therapy programs like the Hancock Center for Dance/Movement Therapy that offer dance therapy as a vehicle for self-growth and actualization.



So don't just sit there! Dance and discover your own inner spiritual awakening!

“Dance is the fastest, most direct route to the truth — not some big truth that belongs to everybody, but the get down and personal kind, the what’s-happening-in-me-right-now kind of truth....We dance to fall in love with the spirit in all things, to wipe out memory or transform it into moves that nobody else can make because they didn’t live it.”



Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox (A3 and A4)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/juq5zbq1rkyq5p2/Dance%20is%20the%20Ultimate%20Spiritual%20Experience%21.pdf?dl=0>



Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/zm8djhofqbruer0/week%205%20activity.pdf?dl=0>

Dance is the
ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL
experience:

☐

YES

☐

NO

Say in one sentence the reason for your vote:

Dance is the
ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL
experience:

☐

YES

☐

NO

Say in one sentence the reason for your vote:

Resources can also be downloaded via Dropbox

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/052sdyhioni4m7s/week%209.pdf?dl=0>