



*Promoting Health and Well-Being
in the Dance Unit*

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Agenda



*Unpacking
Issues*



*Creating a
Resilience
Culture*



*Addressing
Needs*



*Concluding
Comments*



Unpacking Issues

Common Psychological Problems



- Anxiety
- Depression
- ADD
 - Barrell & Terry, 2004; Lench et al., 2010; McIntyre & Campo, 2017; Ringham et al., 2006; Thomson & Jaque, 2015; Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010; Yao et al., 2017



Common Psychological Problems



- PTSD
- Substance misuse
- Eating issues and eating disorders – true across dance forms and a big predictor is BMI
 - Anshel, 2004; Arcelus et al., 2014; Gorrell et al., 2021; Hamilton, et al., 1985; Szaszi & Szabo, 2021; Sekulic et al., 2010; Stracciolini et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2000; Zolotic & Durakovic-Belko, 2009



Common Psychological Challenges



- Historical trauma
- Present day trauma
- Perfectionism
- Injury, often secondary to fatigue due to long hours and stress
 - Abergel et al., 2021; Air, 2013; Biernacki et al., 2021; Cahalan et al., 2015; Caine et al., 2015; Eusanio et al., 2014; Hamilton, 1998; 2003; Hamilton et al., 2006; Krasnow et al., 1999; Mainwaring et al., 2017; Nordin-Bates, 2011; 2017; Pollitt et al., 20221; Rip et al., 2006; Thomson & Jaque, 2015; Verulava et al., 2021



Common Social Challenges



- Competitiveness
- Peer pressure – physical accomplishments, body
- Peer criticism and gossip
- Romantic partnerships
- Ambivalence toward authority
- Social media



Pandemic



- Served as a major source of stress - 8/10 adults (78%)
- Led to increased stress - 2/3 adults (67%)
- Exacerbated by societal stressors pervasive in prior years
 - Health care
 - Mass shootings
 - Climate change/global warming
 - Immigration
 - Widespread sexual harassment/assault reports in the news
 - Opioid/heroine epidemic
 - Politics and the presidential election
 - APA, Stress in America, 2020



Pandemic



- Impacted behavior negatively – 49%
- Disrupted education and work, relationships, healthcare, and the economy
- Resulted in financial distress, job loss, and uncertainty about one's future and the future of the nation and the world
- Led to devastating trauma, grief, and loss of life
- Impacted some groups more than others (e.g., BIPOC, Gen Z)
 - APA, Stress in America, 2020

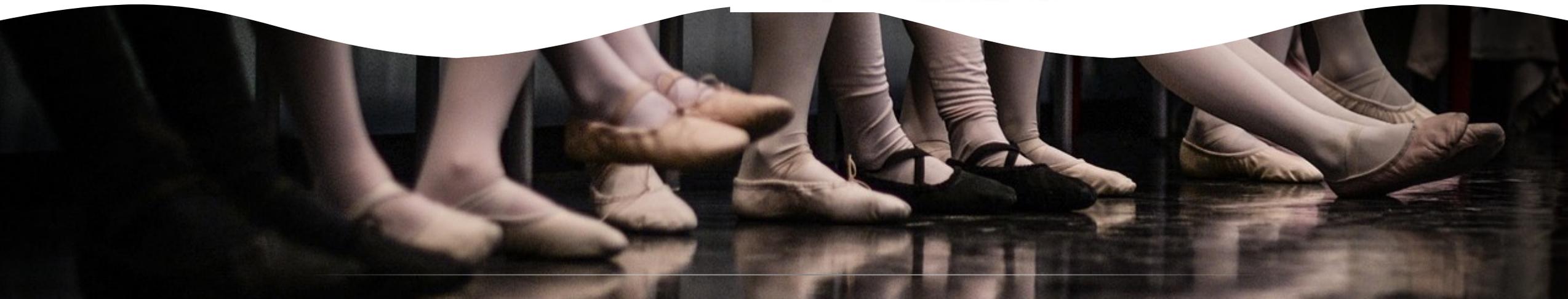
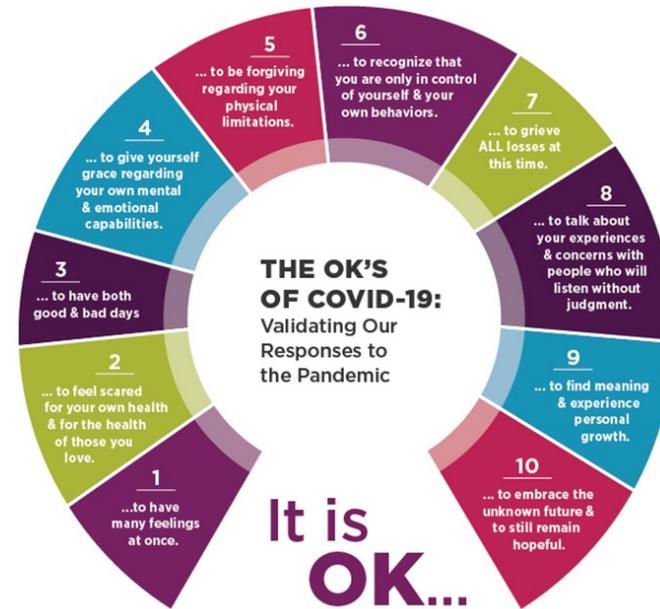


Poll Question



- Poll Question: During the pandemic, have your dominant emotions been

- Positive
- Negative
- Mixed



Pandemic and Artists: Psychological Well-Being



- Associated with
 - More distressing thoughts
 - Increased negative and reduced positive emotions
 - Lowered levels of “flow” – state of mind that brings together cognitive, physiological and affects aspects and corresponds to an optimal psychophysical state
 - Habe et al., 2021; Rosset et al., 2020



Pandemic and Artists: Psychological Well-Being



- Associated with
 - Complicated work-life synergy
 - Burnout



Poll Question



- Poll Question: Compared to prior years, are you personally
 - More burned out
 - Experiencing the same level of burnout
 - Less burned out



Pandemic and Artists: Psychological Well-Being



- Demonstrated resilience
- Were practical
- Experienced life beyond their art
- Grew personally and professionally
- Appreciated the time to be both consumers and producers of their art form
- Relished the pause



Pandemic and the Arts



- Concerned about the survival of the arts and artists
- Found that losing time and being sidelined from the arts for a period was psychologically and physically brutal
- Concerned about safety when returned to class, rehearsals, performances
- Stressed by countless decisions to make to ensure safety and balance that with program requirements and solvency
 - Kahler & Hain, 2020



Pandemic and the Arts: Economic Challenges



- Have witnessed profound economic impacts on individuals
 - Lost income
 - Lack of eligibility for certain financial supports
 - Concerns about short- and longer-term job stability
- Have seen major impact on
 - Arts programs
 - Arts organizations
 - Audiences
 - Brunt & Nelligan, 2020; Ciurczak, 2020; Rosset et al., 2020



Pandemic and the Arts

- Experienced the countless ways in which the arts and culture have helped us cope with the crisis

“ Culture has helped us out of the crisis. Now we have to help culture and support the diversity to which culture owes its strength

- *UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay* ”



Poll Questions



- Poll Question: During the pandemic, have the arts been
 - Helped or valued
 - Hurt or devalued
 - Equal balance between the two
- Poll Question: During the pandemic, has dance been
 - Helped or valued
 - Hurt or devalued
 - Equal balance between the two



Racism



- Increased awareness that systemic racism plagues our nation
- Witnessed massive protests across the US
- Declared racism a public health problem
- Viewed police violence toward members of the BIPOC community as a significant source of stress (59% of adults)
- Cited discrimination on a personal level as a major form of stress (33% of all adults, 44% BIPOC individuals)
 - APA, Stress in America, 2020; CDC, April 2021



Racism and the Arts



- Increased our recognition of how systemic racism shapes our access to art
- Acknowledged that a lack of opportunity for non-white artists and an undervaluing of their art are pervasive problems
- Brought attention to the ways in which the arts community perpetuates racism



Racism and the Arts



- Recognized the ways in which the arts community can confront racism



Creating a Resilience Culture



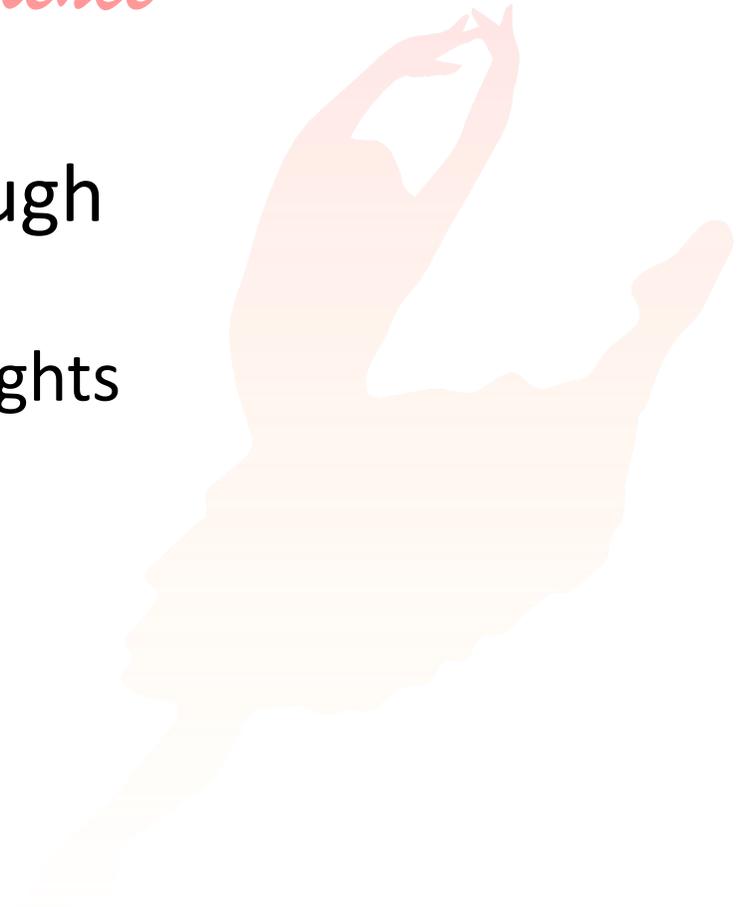
Resilience

- Adapt well in the face of significant sources of stress, adversity, trauma, tragedy, or threats
- Bounce back from difficult experiences
- Grow from challenging experiences and improve your life in response



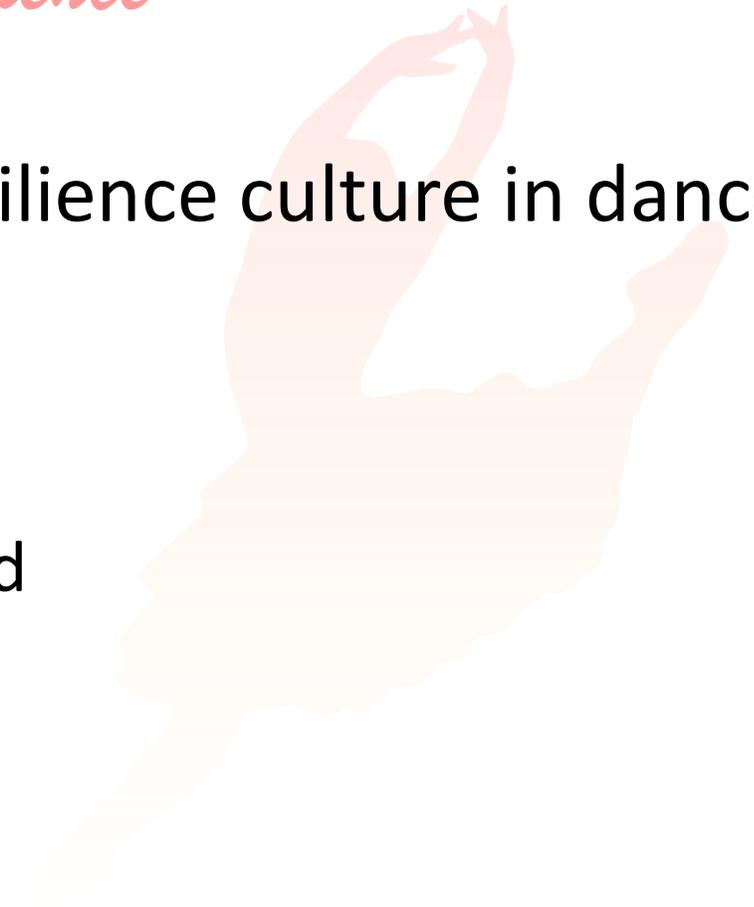
Resilience

- Develop resilience through
 - Fostering wellness
 - Embracing healthy thoughts
 - Finding purpose
 - Building connections
 - Seeking help



Resilience

- Create and sustain a resilience culture in dance schools that is
 - Physically healthy
 - Psychologically healthy
 - Developmentally minded
 - Culturally responsive
 - Socially just



Create a Physically Healthy Culture



- Highlight acceptance of multiple body types and appreciation of developing an adult body
- Encourage body acceptance, which is linked to greater life satisfaction and positive emotions
- Capitalize on each dancer's physical strengths and attributes
- Teach and support dancers in distinguishing between good and bad pain and listening and attending to their body
- Encourage adaptive coping with injuries
 - Faria et al., 2021; Mainwaring et al., 2001; Penniment & Egan, 2011; Pentith et al., 2021; Radell et al., 2017; Tarr & Thomas, 2021

Create a Physically Healthy Culture

- Provide dancers opportunities and resources to engage in supplementary physical training that helps them manage the physical demands and longitudinal training loads of dance
- Encourage and create schedules that support adequate rest and recovery, especially given the physical and psychological risks of fatigue and overtraining during high stress times
 - DiPasquale et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2021



Create a Physically Healthy Culture

- Emphasize
 - Balance between energy taken into the body through nutrition and energy used by the body through exercise
 - Need for appropriate rest and nourishment
 - Value of physical well-being (menstruation, bone health)
 - Knowledge about body composition, stress and nutritional intake combined with energy balance
 - Link between perfectionism and eating issues and ways to have realistic expectations and praise self for persevering and doing one's best
 - Buffington et al., 2016



Create a Psychologically Healthy Culture

- Emphasize overall wellness
 - Determine necessary requirements and eliminate ones that lead to distress and burnout
 - Offer a health and wellness course
 - Provide opportunities for more ongoing conversation in classes, rehearsals, advising meetings, mentoring relationships
- Encourage and empower people to
 - Be their authentic selves
 - Voice their needs and perspectives
 - Partner in creating solutions
 - APA Stress in America, 2020; Mosley, 2020



Create a Psychologically Healthy Culture

- Empower students to be creative and thrive
 - Encourage improvisational dance to help dancers find flow and express themselves creatively
- Give all students ongoing, accurate corrective feedback in multiple ways (e.g., verbal, visual, kinesthetic) in a manner that builds confidence and self-efficacy
 - Biasutti & Habe, 2021; Buckroyd, 2001; Dou et al., 2021



Create a Psychologically Healthy Culture

- Give praise as well as constructive feedback
- Try to understand the reason for a mistake, accept and acknowledge why from the dancer's perspective it happened, and invite the dancer to find a solution
 - Cheon et al., 2015



Create a Psychologically Healthy Culture

- Provide students with training in
 - Adaptive coping strategies
 - Positive self-talk
 - Anxiety management
 - Mindfulness, which is associated with positive affect and dance specific recovery
 - Acceptance
- Support dancers' autonomy, which can protect them from burnout and increase their engagement in the face of perfection
- Encourage students to use an app to monitor their wellness (dance specific)
 - Blevins et al., 2021; Fogaca, 2021; Harrison et al., 2021; Jowett et al., 2021



Create a Developmentally Minded Culture

- Recognize that adolescence and young adulthood focuses on separation, autonomy, creating peer relationships and developing sexual identity and awareness
- Facilitate dancers' growth related to these developmental challenges



Create a Culturally Responsive Culture

- Establish inclusive policies in training and hiring
- Have role models for diverse dance students to emulate
- Strive to have your dance program mirror the demographics of the community (local area, school/university population)
- Engage in community outreach efforts to increase the diversity of the pipeline



Create a Socially Just Culture

- Be attuned to the impact of the societal challenges on dancer's functioning and address this with compassion
- Ensure a value driven culture, that values
 - Open dialogue
 - Hope
 - Connections with family, peers, culture, community
 - Creativity and innovation
 - Anti-racism
 - APA Stress in America, 2020; Brutn & Nelligan, 2020; Giordano et al., 2020; Mastnak, 2020; Molyneux et al., 2020; Rendell, 2020; Sternbach, 1993



Polling Question

- Poll Question: How effective and systematic are your organization/department/program efforts to actively address structural racism, oppression, and bias as relevant to your art(s)
 - Very effective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Not at all effective



Addressing Needs



Build Resilience

- Encourage wellness and self-care strategies
 - Have a self-care routine to facilitate coping with life challenges
 - Include different ways to relax and de-stress
 - Free mind – mediate or journal
 - Make time for self each day - 15–30-minute increments throughout the day
 - APA, Stress in America 2020; Penniment & Egan, 2011; Radell et al., 2017



Build Resilience

- Encourage mindfulness
 - Highlight value of mindfulness (being conscious of something and present in the moment) for emotional stability, optimal performance, injury prevention, and creativity
 - Recommend regular mindfulness practice, which may involve apps (CALM; Headspace; Stop, Breathe, and Think)
 - Encourage mindfulness phrases for dancers
 - I trust my body
 - I am getting stronger/more flexible.... everyday
 - I am physically healthy
 - Blevins et al., 2021



Build Resilience

- Encourage and model self-compassion
 - Teach/encourage dancers to be kind toward themselves and accept their limitations, open-hearted, appreciate that their own imperfections are connected to the experience of imperfection shared by all humanity, and mindful attention to uncomfortable emotions
 - Link self-compassion to resilience, positive psychological well-being, improved body satisfaction and body appreciation, reductions in eating disorder symptoms and pain
 - Albertson et al., 2015; Bluth & Neff, 2018; Kelly & Carter, 2014; Neff 2017



Build Resilience

- Encourage and model self-compassion in the context of the pandemic, social injustice, etc.
 - Recommend daily reflection on three good things that happened, large or small
 - Acknowledge this is a completely new situation that no one was prepared for and thus feelings of uncertainty are understandable
 - Inspire everyone to do their best, but give people space when they don't have energy or motivation
 - Allow people to tap in and tap out as needed
 - APA, Stress in America 2020



Build Resilience

- Teach techniques to increase confidence
 - Self-reflect accurately and with compassion/kindness
 - Avoid comparisons unless to self
 - Define own success
 - Control what can and accept what cannot control (radical acceptance)
 - Barrell & Terry, 2004; Buckroyd, 2001; Fish et al., 2004; Garcia-Dantas & Quested, 2015; Gordon & Gruzelier, 2003; Monsma & Overby, 2004; Pavlik & Nordin-Bates, 2016; Thomas & Jaque, 2018; Walker & Nordin-Bates, 2010



Build Resilience

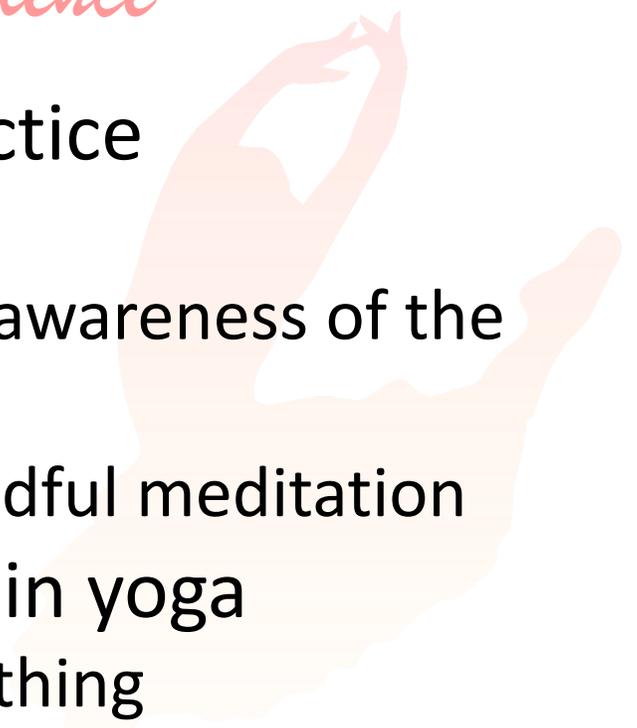
- Offer programming designed to bolster self-esteem and reduce the negative impact of shame and perfectionism
- Focus on striving for excellence rather than striving for perfection – counter the harmful culture of perfectionism
- Help people accept their strengths and challenges and make dance related decisions accordingly

- Eusanio et al., 2014; Hamilton et al., 1997; Jowett et al., 2021



Build Resilience

- Encourage meditation practice
 - Rest the mind
 - Attain a state of conscious awareness of the present moment
 - Offer opportunities for mindful meditation
- Recommend participation in yoga
 - Channel the power of breathing
 - Find peace of mind through accepting your body
 - Listen to your body
 - Sano, 2021



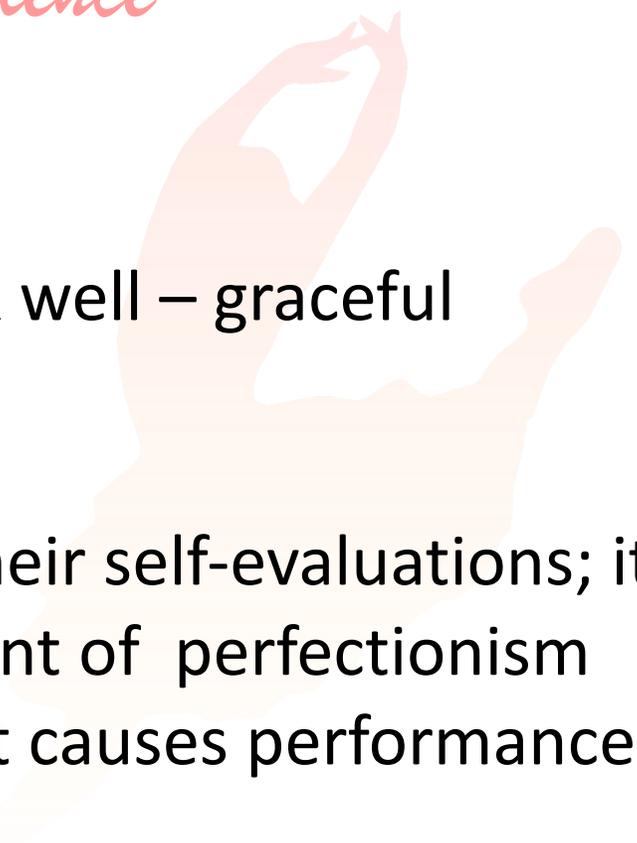
Build Resilience

- Educate dancers about anxiety and teach them adaptive strategies for coping with stress (e.g., performing)
 - Preparing
 - Visualizing and engaging in facilitative imagery
 - Focusing on positive thoughts
 - Using rituals
 - Breathing
 - Practicing mindfulness meditation
 - Being self-compassionate
 - Connecting with others



Build Resilience

- Teach dancers to
 - Take constructive feedback well – graceful acceptance of feedback
 - Resist shame
 - Be kind to themselves in their self-evaluations; it is the self-critical component of perfectionism not the high standards that causes performance anxiety and burn-out
 - Barrell & Terry, 2004; Garcia-Dantas & Quested, 2015; Nordin-Bates et al., 2017; Thomas & Jaque, 2018



Build Resilience

- Prevent eating disorders by incorporating a healthy lifestyle intervention that reduces eating pathology and body dissatisfaction
 - Define and compare the traditional thin-ideal, dance-specific thin-ideal, and dance-specific health-ideal
 - Increase nutritional density (i.e., eat foods that yield increase nutrients relevant to calories)
 - Attend to factors (e.g., sleep, appropriate rest time, other behavioral health domains) that might influence performance other than weight
 - Gorrell et al., 2020



Build Resilience

- Prevent injuries
 - Implement a wellness program that includes physical and psychological screening to establish baselines and take action when problems are identified
 - Highlight value of individual activity-rest schedules especially during stressful periods
 - Help dancers learn adaptive ways to cope with pain
 - Notice pain and engage in appropriate self-care
 - Reduce catastrophizing
 - Clark et al., 2014; Encarnacion et al., 2000; Fietze et al., 2006; Twitchett et al., 2010



Build Resilience



- Use psychological tools to aid injury recovery – reduce pain and fear of re-injury, enhance perseverance and adherence, foster hope and sense of purpose, and bolster self-esteem
 - Embrace a holistic physical-psychological approach that may includes both types of therapy
 - Accept (radical acceptance) injury
 - Set appropriate goals based on injury realities
 - Utilize relaxation techniques and healing imagery
 - Engage in related activities (e.g., assist teachers)
 - Participate in meaningful alternative activities
 - Air et al., 2013; Butler et al., 2005; Christakou et al., 2007; Cupal & Brewer, 2001; Evans & Hardy, 2002; Mainwaring et al., 2003; Pollett et al., 2021; Walker, 2009

Respond to Psychological Symptoms

- Notice and take seriously range of symptoms
- Be attuned to difficulties that negatively impact a dancer's functioning
- Ask dancers who are injured about their psychological distress
- Never feel it is your responsibility to assess the seriousness of the situation or determine the right cause of action



Respond to Psychological Symptoms

- Talk directly to the dancer about concerns in a compassionate and timely manner
- Connect dancers to appropriate behavioral health resources in your community
- Involve interdisciplinary teams to help dancers with specific problems, such as eating disorders
- Participate in the treatment and recovery process for dancers, along with the members of the interdisciplinary team, the dancer, the family, and the peers, etc.



Respond to Psychological Symptoms

- Make accommodations for dancers with psychological difficulties (time for appointments, extra time to learn choreography)
- Be sure all members of your dance school are educated about identifying, treating, and making decisions about psychological problems that require attention
- Implement a “return to dance policy” (e.g., for eating disorders)
 - Mountjoy et al., 2014



Respond to Common Psychological Challenges

- Mitigate against psychological trauma in the dance environment (e.g., humiliation)
- Encourage dancers to strive for excellence rather than perfection
- Shift the culture away from one that embraces injury and pain tolerance to one that supports self-care, rest, modified training, and the receipt of social support so that damage to the body and psyche are minimized



Respond to Common Social Challenges

- Find ways to be humanistic and connected, even in virtual and digital spaces
- Encourage students to use social support and provide such support to them
 - APA Stress in American, 2020; Blevins et al., 2021; Mosley, 2020



Respond to Common Social Challenges

- Empower dancers to view dance as a common language through which they can be understood, embraced, and empathized with so they can engage in more self care and support one another
- Address envy and competition so they are not so destructive
 - Encourage synchronized and coordinated dance performances in highly competitive contexts
 - Roncaglia, 2021; Shimizu & Okada, 2021



Support Help Seeking

- Encourage people to seek mental health services if emotionally overwhelmed, burned out, or struggling to cope effectively
- Facilitate access to services
 - Connect people to resources in the university or local area
 - Recommend free or low costs services specific to the arts community
- Form linkages with mental health professionals who work with artists, like performance psychologists, or with common challenges (e.g., eating disorders)
- Advocate for funding for mental health services in colleges/universities or with health plans



Prioritize Racial Justice



- Make a commitment to anti-racism
 - Review resources in the arts and dance ([Dance/NYC](#))
 - Refocus teaching methods to affirm and celebrate the diversity of people's experiences and cultures
 - Employ anti-racist dance pedagogy
 - Engage actively in anti-racist efforts to make progress toward equitable communities across the arts – do not be complacent
 - Acknowledge ways racism permeates the arts
 - Remember, the process will be challenging and take time, but current and future artists deserve better than the current racist structures
- Make a public statement about racial justice commitment and action plan
 - Gottschild, 1998; Kraehe et al., 2018; McCarthy-Brown, 2017; Mullikin, 2020

Prioritize Racial Justice

- Encourage everyone in the community to confront racism and implicit bias
 - Use voice - speak from own perspective exclusively and express how you feel
 - Use art to speak truth to power
 - Find a place where voice is valued
 - Find allies and be an ally
 - Mosley, 2020; Spears, 2020



How Dance Students Can Confront Racism and Implicit Bias in the Studio

Courtney Celeste Spears | Jun 10, 2020



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Protect own mental health as confront racism and implicit bias
 - Be sensitive to the impact of the racial/ethnic trauma in everyday life compounded by the practices of the arts community on BIPOC artists and the psychological effects of confronting racism and implicit bias
 - Stress and anxiety
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Problems with practice, productivity, performance
 - Mental health difficulties
 - Mosley, 2020; Turner, 2019



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Move from microaggressions to microprogressions
 - Engage in self-reflection
 - Be aware of stereotypes
 - Mitigate bias in choices of what to perform/display and who will perform/have their work displayed
- Encourage diverse people to create and develop their personal voices
 - Wakamatsu, 2020



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Move from microaggressions to microprogressions
 - Be intentional about small, regular, and common acts or experiences that serve to challenge and/or dismantle bias, stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression
 - Use the classroom and performance space to pursue microprogressions and challenge microaggressions
 - Infuse classrooms and performance spaces with compassion, connection, and anti-racism through daily, deliberate microaffirmations
 - Strunk et al., 2017; Wakamatsu, 2020



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Secure anti-racism consultations



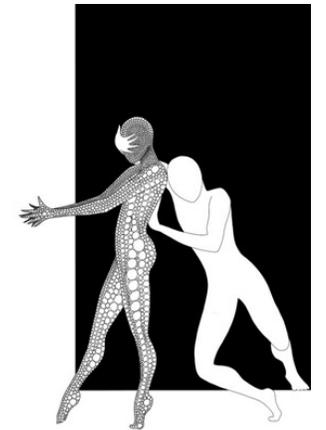
Why Former Dancer Erica Lynette Edwards Launched an Anti-Racism Consulting Business

Lauren Warnecke / Apr 07, 2021



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Hold multicultural arts events in a safe manner
- Call for changes at the top due to lack of diversity in leadership
- Stand in solidarity with protestors across the nation committed to breaking the systems that create and maintain racism, oppression, bigotry and inequity
 - King et al., 2020



Prioritize Racial Justice

- Create work honoring specific communities
 - Black victims of police brutality
 - Black queer community
 - Transgender people of color
- Show support for the BLM movement
- # StopAsianHate

How Is the Art World Responding to
the Black Lives Matter Movement
Now?



Look Forward

- Ensure availability of programming that prepares dancers to transition after their dance career ends by emphasizing
 - Capitalizing on what they learned from dance and generalizing it to other situations
 - Contemplating the role of more formal college education (and possibly beyond)
 - Making career choices and preparing for them
 - Determining creative ways to integrate dance throughout their life
 - Utilizing advisory papers on various transitions from NASD
 - Harrison & Ruddock-Hudson, 2017





*Concluding
Comments*



- Be guided by your values and the values of your organization/
program/institution
- Emphasize activities that bring a sense of meaning and purpose in
your life and the lives of your students and colleagues
- Be proactive and innovative in supporting creativity and well-being



- Make an intentional commitment to anti-racism through the use of microprogressions, which empower people with multidimensional social identities, strong voices, creative capacity, and leadership skills
 - Brunt & Nelligan, 2020; Wakamatsu, 2020



- Use the pandemic and active social justice movement to showcase the arts and their connecting and healing value

Questions





Thanks