



IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, NEWS

# Dance Therapy



Walk around the room, go wherever you want. You have a choice to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with someone else in the room. You have a choice to leave that person and join others or stand by yourself.

There's no pressure.

This walking exercise may be used to begin a dance therapy or expressive dance class. It allows participants to think and make choices for themselves. Do they want to step in front of someone and lead them, or step behind and follow?

These activities set all participants up for success and provide them with opportunities for self-discovery.

Pat Stone, Texas State senior lecturer in the department of theatre and dance, says although

everyone can benefit physically and emotionally from dance therapy or expressive dance. [Follow](#)

many times participants are survivors of domestic abuse.

This is a model that's used in actual dance therapy, but I must make the distinction – we cannot call this therapy because we do not have that kind of a contract with them,” said Stone.

”” *“Therapy is just the byproduct of the activity, we call these expressive movement activities.”*

– Pat Stone

Austinite Kalila Homann runs the private practice Integrative Mind Body Psychotherapy. Homann is a licensed professional counselor, dance/movement and expressive arts therapist and supervisor. She also designs creative therapeutic and educational programs.

Her life's work is dedicated to exploring the interaction between people's minds and bodies. Homann helps people discover how this relationship affects their health and well-being.

”” *“Learning how to use your body as a barometer for understanding how you're feeling can be very helpful.”*

– Kalila Homann

With dance therapy or expressive dance classes, Stone says it's not about learning steps or any aerobic exercise.

”” *“We start with deep breathing exercises that help tune you into more an internal feeling of who you are and then we give them activities that allow them choices.”*

– Pat Stone

“That is the major strategy, is to give them choices, which contradicts their whole world where they have never had, they have been deprived of any choice making, or any self-esteem, and this gives them that, so they have an opportunity to be joyful and expressive,” explained Stone.

There was a dance therapy program at the Hays Caldwell Women's Shelter in 2011 when one of Stone's former students collaborated with an intern from Texas State. Stone says she was told that participant responses reflected a deeper and clearer understanding of who they are and allowed them to be more open to conversation.



Photo Credit: Pat Stone –  
theatreanddance.txstate.edu

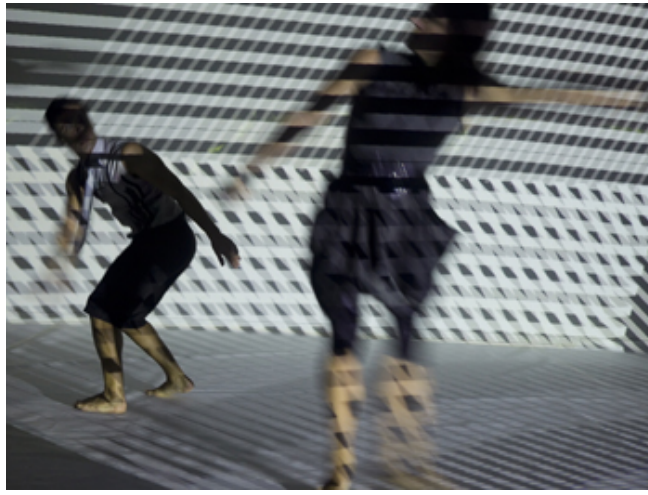


Photo Credit: Anja Hitzenberger

Stone says plans have not been made to revisit the program, but hopes it will happen again. In the meantime, Stone says she will continue to practice and teach expressive dance along the lines of the Gina Gibney Model.

Gibney, a New York-based choreographer and entrepreneur, is someone who Stone says she has admired for years.

Head of a small modern dance company, Gibney Dance founded the Domestic Violence Project, known today as Community Action. This is the only program in the U.S. that uses dance and creativity to help survivors of domestic abuse and their families.

The company's troupe performed on the Texas State campus in 2011, where they inspired another one of Stone's students to apply and receive a Fulbright award to bring movement therapy to women's shelters in Bulgaria.

It's no surprise to Stone that this creative discipline has inspired others in the arts.

“Most everybody in the arts is really trying to figure out life and dance is just one of those more internal ways of navigating life. It was never about learning steps or even performing, it's really about learning who you are from the deepest place. It doesn't get more visceral than dance.”  
– Pat Stone

Through Stone's work with expressive dance, she has seen that domestic abuse does not only affect women, but men and those in the LGBTQ communities as well.

There was an instance where one of Stone's participants was being emotionally abused by her partner. Stone says expressive dance helped the participant become confident enough in herself to finally leave her abuser.

Jordan Gass-Poore', KTSW News.

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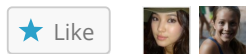
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