



Using Movement with Mixed Ability Groups

3rd Thursday Assembly

Silvia G. Webster: Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is a wild, wonderful format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a topic on a specific question.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!), Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" if you agree). We will have questions and case studies which we will work through together! Nilisha Mohapatra and I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a PDF transcript posted in a few days. Have fun!

This month we are discussing ways of using MOVEMENT WITH GROUPS IN GENERAL AND GROUPS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES. I am really excited about today's discussion as I am studying this field myself as a dancer and facilitator and cannot wait to hear your thoughts and insights!

GOALS for today's session:

- To explore different ways of using movement with groups
- To understand the issues that are important when using movement in mixed ability groups
- To share challenges and successes using movement as a tool for facilitated experiences
- To learn new activities
- To connect recharge and have a meaningful fun time

In order to achieve the goals, here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together flow really well. We are still experimenting with this form, so be sure to add what you NEED or WANT AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS.

AGREEMENTS:

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
- 2) Share at your level: Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. LIKING IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER SINCE FACEBOOK HAS CHANGED AND WE CAN NO LONGER SEE HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE READ A POST.
- 4) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.
- 5) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-

format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!). Feel free to add to the discussion even after our 90-minute session is over

Silvia G. Webster: And here's our check-in question:

If your relationship to movement is a type of weather, what would it be?

Arindita Gogoi: It would be rainy weather...because rain moves me. I dance in the rain. I can keep walking without a single thought in my mind for miles if it is raining. Everything surrounding rain reminds me to keep moving.

Nilisha Mohapatra: Wow, this makes me wonder. If my relationship to movement is a type of weather, it would be windy, cool and flowing.

Kathryn Mark: A summer monsoon followed by a rainbow.

Silvia: Mine is simply like the sun - necessary! Loving all the images here. I can see a choreography emerging ...

Christopher Seeley: Summer's night Thunder Storm. Unpredictable, sometimes comes in a flash, and needed during the "dry" times.

Silvia: ha! nice to know it's always there in the "dry" times. I like that. If you just joined, keep this coming...I'll start posting our discussion questions now

Kathryn: The fluidity of the water element and the illumination of the sun are always an inspiration to move for me!

José Bueno: Rainy weather would be great for playing with the sound of water. Wonderful to celebrate the power of life and having lots of fun

Silvia: Bem-vindo Bueno - nice to have you here.

Nilisha: Such vivid imagery!

Mayan Patel: Cloudy storm brewing. Energetic and electric friction. Transitioning to spring breezes dancing between woodland branches

Silvia: Thanks Mayan and welcome! Question 2 just posted.

Devon Little: right now, a bubbling bog. it's always there, but I am forgetting to utilize it for my personal health, until it bursts forth through me, and I'm like, oh yeah!

Adam Rosendahl: Sunny with a cloud - I know that it's effective, but sometimes all I can focus on is the one cloud.

Silvia G. Webster: QUESTION 1: When you think of movement, what is one word that comes to your mind?

Arindita Gogoi: Mind.

Kathryn Mark: communion

Nilisha Mohapatra: Flow

Christopher Seeley: self-expression

José Bueno: Life

Naali Zahira: Variety, play

Silvia: Yes - all of the above. I think of: Expand

Devon Little: body. me. whole self

José Bueno: E-motion

Kathryn: prayer

Kathryn: connection

Silvia: I love what is emerging here. Getting a real sense of wholeness/essence.

Mayan Patel: Alchemy

Devon: yes essence. movement allows what is true

Cristina Orbe: Liberation

Silvia: keep 'em coming...i'm getting tingles

Nilisha: I my mind all these responses are forming such a powerful collage!

Devon: acceptance, surrender. you can't fake.

Silvia: I know! like a beautifully choreographed poem.

Sarah Bullock: Soul

Taiane Barroso: Bodyes

Silvia: Tai - Welcome !! Nice to see some of my Brazilian crew here! X

Nilisha: Welcome Taiane Barroso!

Adam Rosendahl: FREEDOM

Jake Fearless Yearsley: Expression!

Silvia G. Webster: DISCUSSION QUESTION 2: What are some of the reasons you use or would like to use movement in your sessions? (What are some qualities that a movement activity can lend to a session?)

Arindita Gogoi: Movement makes it more communicative, more energetic. Group movement usually brings some sort of a coherence in the group, and most importantly engaging in movement gradually decreases the level of inhibition in participants, so I've noticed.

Kathryn Mark: Movement can open participants to play, forms trust, and opens the mind.

Silvia: yes - I love how movement can really infuse energy in a group and change things up! Kathryn - say more...

Nilisha Mohapatra: All of the above! And I would also use it to increase the level of creative risk. To do away with the "cannot's".

Kathryn: I work with younger groups, mostly...and once we begin to move, the creative juices start to flow, and the kids are usually able to take more and more risks.

Mayan Patel: Invigorating - energetically and mentally. We think as we move and we move as we think. No longer do ideas only come only from a cerebral place.

Silvia: Yes, I find it is also such a powerful tool for communication. When you remove the words, the body can say a lot. I think it's great for building empathy and emotional literacy.

Nilisha: I agree with you Mayan. I find it useful to include movements while teaching songs. Really makes it a full body experience!

Kathryn: I also use movement as a "barometer" so to speak. It is interesting to see who stays more reserved and who "goes for it"

Arindita Gogoi: Movement brings a break in monotony; there are sessions that require lecture style, but I try to keep them to the minimum. Like Kathryn Mark said, trust-building through movement based activities or

sessions hugely impact the dynamics of a group of people working together. I work mostly with children and with them even the slightest form of movement like raising a hand, doing a thumbs up, could sparkle them and build renewed interest about a subject.

José Bueno: As I always use movement when leading a group, I can't imagine a best way to engage the participants in a journey

Silvia: Nice one Kathryn - we'll explore this issue of who stays reserved in another question. José - can you share an example of something you regularly use with your groups.

Arindita Gogoi: Oh yes! Kathryn That 'barometer' is something I totally use!

Silvia: I feel we could spend hours unpacking these ideas...

Also, ...to reconnect people with their bodies, to build safety, playfulness, to explore how we experience the world, to explore the impact of body language on other people...

José: Wherever I am, I like to open a field of a Dojo the sacred space for learning by practicing. Aikido is my passion and I've been using very simple principles like grounding with our legs and flexibility with our whole body.

Nilisha: YES! I love the reconnecting piece. State of complete awareness.

Sarah Bullock: Your body speaks your mind. Even in stillness there is movement. There is breath. Exploration. Expansion. Play. Joy. Expression and exploration of e-motions, creativity

Silvia: Welcome Sarah! I like your point that even in stillness there is movement.

Devon Little: Mayan your words "We think as we move and we move as we think. No longer do ideas only come only from a cerebral place" is hitting a mark for me. I often don't trust ideas that come from only a cerebral place. I believe that to grow and learn and live what's true in us, we need our gut, we need our heart, we need our feelings- and our body's movement. We need to listen to our bodies in order to learn, and allow our bodies to lead the way in carving new pathways. Our body can be our portal, educator, and medium.

Nilisha: Sarah I love how you associate stillness with movement!

Silvia: Yes - I am hearing something very powerful about the importance of reconnecting with our body as a source of knowledge and wisdom. It encompasses all our senses after all. This is such a powerful notion. I am absolutely in agreement.

Rekha Kurup: Body also brings us out of the head and that is one of the reasons I love movement in any activity. It frees us from the chattering mind, criticizing intellect. And when bodies move together - it is huge

ice breaker. I also totally agree that our body has the ability to tap into the ancient wisdom of the beginning - our innate intuitive instinct!

Nilisha: Sharing the transcript of a previous Third Thursday chat, which speaks about the Power of body and voice in facilitation. I hear a lot of responses which resonate with this topic. <http://www.pyeglobal.org/.../3rd-thursday-assembly.../>

Nilisha: Rekha, I agree with you. I have experienced my inner critic go silent when I include movement in my facilitation.

Arindita: There is a little connection with movement and the sense of touch...I had once done a hug a tree activity and towards the end the kids would refuse to let go of the tree...the spreading of the arms around the tree, forming a bonding, breathing and feeling the tree was totally cathartic...it was mind blowing to see how the kids responded to that.

Nilisha: How interesting! So the intent is to expand ones self/experience to include other ppl/objects around?

Arindita: Also, to bring the movement in our senses...with kids from our cities, their sense of movement and touch come with electronic devices...hugging the tree was like hugging a breathing being.

Silvia G. Webster: 2-PART DISCUSSION QUESTION 3: What challenges have you encountered in getting people to move freely in their bodies? And how can you create a safe space for people who are new to movement/dance?

Arindita Gogoi: One of the biggest issues is shyness or embarrassment or the sense of someone judging them...would I look or sound funny...will people make fun of me, am I looking too fat or too tall for this activity. I guess a lot has to do with social issues with body image.

Nilisha Mohapatra: The biggest challenge I have faced is participants get conscious of how they look. Or their conditioning comes into play and they think of how they should not move or cannot move. Or fear looking silly.

Silvia: Thanks for bringing this up Arindita - it's actually coming up on our case study

Kathryn Mark: For me, part of creating a safe space with movement is to make it available to all participants, but to not force them to participate if they are reluctant. I ask periodically if the hesitant ones want to participate, and usually they do. I find the challenges I have in getting people to move are the blocks they put in their own way...

Yes, like the body image, self-consciousness and fear. I just continue to be as willing to move as I ask the group, to lead by example. This is usually easier with younger kids....(who are the ones I work with most regularly)

Nilisha: Kathryn, is there anything you say in particular? I have sometimes found open invitations dont work the way I expect them to.

Kathryn: I do use the open invitation...and frequently I would say: "it is ok to watch or to join when ever you feel ready to participate." Then I would check back frequently with "Do you want to join us?" Another tactic I use is to "ignore" them for a while--so that there is no pressure to participate, and as they see the other children having fun, then I ask if they want to join us.

I also frequently tell them that we are all learning...so again it removes the pressure and stigma they may perceive. (I know this is usually an easier hurdle with young people than with teenagers or adults)

Silvia: What are other ways we can remove the barriers to participation? I like it when we introduce the dance circle we give people the option of moving simply their little finger if that's what they are comfortable with.

Arindita: I usually try to create a safe place by being active till the end and not leave it mid-way. Also, I try not to drive any attention on those who seem to be a little shy. And always ask people to volunteer to take the next lead. I try to keep the game/exercise/activity on for as long as someone who is shy also gradually volunteers. If it does not happen in the first activity, I wait for the next. And if I see someone gradually opening up but might require some emotional support, I try to initiate the activity alongside the participant...and gradually move out of the lead without the participant vividly noticing it.

Nilisha: How about a repetitive name game which includes movement? Participants choose their movements and repeat others' too!

Kathryn: I do both!

Devon Little: For me, I usually start with some form of theater. folks have had experience pantomiming something we do every day, or they know the feeling of being caught in a rainstorm walking on the street - it can be a bit more accessible, and get us moving. Passing around the magic ball. and it begins to both show them that there is not right or wrong in movement, and that they can take things in new directions

Arindita: Also, I try to start my session with a simple movement activity and that gives me a slight perspective of who are the shy ones. As the session progresses I try to get more complex. Also, if I see many shy children in the lot, then I try not to do the activity in a circle, but an activity that requires random mingling...so that they don't have the fear of being watched.

Silvia: Thanks Devon - pantomiming something we do everyday is a brilliant idea. It reminded me of one use often with groups when they do their round of introductions is to get them to mime something they love to do.

Arindita: I agree with Devon to engage the group in activity that allows them to be random and to get comfortable with the fact that there is no right or wrong movement.

Mayan Patel: Challenges I have faced have been body image related or having to look good/right in the face of others judgement.

I find it useful to start sessions by taking away sight or finding a place you can be alone in a group. Closing eyes and beginning with internal awareness. Or very small movements that are barely visible.

Similarly, When i teach yoga i operate from the principle of "simple to complex". The first few instructions are foundation of what we are doing and very approachable for all physical abilities. From there I make offers that increasingly become more challenging if you are comfortable where you are. (e.g Only if you can find stability here, try raising your arms, otherwise continue breathing deeply and notice the weight shifts in your feet)

Similar to Devon I use relatable daily movements or environments as icebreakers. Such as what they did this morning or If I have them mingling I might say something like, imagine your in Kings cross station in rush hour, moving faster and becoming hyper aware.

Nilisha: Ah that is interesting- the relatable movements. I use them for groups to become aware of what happens where their body experiences certain situations/emotions/states.

Silvia: This thread is so rich and full!!! I am so energized by this discussion!

Silvia G. Webster: QUESTION 4: When working with a mixed-ability group, how have you made movement activities accessible to all?

Nilisha Mohapatra: I've always preferred giving the option of moving whichever part of their body they are most comfortable with.. Slowly moving to areas of discomfort.. The latter would include really small movements. And I try doing them in smaller groups, instead of a large circle.

Silvia: Thanks Nilisha. I like the idea of starting in smaller groups too.

Rekha Kurup: I usually lead with simple body relaxing easy movements like messaging the head, moving the eyes, lifting the arms and waving, moving the hip, shaking the leg, and slowly moving into a gentle shake of the body going from feet to the head and then becoming like children!

Going wild shaking like there is no bone in the body. squeals of laughter always follow. then after that move into more movement.

Another important thing is making a story along with the movement like "Oh the hand it wants to move up ..."
just engaging everyone

Kathryn Mark: I find that shaking, wiggling and giggling are always help "open the door"

Silvia: I love linking story to movement.

Devon Little: I am so excited about this question, because I am working with people of diverse medical conditions, and I am just beginning to learn how to incorporate movement. i want to start by just saying that I am so excited about your responses!

Nilisha: I see a common theme in terms of introducing progressive movements.. We'd love to hear your experiences Devon!

Silvia: We led a camp in Brazil with a few young people who couldn't see, hear, and a couple who had mild forms of autism and two of our facilitators interpreted the invocation in sign language and movement while one of the young people spoke it out loud. it was such a beautiful way to make that piece accessible to everyone and really brought the group together.

Kathryn: I also do a sighing/yawning exercise where I invite participants to yawn, stretch and make audible sighs. It relaxes the group, gets them giggling a little bit, and then generally encourages openness.

Silvia: love this. so simple!

José Bueno: Sometimes I have elders or handicapped people in my groups and they are welcome to sit around keeping the connection with the whole group.

Nilisha: I find that so powerful José. I am curious- what do they share about their experiences of being in the group?

Silvia: Say more Bueno - do you mean you have them just holding space?

Kathryn: I think having spectator-participants is safe and powerful.

Devon: I'm really loving the ideas of how to start with the basics. closing eyes and tuning into your body and breath. yes. then making yawns and sighs. then tapping or wiggling the parts of your body, noticing what wants to wiggle and what doesn't (true for everyone :-)). noticing if you body has any info for you.

Arindita Gogoi: I have been occasionally working with kids with mixed ability - mostly mental. And the challenge I face is body and mind coordination at times, and inability to decipher or replicate a movement. I

have been instructed to use clay dough and let the kids do as much hand movement into the dough as possible to help in their motor skills...from moulding to beating to creating something.

Mayan Patel: I focus on releasing as much I do moving. We learn how to use our bodies but rarely how to un-use them. Having someone lying down and letting the weight of their arm or leg be held or moved is simple and powerful.

José: Exactly, once I had Ozires Silva (80 years old!) the president of Anima Education, attending a workshop when I invited other 80 participants to enter in a field of a Dojo to understand the Aikido approach for dealing with challenges. He spent the whole time out of the mat, keeping connected and afterwards he shared his accurated perception about the experience and some personal stories about his challenges as the founder of Embraer.

Nilisha: Arindita, yes I know differently abled children learn mostly though touch. They need stronger feedback from the environment to refine their skills.

Devon: Silvia your story about the mixed-media invocation totally inspired me. and it made me think about how sometimes, in mixed-ability groups, I offer movement exercises that also have verbal options - like song with movement. Or the other day I tried making a rain storm, but since some folks can't use their feet, and some folks wouldn't be able to snap, having the vocal sound of wind was something I could have had as the "common denominator"/bass option.

José: I'll remember forever the invocation to open the camp in Brazil beside Cecilia, using the sign languages to say welcome to the one who couldn't hear our voice. It was a gift for me and maybe for the whole group this very welcoming moment.

Silvia: It was beautiful Bueno - I'll never forget it either.

Devon: i'm thinking too about the role of spectator. maybe spectator is the wrong word, and like José said, it's about having the experience in a different way. at a mixed-ability yoga class the other day, we had "spectators" come simply to watch , I was surprised and a little confused, to be honest, but then became completely excited that they felt that they were welcome to come and watch. and then I realized they needed to be included in our check in question, and openly invited that if they did want to participate at any time, they totally could. So I learned in that class, that witness or someone who does part of a class and not the other part, can enhance the group experience.

Kathryn: I would use the term "witness"

Maureen Gulczynski: Ooh following this to read later

Silvia G. Webster: QUESTION 5: What issues you have found useful to explore using movement as a tool?

Silvia: This is the final discussion question and then we'll move on to a couple of case studies.

Nilisha Mohapatra: I'd love to know more about this! I have found movement brings into life body image, self-worth, ability to respond to emotions.

Silvia: Yes!

Mayan Patel: Cooperation in groups to accomplish something we could not alone

Nilisha: I have also seen a lot of trust issues or group dynamics come into focus.

Silvia: How reorganizing our bodies and moving in different ways can help us reorganize/shift our thoughts and feelings.

Arindita Gogoi: When I train my team to work with children, movement has proved to be very powerful because all my facilitators have to be sans inhibition. Also, I have had very fruitful sessions of conflict management through theatrical explorations. With children, any learning outside of their classrooms call for movement.

Devon Little: learning about how we relate to being in front of others, or being in a group. being seen versus being alone.

Silvia G. Webster: Ok, I think we're ready for Case study number 1: You are invited to run a day-session with a mixed ability group of teen girls to help them build or reinforce a healthy relationship with their bodies. What of movement activities could help you achieve this?

Nilisha Mohapatra: This I am excited about! There is tons of wisdom today's group has to share.

Mmm I like going from fun movement to deep movement. Fun being imagining the room is an ocean or a park, and move/be the object/beings found in parks and oceans. to whichever extent comfortable. Deep being to embody how they feel. Or as they move each body part, fill it with a positive emotion or energy.

Silvia: I would start with a breathing exercise, followed by a short guided visualization that enables them to connect with what is precious about the body - how it takes oxygen to our blood, our cells, how it helps us move, think, feel. I also find mirroring activities really powerful. Need to think more about how I'd introduce this though.

And here's another activity offered by dear friend and colleague Julia Pond: Reach for someone's hand in the group, looking them in the eye. Without letting go, look for another hand to clasp. Only move away from one person when you've found the next. In silence...

Arindita Gogoi: I would start with an art activity...something on the wall that requires large movement of the arms and lets them touch colours..nothing that would talk about their bodies.

Nilisha: Has anyone tried any storytelling activity with movement in this context? I'm wondering how would that be.

Arindita: Having said that, I could also start the activity with asking them to sketch themselves to understand what their self image is. Immediately starting with a heavy movement activity might further push them to a shell.

Silvia: Thanks Arindita - I love this approach! There is something in here for me about getting them to have a connected/joyful experience with their bodies...

Wow! that's powerful Arindita Gogoi.

Nilisha: Yes! This reminds me of an activity called 'Beautiful you' where participants draw inside an outline of their bodies, about what their strengths are and what they like about their body. Projecting their self image.

José Bueno: I would start slowly with art and songs before movements or exercises to explore their bodies...

Silvia: The beautiful you exercise reminded me of a quote from Dr. Seuss that my friend Lis Cashin shared with us this weekend:

Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.

Nilisha: That is one of my favourite quotes. I have it up on my vision board.

Also, scroll down for the Second Case Study folks!

Arindita: I am not limiting movement as a dance or a big physical movement, but even hand movement while sketching or arm movement while painting. We can keep some music on while the art movement keeps happening and gradually as they finish their sketches. they can actually be gently led to grooving. I would keep grooving while their sketches are on and see how they respond to it.

Mayan Patel: Off the top of my head it would be great to do something that addresses photoshopping of women's bodies in the media. Naming societies expectations allows for personal voices to be heard. Not a movement exercise but it would be a great precursor.

Silvia G. Webster: CASE STUDY #2: You have been asked to create a closing plenary session for a multi-day arts-empowerment camp. It needs to include movement and creative writing and your intention is to help them internalize insights/learnings that will support them in going back home. What might this plenary look like?

Silvia: Folks - this case study is juicy and there is one more which I will post on the thread...too much good stuff going on here!

Nilisha Mohapatra: From the top of my mind, I am thinking of Group Poems. Free writing first, then picking a favourite line each, and then working to arrange themselves as a complete poem. Maybe singing it out too.

From the top of my mind, I am thinking of Group Poems. Free writing first, then picking a favourite line each, and then working to arrange themselves as a complete poem. Maybe singing it out too.

Arindita Gogoi: I did something similar in a group of children with special needs...it was a multi-day arts empowerment camp for children with disabilities...we had each day dedicated to some form of art. The music day had them making instruments from trash and then playing their music, on arts they they chose one imagery(each) they liked from various magazines and then we had a total of 15 images and each kid created a narrative with 15 different images...so 15 different stories. Likewise with theater. On the plenary day I'd ideally have them writing a letter to themselves reflecting on the three days and advice they'd give themselves and what they'd pat themselves for.


Luke McGrath: I would get some note books so they can dekerate them and then write there own psalms

Silvia G. Webster: CASE STUDY #3 (by Nilisha Mohapatra) You are facilitating a workshop for a group of adults with mixed physical abilities. Your goal is to explore with the group their relationship with movement, and expand it, change it or heal it. What activities can you use here?

Nilisha Mohapatra: Ah thanks for putting this up! I so want to explore this one.

Arindita Gogoi: I loved our check-in question today...our relationship with movement through a weather. If we have a mixed physical ability adults, this could be a very powerful start up. And to express the same, the participants can use mixed media or speak.

Silvia G. Webster: We are coming to the end of the facilitated part of this chat. THANK YOU SO much for your input and thoughtfulness. There seems to be so much energy around this topic so do stay on, feel free to reply/add to any of the discussion questions or case studies. Coincidentally (or not) I'm off to a 5Rhythms



class now called Sweaty Thursdays and will keep you all in mind as I move through my dance. Very grateful to you all! X

Nilisha Mohapatra: This discussion has been full of wisdom and gentleness! Thank you all! I have learnt tons.

Devon Little: Thank you all so much, I need to sign off, but it has been incredibly refreshing and inspiring to be part of this conversation.

Kathryn Mark: Thank you! I look forward to reading the transcript. I have had some other tasks to attend to, so I dropped out toward the end, but this has been a rich discussion. Looking forward to the next one!

Silvia G. Webster: Hi everyone. Thanks again for a great discussion yesterday. I went dancing last night and came across this video. It makes so many good points, particularly the one of reconnecting with the "underlying rhythms that guide our human experience on earth". I thought you might enjoy watching it as this issue seemed to cut across much of our discussion: connection to body/rhythm vs. disconnection. Great to reflect on this as we design our movement sessions: <http://vimeo.com/m/91720717>