Research Paper

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Protecting the Body Against the Harmful Effects of Stress through Dance

Healthcare

KEYWORDS : benefits, stress, dance, students

*** Ganciu Mihaela**	Associate professor, University of Bucharest, Romania. * Corresponding Author
MihaiuCostinel	Lecturer, University of Bucharest, Romania

ABSTRACT

The Dance Therapy offers a holistic approach to healing, that addresses both body , the mental and emotional state of the person.

Knowledge of the individual solutions and strategies for the prevention and removal of negative implications of stress becomes necessary current.

This paper aims to present the role that it plays in the fight against stress.

In preparing the paper the following research methods are used: sociological survey questionnaire based on self- assessment of stress-Cohen and directed call, statistical and mathematical methods, as well as graphic representation method.

The experiment was conducted over an academic year in a group of 50 subjects who participated in two lessons per week and an individualized program of self -employment.

The talks have shown interest in the development of female students for dance therapy with health benefits. The most important physical effects felt after practicing dance are : increased self-confidence , increase self-control capacity , reduction of anxiety .

Dance therapy lowers the score in the final testing of the questionnaire for self- assessment of stress : if in the initial testing 6,4 % of the subjects were "highly stressed", at the final testing only 1.2 % were still included in this category.

The conclusion is that the subjects with high stress scores on initial testing had lower levels of stress at the final testing ,which proves that dance is an effective prophylaxis and treatment of stress.

INTRODUCTION

Dance was part of traditional healing practices, some of which still exists in shamanc rituals.

The modern activity of dance and movement therapy has its beginning in 1950 as a result of merger between dance and psychotherapy.Although it has many of the characteristics of the two forms of therapy, this is unique and has its own personality.Dance therapy is basedon the premise that postureandmovementareeloquentandthatit influences the mental stateandhowthat person is functioning from the psychological perspective (Martens R., 1990).

In this form of therapy, movement is the way to express yourself, to communicate and also a therapeutic intervention for personal development, integration and healing.

Dance therapy was founded in 1940 by Marian Chace, its pioneer. Psychiatrists from Washington D.C. began to notice the benefits their patients were receiving from attending Chace's dance class.

In addition, dance therapy wasused for the first time in the nineteenth centuryinBritain.Its popularitygrewonly after the 1940s, when it began tobeusedin the USA. Although dance has been a method of expression for centuries, the idea of dance as a form of therapywasintroducedwhenadanceteacherfrom the U.S. hasnoticedthatsomeofher students were moreinterestedinemotionswe experience when dancing thanon the technical side. Working closely with a medical team, she founded dance therapy.

Dance therapy represents the therapeutic use of dance to improve thephysical and mental state of people.Scientific studies results analising the therapy efects show that self esteem is improved and the stress is reduced.

With the help of dance therapy, our body becomes the instrument that helps us to learn to feel good in our skin and to have the same energy as we had as a child . Therapy aims are to connect with yourself and release tensions and blockages recorded in body memory. From the physical point of view ,therapy improves circulation , coordination and muscle tone. In terms of mental and emotional state, therapy increases self confidence, stimulate intellectual ability and creativity and also allows usto express emotions that are hard to put into words (anger, frustration , isolation, etc.)

Principles

From the definitiongiven by "La Rousse" in 2007,anxiety appearsthatis a state of unrest prevailing fear of a situation which, although generally not determined, it might prove un pleasant or even dangerous.

Anxiety, defined by dictionaries as fear without object, is ,in sport, an emotional state determined by a good cause and expressed as an adaptive reaction to situations that may pose as a threat to the athletes ego.

Pre-competitive anxiety is generating insomnia, nervousness, mental confusion, mood disorders, lack of concentration, digestive disorders and many other psycho-physiological manifestations.

Along with innate predisposition of each individual to develop anxiety of a certain intensity ,the social environment, their personal and sportive experiences, the cultural environment are of major importance . Therefore it is necessary to periodically review the existing anxiety level when practicing a certainsport , taking into account both social and cultural factors but also the personal ones.

Stress and illness (physical and mental) can be regarded as phenomena arising from the disruption of informational circuits - energy circuits, environment-system (both internal and external) ;therefore a person's ability to cope with these is an expression of its integration level in the natural and socio -cultural environment. (P. Popescu - Neveanu (1978).

Intervention on stress prevention and therapy has proven to be one of the most effective analyzing cost and benefits (both in organizations or on a personal level) .

Stress represents the adaptation syndrome which every personexperiences after environmental aggressions . Any type of stress occurs when continuous adaptation of the organism to the environment can be affected by a marked imbalance between en-

vironmental demands and individual's actual response. (Wilkinson, G.,2008).

Stage of knowledge

Dance Therapy offers a holistic approach to healing that addresses both body and mental and emotional state of the person.

Therapeutic use corporal activities to improve physical and mental state of people is mentioned in various works. The results of scientific studies conducted by Hanna JL, 1995 (quoted by Jeleascov C., 2006) on the effects of therapy on health movement indicates its effectiveness in reducing anxiety and stress. Knowledge of the individual solutions and strategies for the prevention and removal of negative implications of stress becomes necessary current.

The specialists performing this therapy claim that depending on the type and intensity of movements - quick or slow, dancing provides numerous benefits, from strengthening bones to burning calories and socializing with new people. Dance therapy involves series of different moves according to the patient's condition. There are special moves for expressing anger, for relaxing the body and achieve a state of calm.

Dance therapy allows us to discover our own body and awakens plenty of sensations, feelings and thoughts. At the end of the dance session, we can discuss about the discoveries we made and the sensations we felt while dancing. These discussions can guide future stages of treatment.

In dance therapy the patient become saware of his feeling sthroughsensationsandmovements.As a result, emotional problems and conflictstend to emerge. By harmonizing the connection between body and mind,dancetherapy'sgoalis to increase theself-esteemand self-identityof a person with emotional problems. Gradually, new dance therapy associations were founded, in orderto establish criteria for the education and professional competencein this specialization. The result is that there are now standardized procedures based on recent discoveries about the nervous system,the human psycheand dance.

In dance therapy the patients are taught to reveal their hidden suffering. It is believed that by extroverting the past suffering and frustration the patients will accept and overcome their emotional problems. (Bottomer, P., 2006).

Sometimes, the patients stand on the dance floor and when the music starts playing they start to move their feet to the rhythm of songs.This helps them to release hostility and to break out of the routine installed in their lives.Next, the patients learn to re-establish the connection with their own personality through touches.They first touch their eyes, hair, ears, then they choose their parteners and are encouraged to dance together.This exercises lead to a series of movements different by tempo, dynamics and rhytm. Every movement, ritual or dance goal is to help patients to improve self-confidence.

Dance therapy can be done privately or in a group. In both cases, therapy involves four main stages the patient has to follow in order to obtain benefits from dance.

1. Preparation involves preparing the body for physical effort by executing some exercises and specific movements and also create a safe and comfortable environement for the patient.
2. Incubationcosists in a phase of total relax in which the patient has the possibility to lose conscious control and to express their feelings and emotions through dance.In this stage it is considered that the dance movements are emblematic for what the patient lives.
3. Illumination is the stage in which the patient connects the dance movements from the previous stage with some of the possible meanings they might have, helped in this process by the therapist.
4. Evaluation takes place at the end of the therapy session and cosists in evaluating the patient progress (Effect of Dance/ Motor Therapy on the Cognitive Development of Children, link:http:// openaccesibility. org/ images / XEW191_Asmita_ Vilas_Balgaonkar.pdf

In this therapy some individual aspects are analyzed (other than the movement it self): their voice tone, the expressivity of the face, eyes, howthey move, etc.

Dance therapy has not been the subject of intense study to seeif the benefitsthat therapists claim to obtain are indeed valid and positive results are indeed due to the dance. Most were collected from the case studies and from the results reported by therapists, but for them to be widely accepted and recognized it is necessary a well-designed clinical trial.

1. The results of a study on women cured of cancer who attended dance therapy sessions shows that their shoulder joints got more mobility and their body perception has improved significantlly compared to people who haven't attended dance therapy sessions

   (DanceTherapy,link:http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/complementaryabdalternativemedicine/mindbodyspirit/dance-therapy).
2. Another clinical study made in Germany evaluated dance therapy in terms of improving life quality. Participants were persons who faced with stress at work, anxiety before exams, stress related to interpersonal relationships or caused by certain events and situations in their life (divorce, bereavement, etc..). The results showed that ,both short and long term,the participant improved their social relationships, physical health and general quality of life due to the therapy through dance.

Research methods

Studying the problem was due to the following methods:

- The bibliographicstudy method;
- The experimental method.The experiment is ameliorative because it is aiming to increase efficiency of the educational process.(Epuran M., (2005)
- Sociological survey based on a questionnaire (Self-assessment of stress Questionnaire-Cohen) (Derevenco, P., Anghel, I.,1992)
- Sociological survey based on discussions;
- Teacher observation method;
- The statistic-mathematical method. The datas obtained from tests and measurements were analyzed and interpreted using this method;
- The graphic method- allowed me to integrate the processed data and the findings.I used graphics also as a way of analyzing the study results.

In this paper we started working from the following hypothesis:

It is assumed that the differential application of dance therapy, according to the individual characteristics of female students,will lead toareduction of stress level.

The research goal

Through this research we want to see if practicing dance, systematically, with moderate intensity, for alonger period of time,is associated with a strong decrease of the state of mentaltension and anxiety.

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Research organization
The test was applied to students who are part of the eighteen universities of University of Bucharest, selected from all years of study, based on voluntary adhesion.

The experiment was conducted over an academic year for a group of 25 subjects, who participated at two physical education lessons per week and had an individualized program of independent activity.

Components of the study were in number of 25, with a mean age of 20,5 years.

This study was based on a questionnaire-test about stress, which was appliedamong students, determining the state of stress they experienced.

Subjects responded to a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions.

The intervention program included 8 dance programs and relaxation techniques, both within lessons but also in their spare time,asan independent activity, 3 times a week for 30 minutes.

Dance programs implemented were: Waltz, Rumba, Polka, Rock, Zumba, Aerobics-Latin, Greek and Romanian folk.(Dobrescu, T., 2003)

Relaxation techniques used included : breathing techniques, relaxation and meditation. (Popescu-Neveanu P.,1977)

Checking the progress achieved by the proposed programis based on tests applied at the beginning and the end of the program.

Following the dynamics of the recorded parameters, we see jumps in value between initial and final testing.

Research results:
After observing and discussing with the 40 trainees it is found that:

- Workout helps the students to be more optimistic;
- the students are morerelaxed;
- the discussionshaveshowna growing interest for dance therapy;
- practicing therapy through dance has created a state of optimism and good humor;
- young students became more sociable because dancing has improved relationships with others.

Here is what the subjects declare in some rounds of discussions:
T. F. -20 Years : " I feel better when I dance , I have a positive thinking ";

E. L. -20 Years : " Since I started dancing I am always in a good mood";

A.S. -22 Years : " I'm not stressed anymore and I can sleep better because dance relaxes me and makes me forget the difficulties I have ";

G.D. -21 Years : " Dancing plays an important role for me, relaxes me and helps me to get rid of my negative emotions ."

For calls made throughout the research with trainees, and the resulting inquiry following:The talks have shown interest in the development of female students for dance therapy with health benefits.

Following the dynamics of the recorded parameters we can observe different values for initial and final testing.

The Self-assessment of Stress Questionnaire results:
- Initial testing (I.T.): 10,.3 % of subjects scored 10 to 12 points for the 10 items , 83,3 % scored 13 to 24 points and 6,45 % had a score of 25 - 30 points.
- Final testing (F.T.) yielded the following results : 59,6 % of subjects scored 10-12 points , 39,2 % scored 13 to 24 points and only 1,.2 % obtained 25-30 points.

Testing the stress level
Interpretation of self-assessment to stress Questionnaire ("Cohen")

Score between 10-12points :normal state of stress

Score between 13-24points :moderately stressed

Score between 25-30 points: highly stressed.

Normal state of stress T.I. 10,3% T.F. 59,6%

Moderately stressed T.I. 83,3% T.F. 39,2%

Highly stressed T.I. 6,4% T.F. 1,2%

TABLE – 1

Normal state of stress	Moderately stressed	Highly stressed
I.T. = 10,3%	I.T. = 83,3%	I.T. = 6,4%
F T.= 59,6%	F.T. = 39,2%	F.T. = 1,2%

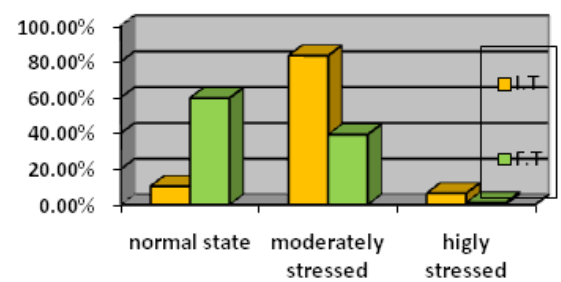

Chart 1 - Testing of stress levels

Discussions
In this scientific research, the age of the subjects is a landmark of the period in which they are included,which has certain specific psychological characteristics, which make them more prone to anxiety and stress state influence.

Dancers possess an aura of self-confidence and capacity to enjoyin society. When you learn to dance, the whole mental outlook is improved in a creative way, motivational and energetic.

At individual level, the development of sanogenetic behavior and reducing (or extincting) unhealthy, harmful behavior, havea crucial role in managing stress and maintaining physical and mental health.

Tudos St, Mitrache G.(2005) believe that for managing stress and increasing quality of life, next steps have decisive importance:

Personal hygiene behaviors;
Efficient body resources management behaviors:
- quality food and nutrition (diet);
- sleep and sleep-wake rhythm;
- practice exercise

- avoiding excesses;
- acquiring body detoxification techniques;
- positivethinking;sense of humor;
- learning to have achievable goals;
- increase the capacity of communication - effective communication skills training (with self, with others, with nature, etc.). Any effective communication means generation or regeneration of psychic structures;
- "consumption" of art
- acquiring recovery-regeneration- relaxation techniques

Dancing is one of the most effective ways to improve or counter act the harmful effects of stress, with important benefits for maintaining the health, emotional and social state.

Dancing determines,throughout life, the evolution and maintaining optimal mental functions and energy balance.

Conclusions

From the discussion with the participating students and from the investigations we made, we can conclude:

- The most important psychic effects felt after practicing dance are : increased self-confidence , increased self-control capacity , reduction of anxiety .
- Dance therapy improves many aspects of life like health, self-esteem , social life , entertainment .
- Dance therapy represents a way of development and exploration, leading to a better understanding and improving self-confidence.
- Dance therapy lowers the score in the final testing of the questionnaire for self- assessment of stress : if in the initial testing 6,4 % of the subjects were "highly stressed", at the final testing only 1.2 % were still included in this category. However if at the initial testing only 10,3 % were having a "normal state of stress", the final testing showed a significant increase, up to 59,6 % of the participating subjects . In category "moderately stressed" we can also observe a decreases from 83,3% at the initial testing to 39,2 % at the final testing .

We conclude that subjects had higher level of stress on initial testing compared to final testing, fact that demonstrates dance is an effective way to prevent and treat stress.

It is currently studied dance therapy applicability in disorders such as chronic fatigue syndrome or psychosomatic disorders .

The most important thing is that the students get used to practice physical exercise, to include them in their daily basis life .

This activity , with profound formative implications, it has to be perceived as a solution for achievingan harmonious physical development, strengthening health , for recreation or relaxation.

Proposals

Educating a motivation for practicing systematic, continuous, lifelong, physical exercise should be the primary objective of physical education courses.

The goal of this paper can be considered achieved when this managed to demonstrate the role of dance in reducing stress level and improving self-esteem .

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