

Dance/Movement Therapy with Veterans and Military Personnel

Veterans and military personnel face unique challenges in today's world. Many suffer from combat related disorders such as posttraumatic stress, depression, substance abuse, and traumatic brain injury. Coping with these stressors can sometimes seem insurmountable as evidenced by the rising rates of veteran homelessness and suicides. As the veteran population grows, medical facilities are struggling to meet the complicated needs of each and every veteran. As a result, many health care organizations have begun to reach beyond the biomedical model and have utilized complementary and integrative therapies, such as dance/movement therapy (DMT).



According to the Chronicle Guidance Publications Brief 386 (2006), "Dance/movement therapists use dance and movement to foster health, communication, and expression; promote the integration of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social functioning; enhance self-awareness; and facilitate change." Dance/movement therapists fall into the Federal Civil Service Classification of creative arts therapists, which includes art, dance, music, and psychodrama therapy professionals.

Veterans' hospitals and military medical centers across the country offer DMT for the treatment of conditions commonly experienced in the veteran community. Veteran testimonials have shown that dance/movement therapy has helped veterans to manage anxiety levels, regulate sleep, process emotional trauma, and increase concentration. Veterans who have experienced dance/movement therapy have also expressed feeling joy and increased social connections.

Dance/movement therapy is an effective holistic approach to health care that meets the complex needs of our nation's military—mind, body, and spirit.

"Dance/movement therapy can foster creative self-expression and provides safe and effective options for relating to others and coping with the environment."

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"Dance/movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration of the individual."

—American Dance Therapy Association

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