

Benefits of Using Dance to Address the Effects of Toxic Stress and Trauma

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Toxic stress and trauma are often stored in the body, and dance can help individuals release this trauma, regulate their nervous system, and reconnect with their physical selves.

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY BENEFITS:

- **Reclaiming the body:** Dance provides a safe and joyful way to inhabit the body again, allowing for a healthy relationship with one's physical self.
- **Releasing stored trauma and tension:** Movement allows individuals to process and release these deep-seated physical and emotional tensions.
- **Improving mood:** Dance releases endorphins and other mood-enhancing hormones, which can help improve a person's mood and reduce the impact of distressing thoughts.
- **Developing body awareness:** Dance encourages individuals to tune into their body's sensations, breath, and posture. This increased awareness can help them recognize their trauma responses and develop new coping skills to calm themselves.
- **Strengthening the mind-body connection:** Dance helps to reintegrate the physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects of the self, which is key to holistic healing.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS:

- **Non-verbal expression:** Dance offers a non-verbal, creative outlet for expressing complex feelings and experiences that may be suppressed or inaccessible to conscious thought.
- **Emotional regulation:** The rhythmic nature of dance can help regulate the nervous system, which is often left in a state of heightened arousal or shut down after trauma. This promotes a sense of calm and helps stabilize moods.
- **Empowerment and self-esteem:** Through dance movement, individuals can reclaim the sense of control over their bodies that was taken away by trauma. As they gain new skills and feel more comfortable in their bodies, their self-esteem and confidence can improve.

SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL BENEFITS:

- **Building safe relationships:** In a safe space dance can help build a sense of connection and empathy between others that can also help trauma survivors feel seen and empowered.
- **Fostering community:** Group dance settings can foster a sense of belonging and community, which is vital for healing.
- **Improving interpersonal skills:** Dance can provide a way to practice healthy boundaries and social interaction in a gentle, creative environment.



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