



DYNAMITE

A choreographed aerobic fitness program featuring movements inspired by Zumba and various styles of dance, which may be modified to meet each individual's needs.



Dance revitalizes the body. In following the leader through choreography, people move in ways they might never have considered on their own. And yet these challenges to the body aren't commands – it's the exuberant music and the energy of the group that urges the body to move. In fact, the name "Dynamite" itself reflects this joy and is a reference to a resident's favorite Taio Cruz song, one they couldn't hear and sit still. For dancers who may generally struggle with socializing, doing the same moves with the same people at the same time each week creates a sense of community. But doing the moves in unison isn't the only way to be part of the group – the person pacing at the back of the room might become the class cheerleader, serving an equally important role by keeping rhythm with his clapping. Dance is perhaps one of the purest forms of self-expression – allowing us to be unmistakably ourselves without forfeiting our place in something bigger.

TCFD OUTCOMES

This activity is aimed at helping individuals excel in the following categories:

- Energy Regulation
- Socialization
- Motor Skills
- Emotional Regulation

PLANNING A DYNAMITE CLASS

1 *Designing the Choreography: choosing songs, developing repetitive dance moves.*

2 *Plan a Dynamite session for a small or large group.*

3 *Dance, move, sing, have fun.*

SAFETY

- Ensure each individual is medically cleared for any exercise program before starting it
- When using equipment, collaborate with an individual's physical therapist or occupational therapist to guarantee proper positioning and secure safety supports in place.



Warm Up



Deep breathing, stretching, and gentle movements prepare dancers physically and emotionally for the upcoming program.



Active Dancing

At least three high-energy songs and choreographed dances consisting of upper and lower body movements depending on the person's skills and abilities. Upper body exercises may involve reaching out and in or up and down, punching up, and shake their arms. Lower body exercises may include marching, jumping, lateral movements, jogging in place or in a circle.



To challenge your dancers, try incorporating complex movements such as the "cross crawl": Reaching your left hand down while raising your right knee up and touching them together, then raising your left knee up while bringing your right hand down, then repeat



If a participant has limited physical endurance for exercising or limited attention to task, start with a shorter session with a warm up, 1-2 active songs, and a cool down.



Cool Down



Cooling down with a peaceful song paired with stretching, massage, and deep breathing promotes a sense of calm and well-being.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Hiring a Dance Educator or Dance Therapist

When developing a Dynamite program, it is important to recognize the benefits of finding an instructor who has formal training and/or education that qualifies them to teach the target population.

Dance Educators use their keen awareness of body alignment to continually correct the dancer's form. They protect the dancer from injury and improve strength and mobility by making sure movements emphasize the right muscles. While a Dance Educator pays attention to the integrity of the person's movements, the Dance Therapist is the one who coordinates those movements in the first place, developing choreography to help the dancer accomplish any emotional, social, cognitive, and physical goals. Since one of the aims of therapeutic dance is to help a person experience a sense of wholeness and integration, these goals can be the consensus of a team of people, ranging from Behavioral Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Teachers and their assistants.

Environment

- Dynamite is accessible. It can happen outdoors or indoors, in places as small as a living room or as large as a gymnasium.
- Dynamite sessions are engaging and valuable regardless of the size. Small groups of 1-6 people allow participants to focus on the instructor and learn each move. Larger groups of 6-25 participants make for a dance party.
- If support staff are assisting, switch partners throughout the class to promote socialization. Everyone in the room, including support staff, is encouraged to model the movements and dance along with the choreography to create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Music

- A full playlist could include a slow warm-up song, a cool down song, and three or more energizing songs in between. Choose popular and relatable music that encourages participants to sing and dance.
- Take care to select songs that foster a positive environment. If you're concerned about appropriate language, many songs have edited versions that can be found online or through KidzBop.
- Use a speaker loud enough to project throughout the whole room.

A Adaptations:

- The overarching goal of Dynamite is for the participant to "do what I do." Imitating choreography is an inadvertent way to practice life skills like following direction, staying with the group, and enhancing motor skills. However, it may take time for participants to feel confident in their environment and feel capable of following this expectation. For a beginner, the goal might be to engage with the dancing to the best of their ability. For participants who have limited attention spans or sensory processing sensitivity, this may include clapping, singing, or jumping to the beat.
- Support staff can help teach by providing verbal, gesture, and touch prompts. For example, if you want the participant to march in place, model marching, guide their arms in front of their bodies, and encourage them to bring their knees up to touch their hands.
- If a participant uses a wheelchair, they can do the dances while seated in a chair or while seated in positioning equipment. If a participant has limited use of their upper extremities, practicing gentle hand-over-hand assistance to help complete the movements. Props may be used to motivate participants. This can include using a bounce disk, octoband, or parachute during the session. This allows participants to engage differently in the movements but still fosters socialization in participating together.
- As group members become well-versed in the choreography, encourage them to co-teach their peers or even take over as the instructor! Group leaders can choose which combinations of songs to play and lead the group in the movements. This builds the self-efficacy and confidence to face any challenge.

