

Dance as Therapy: The Healing Power of Body/ Movement Memory in Dance-Based Narrative Therapy

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Under the postmodern perspective, as social constructionists, we recognize people are Relational Beings. We identify who we are through the influence of mainstream discourse. Our inner voice may be suppressed by the context of the social construct. Narrative Therapy (NT), based on this point of view, uses verbal dialogue to empower people to find multiple identities to reconstruct new identities and work through life's challenges. In Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT), the body remembers and expresses life experiences through its movements. This study explores the scaffolding of how "Dance-Based Narrative Therapy (DBNT)" integrates DMT and NT to find healing power.

Using Narrative Inquiry as the research methodology, the data includes DBNT session videos, session scripts, and researcher's reflection diaries. The videos show DBNT sessions with a middle-aged woman who was grieving over her late husband. Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) was used in the background of the DBNT sessions as a reference for mirroring or reading the body movements and transforming them into texts. Crystal Immersion/ Crystallization Analysis Style was used to examine the data collected from the LMA observations.

The study shows the model of DBNT: 1) "Qi-Cheng-Zhuan-Ho" was the scaffold. Qi: prelude-verbal to body language; Cheng: elucidation-bodily theme; Zhuan: transition-theme extension or variation; and Ho: summing up-convergence. The concept of Postmodern Social Constructionism of NT was used to develop four embodied-narrative dialogue methods: perception and involvement, externalization and deconstruction, enrichment and resonance, and lastly witness and transition. 2) LMA is the complete system for seeing and knowing body language. 3) DBNT as embodied-dialogue that initiates and activates body memories to help people find their strength through psychological turbulence.

Overall, DBNT provides a space where body memories are transformed into healing power. People can reframe their old experiences into an empowering story, and LMA can be a strong reference for body movement.

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