

# DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY

## WHAT IS IT?

Dance movement therapy is a form of Creative Arts Therapy, and uses dance and movement to support physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. Dance movement therapists combine the elements of dance, movement systems, creative processes, and psychological and social frameworks and theories, to address the specific needs of groups and individuals. Dance Movement Therapy is based on the premise that the body and mind are not separate but each influence the other, so change and growth in one can support change and growth in the other. It uses movement as its primary language and dance as its creative expression. It recognises that each child's individual's movement abilities, preferences and choices are unique, often reflecting their personal history and experiences.

## DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY & NEUROBIOLOGY

Dance Movement Therapy can be a powerful therapy method as it can simultaneously engage physical (somatic), emotional, cognitive and social engagement processes simultaneously. Five areas of neurological functioning that Dance Movement Therapy can support are:

1. Arousal and rest
2. Emotional regulation
3. Implicit (preverbal, preconscious) and explicit (verbal, conscious) memory
4. The mirror neuron system
5. Right/left brain integration

The critical link between the nervous system and our emotional and mental states is being recognised within the therapy space. When the nervous system is chronically dysregulated, it takes a significant toll on mental clarity, physical energy levels, and learning ability.



## BENEFITS OF DANCE MOVEMENT

- ✓ Improve Motor Control
- ✓ Develop self expression
- ✓ Build body-awareness
- ✓ Social engagement & Connection
- ✓ Reduce stress & anxiety



## MEET LALITA!

Dance Movement Therapist at  
Sensational Healing

Lalita's favourite part of Dance Movement Therapy is seeing how each child responds to the invitation to play, dance and move in their own unique way.

## WHAT IS THE RESEARCH SAYING?

Neuroscience is increasingly providing an evidence-base regarding the connection between body and mind, and how music, movement, dance, and rhythm provide a powerful resource to shift physiological states. Music and dance have also been found to improve mood and biological markers of stress. Music and movement activities can reduce anxiety, partly through improving sociability and avenues of self-soothing. Rhythmic-motor components in music have also been found to improve motor control, including gross and fine motor skills. Dance Movement Therapy can support children and young people to better sense their bodies and build awareness of their feelings and experience. It can also create state-shifts within the body, that even if only momentary, can build towards restoration, social engagement and connection.

Dance Movement Therapy can work with the natural strengths and abilities of children with anxiety, ASD or ADHD and it is not reliant on verbal processing. For children with ASD it can help improve communication, including social interaction skills, sensory perception and language. Interestingly, the mechanics of speech and song have functional and structural differences, and music abilities may be more prevailing in children with ASD. Some children with ASD may also have the ability to engage in complex musical tasks such as identifying the emotional content of music. Music can help in the expression, recognition, understanding and processing of emotions in children with ASD. It can also draw on strengths and individual abilities, for example, individuals with ASD can excel at creative activities, including having superior memory for pitch and timbre, excellent broader musical memory and high levels of ability to process melodic and rhythmic complexity. Music has additionally been found to improve behaviours. For example, music can lead to fewer instances of repetitive behaviours and can increase attention to tasks and the following of directions. It can also lead to more responsive social behaviours, including eye contact. Role play and modelling has also been found to support the social engagement of children with ASD.

## ABOUT OUR DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPISTS

Registered Creative Arts Therapists are university trained in both creative methods and also in psychological and cognitive methods to help clients better express themselves and to improve their wellbeing. Creative Arts Therapists are also mental health professionals who use art, media and the creative process (dance and movement, drawing, writing, sculpting, drama, clay, sand) to facilitate the exploration of feelings, improve self-awareness and reduce anxiety for clients. They are registered with ANZACATA (Australian, New Zealand and Asia Creative Arts Therapy Association). In Australia, New Zealand and Asia, Certified and Registered Creative Arts Therapists have a specific Master's degree in Arts/ Creative Arts Therapy (Dance Movement or Drama), and over 750 hours of supervised clinical placement. They must undergo regular supervision, abide by a Code of Ethics and update their practice every year with professional development training.

## CAN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY BE FUNDED UNDER NDIS?

Yes! Creative Arts Therapy is funded under the NDIS. It must be undertaken by a Creative Arts Therapist, registered with ANZACATA. The participant must have funding allocated for Capacity Building – Improved Daily Living Skills and it must be deemed 'reasonable and necessary'. The Therapist will work with the participant to make a plan, conduct sessions in accordance with the goals of the participant and report to the NDIA on progress with the participant in reaching their goals. Source: [www.anzacata.org](http://www.anzacata.org)