

# Dance Warm-Ups and Exercises

## Warm-Ups:

### 1) Social Dance Warm-Ups

Pick a social dance (like cupid shuffle) or use the 10 minute "MOVE Dance Mix" to get everyone warmed up and comfortable and out of their shells.

### 2) Four Corners

This is a new way to get in an aerobic work-out for your dancers. Have everyone choose one of four corners (add the center of the room for a 5<sup>th</sup> space if needed). Then assign each corner an exercise. Set a timer for 1 minute and put some fun music on while they do their exercise. When the timer goes off, they move to the next corner and complete that exercise; continue until everyone goes through the whole cycle.

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|------------------|---------------|
| 1) Jumping Jacks | 5) Push Ups   |
| 2) Planks        | 6) Squats     |
| 3) Crunches      | 7) Stretching |
| 4) Wall-Sits     | 8) Etc        |

### 3) Dance to the Beat

Put on a lively song (like "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" by Whitney Houston). Have dancers move around the floor, walking on the beat.

Give prompts to hit a specific move on a specific count:

Moves could include: Punch/Shake/Flick/Freeze/Explode/Slide/Look/Collapse/Kick Ball Change

Counts: whatever feels most natural or comfortable (usually beat 1 or 5)

Examples:

"Ok, on beat 1, I want everyone to FREEZE for 4 counts!"

"This time, we're going to SLIDE on beats 5-6"

"Now let's do a FLICK on beat 2!"

\*On some prompts, you may want to take a moment to let them freeze and look around at what everyone's doing before continuing.

# **Improv Dance Exercises:**

## **1) Dance Your Name**

Have dancers take turn moving across the room (by twos or threes) writing their name on the floor using various body parts. Give them a specific prompt for each time they cross:

- 1) Feet
- 2) Elbow
- 3) Head
- 4) Bottom
- 5) Making shapes of the letters with their whole body

## **2) Dance Through Texture**

Have dancers take turn moving across the floor (by twos or threes) as if they're moving through various textures. Give them a specific prompt for each time they cross:

- 1) Moving through clouds
- 2) Sticky honey
- 3) Crunchy peanut butter (there are smooth parts, but watch out for the nuts!)
- 4) Wiggly Jello
- 5) Pins and needles everywhere

## **3) Roll the Dice**

Prepare six 8-count phrases. These could be selected from various exercises you've done throughout the day, or something that you come prepared with ahead of time. Alternatively, you could break the class into groups and assign them a phrase to prepare. Ideally, you would have phrases that vary in dynamics: Big movements, small movements, turning, jumping, stillness, low level. Make sure everyone is comfortable with each phrase.

Next, assign each phrase a number, 1-6. Write these on a board or chart paper so that they're visible. Then, roll the dice! Assign the order of the phrases in the dance strictly according to the results of the dice roll. Have the class perform the dance, then play with different music options. Have a selection of music to underscore the dance with various tempos and emotions. See what works!

#### **4) Inside Out (Emotions Exercise)**

Have your dancers spread out around the room. Give them an emotion-based prompt (happy, sad, frustrated, giddy, furious, contemplative, unsure, whimsical, etc). Ask your dancers to create a shape to express the given emotion. Give an opportunity for people to take turns walking around the room and viewing peoples shapes as if they're looking at statues in a museum.

Once their shapes are established, prompt them to expand their shape over an 8-count phrase. Again, allow people to share and view each other's phrases.

You can choose to repeat this exercise with a new emotion or take a selection of people's shapes/phrases and weave them together to make a longer dance (could use "Roll the Dice" exercise from above).

#### **5) Scripture Improv**

Select a short passage of Scripture that is rich in imagery. Some suggestions include:

- a. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"—Matthew 6:25-27
- b. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."—Joshua 1:9
- c. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."—Numbers 6:24-26
- d. "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man." —Proverbs 3:3-4
- e. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." —Matthew 5:14-16
- f. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. —Proverbs 3:36

### **Scripture Improv, SIMPLE VERSION:**

This is an exercise that allows your dancers to engage with Scripture in a unique way. It can be meditative or exciting, but not necessarily geared towards a performance.

Have your dancers spread out around the room. They will work independently on this exercise. As you read the selected passage to the group, encourage them to listen closely to the words and identify the emotion of the Scripture. Next, prompt them to select a NOUN that resonates with them. "Let that word inspire to you make a shape using your whole body." Once everyone has a shape, repeat this process, prompting them to select a VERB (action word) that resonates with them. Have each dancer create an action that fits with their selected verb.

Once they've established their NOUN and VERB, have them create a transition that will connect the two. Direct them to use this transition to change levels (for example: if their movements were HIGH for the noun, have the transition move them to being LOW for the verb).

Now, read the whole passage as the group performs their improvised Scripture Dances as one. Elevate this experience with underscoring/mood music!

### **Scripture Improv, ADVANCED VERSION:**

Read your selected Scripture passage. Have your dancers select three NOUNS that stick out to them, and create a whole-body shape for each one. Read the passage again as they present their shapes. Next, prompt your dancers select three VERBS or action words that stick out to them. For each of these words, have them create a movement. They now have three nouns (A, B, C) and three movements (1,2,3). Once these are established, play with the order! A1B2C3A, etc. Put music on and let them play with these sequences.

You can continue to explore by:

- Changing facings (body directions)
- Play with timing (length of holds, double time, etc)
- Play with levels (high, medium, low)
- Play with tempo (change the song and see how that affects things)

You can also have the dancers pair up and teach their partner their sequences. Put them together, play with order, and the continue to explore using the promptings above.

Using this exercise, you can work out a dozen new dances – all inspired by the Scripture passage!

## 6) Cool Down – Listening Prayer

Have dancers lay on floor in an “x” shape (arms high or low, depending on their comfort). Invite them to close their eyes as you play quiet music. Prompt them to take slow, deep breaths in, and out.

As the music plays, gently walk the dancers through the process of bringing awareness to each part of their body, encouraging them to relax each muscle as if they’re melting into the floor. Include large muscle groups, and small ones: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg, shoulders, belly, ankles, toes, wrists, fingers, back of the head, cheeks, tongue, eyeballs, jaw, etc.

Once they are relaxed, begin to lead them through a listening prayer exercise.

I invite you to imagine yourself in a safe space.

Invite Jesus into the space with you.

What does he do when he gets there?

Does he know you?

Ask him:

What does he feel about you?

Is there anything he wants to say to you?

(You can tailor these questions to your specific class)

After this, it’s time to slowly wake them up. Remind them to keep breathing as they slowly

- 1) Wiggle toes and fingers
- 2) Spread awareness back through their arms, legs
- 3) When they’re ready, roll onto their side
- 4) Push themselves up into a seated position.

Close in prayer.