

Using dance as a therapeutic art

Short Notice
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STOP awhile and meet Tripura Kashyap, dance therapist.

What exactly is contemporary dance therapy? "Dance therapy is a combination of physical and psychotherapy. Dance therapy is used to help disabled as well as normal individuals to improve movement, co-ordination, attention span and social skills", says Tripura.

As many of the individuals undergoing dance therapy are not dancers, dance movement vocabulary is taught to them in the initial therapy sessions.

After participants learn dance vocabulary, they are familiarised with body language and are encouraged to develop their own language using the dance vocabulary. They are guided at all times, so that they are comfortable and are shown their movements by mirroring movements by the tutor.

"Dance therapy", continues Tripura, "helps to express bottled up emotions. Anger, fear, pain and ecstasy can all be expressed through dance and dance therapy is a valuable guide on the process of expressing your emotions through dance".

Situations are stimulated on the dance floor and aggression is brought out in a safe, structured manner. The philosophy of dance therapy in terms of dance,

is the constant search for something new. Believe it or not, but this unique therapy medium is used by Tripura for stress management, and corporate managers and executives should consider dance therapy as a suitable alternative to other focus of stress management.

Just watching a performance by Tripura, is relaxing, soothing and leaves you with a good and easy feeling as they call it. Tripura has started conducting therapy sessions for stress management and TISL executives have been among the first to adopt dance therapy to manage

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corporate stress. Dance is a truly relaxing experience as this performing art is a record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best midgets.

Tripura does a lot of work with disabled children. She uses dance therapy to help children who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded or physically disabled, express themselves. "The improvements I got from mentally retarded children using dance therapy was extremely satisfying", says a contented Tripura.

These children were taught to express their verbal wishes through touch or in other words by brailleing the body. It took four to six weeks of therapy before achieving spatial awareness among these children. Her

charges for two 45 minute sessions per week is at an affordable rate of Rs 100. Her work with children suffering from Down's syndrome is commendable. She brought about remarkable changes in concentration and attention span of such children using dance therapy.

Tripura also teaches dancing to children and is a consultant to Newspapers in Education (NIE) the training division of *The Times of India*. She does workshops on modern contemporary dance for school children in schools all over Bangalore who are a part of NIE.

"My dream is to set up a dance studio and live there", says Tripura, exuding optimism. There is tremendous therapeutic potential in Indian dance forms. Bharatnatyam gestures are an ideal medium for non-verbal communication. "Kollattam" or 'Garba ras' builds up a rhythm which is unmatched by even the best of western dance.

Indian folk dances especially the dances of the north eastern states, have tremendous potential in building of team, co-operation among team members, co-ordination of activities in a group, besides other psychological benefits like a sense of belonging and security.

The Bhal-Gond dances give dancers a good opportunity for social interaction and the true

and full therapeutic potential of Indian folk dances have not been researched fully. "I would love to do such a research project on my own, provided I find sponsors," continues Tripura.

Tripura Kashyap is a dance graduate from Kalamandira, Madras. She has also specialised in dance movement therapy from Hancock centre for movement therapy, affiliated to the University of Wisconsin, USA.

She has travelled extensively in India and abroad as a dancer and choreographer with troupes like Chandradakshin. She is currently working as a therapist at the Atma Shakti Vidyalaya, Bangalore.

Her dance performances in Bangalore include the 'Senses of Furies', 'Sorrows', 'Shadows of Substance' and a guest appearance in 'Roots to Fly'.

"Violence can evoke anguish and despair in a person. What is the better way to express anguish than to express it through dance with the employment of every part of the body", asks Tripura.

Contemporary dance and dance therapy are increasingly becoming more important in the history of performing arts in Bangalore, and Tripura Kashyap has played a role in the evolution of dance therapy and management of stress using modern contemporary dance movements.