

## **Core Dance Dynamic X-Change**

Dynamic: energy or power in motion

X: the unknown factor in any equation

Change: to become different, to be transformed

Guided by a strong sense of public responsibility, Core Dance extends ourselves in the service of our communities. In keeping with our mission, Core Dance uses dance to illuminate, educate and question, revealing the wealth of information we carry in our bodies. The teaching artists of Core Dance use dance to teach, to question, to connect, to heal, and to inspire. Working in partnership with and in service of our communities, this connection of movement and energy cultivates the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical well-being of people of all ages.

Through Dynamic X-Change Healing Arts Program, Core Dance continues its pursuit to ignite the creative spirit and actively encourage participation and conversation by and with our community. Since 1993, the teaching artists of Core Dance have activated Dynamic X-Change in support of those living in challenging situations and oftentimes isolated because of their circumstances – dealing with abuse, homelessness, language barriers, refugee status, aging, AIDS. Careful attention to human needs, years of teaching experience, and a finely attuned sense of the stories our bodies have to tell informs and guides the process. What results for the participants is change in their lives that is grounded in their bodies and derived from creative expression through movement.

Working alongside and with the community, the teaching artists of Core Dance have developed innovative ways of encouraging self-expression and creative risk in a safe and welcoming environment. Focusing on self-expression and communication, as well as physical activity and fitness, participants discuss and interpret life and its array of experiences through movement.

Working sessions use movement to:

- Develop a healthy awareness of the body and its movement potential through gross and fine motor skills
- Make creative decisions in structuring body movements based on personal experiences, stories and memories
- Build self-esteem and confidence
- Discover how everyday life provides the raw material for artistic creations through dance and a kinesthetic and creative means of personal expression
- Experience the arts of visual and verbal storytelling
- Develop verbal and non-verbal forms of communication
- Link inquiries, innovation and creativity in support of problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities

Dynamic X-Change is our most effective long term effort to reach outliers in our community and it is constantly renewed by our partner organizations. Core Dance offers the Dynamic X-Change Healing Arts program free of charge to the participants and in a collaborative partnership with Houston and Atlanta nonprofit organizations with a strong commitment to addressing the needs of marginalized community members. In Houston, we currently have strong partnerships with the Battered Women's Shelter of the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC), ArtsReach and the Senior Program at Mamie George Community Center. These current partnerships expand upon work that we pioneered more than 25 year ago with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of greater Houston, Nehemiah Center, The River, Children's Assessment Center, St. John's Academy, MECA and Project Row Houses. In Atlanta, our current partnerships build promising futures for the children of Clarkston Community Center, East Atlanta Kids Club. These current partnerships expand upon our work with the Latin American Association, GOAL, EDIN, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta, Atlanta Union Mission, CHRIS Kids, Synchronicity Theatre's Playmaking for Girls Project and Cool Girls, Inc.

While most of the Dynamic X-Change projects currently underway are part of our Healing Arts Youth Initiative, Core Dance also works with adult clients with AIDS/HIV, refugee women and men, women inmates, senior citizens and breast cancer survivors. We remain committed to developing new partnerships to broaden the reach of Dynamic X-Change in our home cities, Houston and Atlanta.

Dynamic X-Change gives significant benefits to the artists of Core Dance, who often bring their experiences in this program to their work as dance artists with Core Performance Company. The substance and depth inherent in working with and alongside our community provide unfeigned inspiration and lead to art making that is increasingly authentic and relevant and thusly completes the X-Change.

## ***Dance for Health***

Dance interfaces with every aspect of health – physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual.

As a form of aerobic exercise, dance is beneficial for cardiovascular health and weight control. Yet it is also a practice in moving meditation, inducing a state of *flow* and connecting the world inside us to the wider world outside our skin. Contemporary dance has consciously incorporated mindfulness techniques, including breathing awareness, mental body scanning, and heightened proprioception. By simply entering a dance class you enter an agreement to be present and receptive, to pay attention to your body and the space around you.

Studies have found that dance is effective for increasing quality of life and decreasing symptoms such as depression and anxiety, as well as increasing subjective well-being, positive mood, affect, and body image.<sup>1</sup> Specific movement shapes and qualities have even been found to differentially influence affect, attitudes, and cognition. Indulgent movement can make you feel more relaxed and joyful, whereas “fighting,” aggressive movement can make you feel more aggressive and tense.<sup>2</sup> Scientists are confirming what anyone who has enjoyed a dance class intuitively knows – dance is good for mind, body, and spirit.

1. S. Koch, T. Kunz, S. Lykou, R. Cruz, Effects of dance movement therapy and dance on health-related psychological outcomes: A meta-analysis. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. 41, 46-64 (2014). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197455613001676>
2. S. Koch, Rhythm is it: effects of dynamic body feedback on affect and attitudes. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 5, 1-11 (2014). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4051267/>