



## DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY & COUNSELING



From PrisiM The Health Institute  
Founder Director: Priti K. Shroff

By Ruchi Shah  
Dance Movement Therapist

I recently conducted a dance/movement therapy (DMT) session on the pediatric oncology unit of a renowned hospital in Mumbai. A colorful room on the 11th floor, which generally serves as a play room to the forty odd children admitted there, was transformed into a space of healing. As I was setting up the room I was met with nervous but curious eyes from behind blue medical masks. Children between the ages of 2 and 17 anxiously made their way onto the chairs set up. Uncertain about what was in store for them and unfamiliar with me, most of them clung on to their caregivers for support. It felt like the first day of a new school.

After several minutes of convincing, encouraging, and borderline bribery masked in promising to play their favorite songs, group finally began. We engaged in a classic DMT body-part warm up to increase self-awareness and mindfulness. That was followed by a 'Movement & Memory' intervention where each patient was empowered to create and share his or her own unique movement, then sewn together to create their unique dance. After 40 minutes of creating and engaging in movement, we ended group with deep breathing and relaxation to transition them back into the rest of their day.

Children who had walked in reluctantly now refused to leave the play room. Quiet and nervous voices had transformed into confident ones. One patient reflected that her "heart was feeling happier than before she walked into the room". Another one noticed that a residual headache resulting from chemotherapy that morning had vanished after group. A very concerned parent came in to help his daughter back into her room as she was connected to her IV drip. He came up to me and thanked me for my session. He mentioned that his daughter had been refusing food and water all day. She had been sad and unenergetic. However, immediately after group he noticed that her facial expressions were brighter, she was smiling, and had lot more energy. He felt rejuvenated as a parent just by noticing this shift in his daughter.



This is just one isolated experience reflecting the impact of an integrative intervention like Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT) and counseling. As defined by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), DMT is the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual. It is an experiential form of assessment and intervention that goes beyond the verbal language, using movement (our more primal mode of communication), creativity and expression, as core factors. Dance/movement therapists work on the premise that the body and mind are connected. Therefore, by creating a shift in one we can ultimately create intentional and positive shift in the other. We use the body and physical self as an inroad to the psyche as opposed to using the cognitive self. This not only helps surpass defenses but also connect to the corners of the spirit.

We hold our deepest feelings, emotions, beliefs, thoughts, and trauma in our physical body. Ever noticed yourself retreating from a hot flame after being burnt once? Or holding still when you see a dog after being chased and bitten? The body remembers. Ever experienced a bout of work at the office and a sudden seemingly unrelated head ache or back ache? Ever noticed a chronic muscle pull that seems to have no medical basis? The

body stores. And that is why in DMT the focus is on connecting to our bodies to find what is hidden and help it emerge and release in the interest of health and well-being. DMT helps connect to and release all of our emotions, experiences, and trauma.



The body says, what words cannot.

- Martha Graham

Benefits of DMT include but are not limited to:

- Mindfulness
- Self-awareness
- Stress reduction

- Improved mood
- Pain management
- Self-confidence
- Self-acceptance
- Learning to express and regulate feelings
- Integration of the body, mind & spirit
- Developing healthy relationship skills

DMT can be practiced in settings such as:

- Mental health facilities
- Rehabilitation programs
- Medical centers such as clinics or hospitals
- Educational centers
- Corporate offices
- Forensic settings
- Nursing homes
- Day care centers
- Disease prevention
- Private practice

DMT can benefit the following populations:

- Individuals who have experienced trauma, abuse, grief, and loss
- Individuals experiencing chronic stress, hyper tension
- Individuals suffering from mental illnesses such as eating disorders, anxiety, depression to name a few

- Children with autism, emotional needs, and learning disabilities
- Older adults with dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's
- Individuals suffering from Cancer
- Normal neurotic adults, children, and adolescents
- Individuals dealing with issues of sexuality and sexual identity

Dance and movement have cured humans since the early days of village rituals and community healing. Now we have simply put it in the urban perspective. My journey with the therapeutic benefits of dance and movement started way back when I was 5 years old. From exam-related stress to clinically diagnosed anxiety, dance and movement helped me ride through the storm. Ever since, I have drowned myself in the expressive and performance arts - dance, music, theatre, yoga. As an adult,

DMT gave clinical backing to my own personal experience with dance and movement. It became my vehicle to creating change in individuals and society. Everything you experience consciously or unconsciously lives in your body. It is the one thing you carry with you wherever you go. So why not connect to it, nurture it and empower it?

PrisiM Healing Institute is the one and only dealer in Mumbai of this unique Breath Healing Program. You can avail of a trial session at PrisiM Healing Institute. Email us at prisiimbbs@gmail.com for an appointment.

Ruchi Shah, MA, R-DMT, is a registered dance/movement therapist & counselor who recently completed her Masters from Columbia College Chicago. She uses movement as an assessment and intervention tool to further emotional expression, communication, and healing. She believes that healing happens in a non-judgmental and empathic relationship between the therapist and client.

FACT	MYTH
- DMT is a clinically informed practice	- You need to be a dancer to experience dance/movement therapy
- DMT is a form of psychotherapy	- DMT involves teaching people how to dance like in a dance class
- DMT can be practiced at an individual as well as a group setting	- DMT is an exercise class
- DMT can help individuals experiencing a variety of physical and emotional challenges	- DMT is limited to healing people with stress

