

# 'Promoting wellness, having fun, and creating community': a dance instructor's pedagogical practices and perspectives on the influence of community dance classes for older adults

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**Purpose:** To explore pedagogical practices and understand a dance instructor's perspective on how a community dance class can influence older adults' experiences of aging, physical literacy, and embodiment.

**Methods:** The dance instructor participated in 3 semi-structured interviews.

## **Results:**

### **The coffee and cookies might be the most important part**

The social opportunities of the dance class were essential to the class experience. The social time following class supported motivation to attend and fostered social connection amongst classmates and with the instructor. Although the synchronous virtual classes allowed for some interaction, this was not the same as the in person social experience.

### **Everyone can walk away feeling successful at something**

The instructor felt it was important and strived for participants to feel accomplishment. They provided multiple movement combinations per class, worked on combinations over multiple weeks, and provided feedback and encouragement. The instructor invited participants to make modifications and offered opportunities for participants to make individual movement choices. Although the instructor aimed for participants to experience similar feelings of success in online classes, they found this challenging, given the method of class delivery.

## **Key takeaways:**

The social aspect of the dance experience is not an addition, it is essential.

Online classes did not offer a replacement for the in-person class.

When intentionally considered and planned for, dancing has the potential to influence multiple aspects of health in older adults.

### **Supporting physical, emotional, and psychological needs**

Given attendees ongoing participation, the instructor believed classes were filling a need for the participants. The instructor aimed for the class not only to address physical health, but holistic wellness. The instructor described hearing and seeing how participants experienced enjoyment and felt good after class. It was noted that online class delivery was not accessible to all, and therefore excluded some individuals who previously participated.

### **A space where class attendees can be creative and expressive**

The dance instructor encouraged participants to make their own movement choices and included improvisational and creative tasks throughout class. The instructor perceived that these opportunities may be challenging or potentially uncomfortable at times and so they aimed for these tasks to be small and manageable for attendees. Music, and fostering an environment supportive of creative expression, were considerations of the instructor in supporting creativity and expression.

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