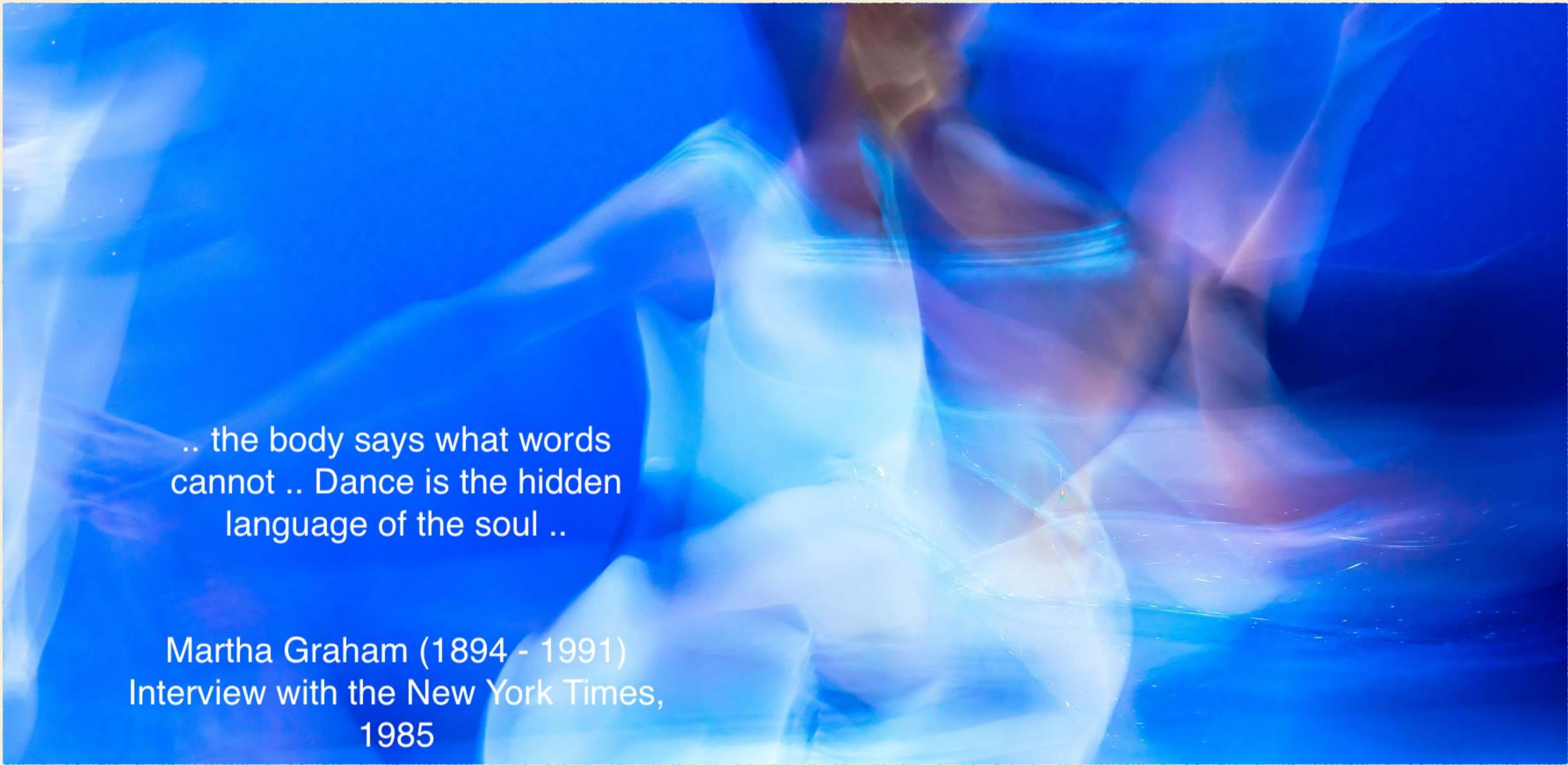




An Exploration of the Healing Art of Dance Movement Therapy incorporating the use of Touch in the recovery of Trauma Survivors

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.. the body says what words
cannot .. Dance is the hidden
language of the soul ..

Martha Graham (1894 - 1991)
Interview with the New York Times,
1985

Introduction

- Rationale: Why is this research significant and important?
- Historical, cultural and social context Dance Movement Therapy (DMT)
- The purpose of Dance Movement Therapy
- Touch as a healing component of Dance Movement Therapy for trauma survivors
- Ethics of touch within psychotherapy
- Current research

Rationale: Why is this research significant and important?

- Traumatic experiences often lead to a disorganised and fragmented narrative of the self. *Federman et al, 2019*
- Dissociation between mind and body is a key aspect of the trauma that survivors experience and is a coping mechanism to deal with the trauma.
- The body is the place in which survivors store their trauma and it is through the body that they can make sense of their bodily experiences. *Cristobal, 2018*

Historical Context

USA

- Dance Movement Therapy was developed as a specific form of psychotherapy in the America in the 1940s to treat World War Two veterans suffering trauma.

- Dance Movement Therapy today is influenced by psychodynamic, Gestalt and humanistic theories.

American Dance Therapy Association, 2020

UK

- In the UK in the 1960s and 1970s pioneers of DMT came from dance, education and health backgrounds.
- DMT has expanded its evidence base due to pioneers in practice-based research such as Professor Helen Payne in the 1980s and 1990s who worked in special schools and hospitals.

Association of Dance Movement Psychotherapy UK, 2013



Where do Dance Movement Therapists work?

Dance movement therapists can work in private practice, health, education and social care settings, working one-to-one or in groups, and Dance Movement Therapy is included in the NHS range of treatment options.

[nice.org.uk](https://www.nice.org.uk), 2016

The government's National Careers Service defines the role of DM therapist as helping patients deal with psychological, emotional and physical issues.

[nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk), 2021



What is the key difference between Dance Movement Therapy and dance teaching?

- * The presence of the therapeutic relationship within Dance Movement Therapy.
- * Dance Movement Therapy is a creative, somatic form of psychotherapy for expressing thoughts and feelings. *Payne, 2006*



What is the purpose of Dance Movement Therapy?

- * The purpose of DMT that includes the use of touch for trauma survivors, is to help re-integrate healing touch into the lives of survivors, helping them to understand their own bodies in relation to touch.
- * DMT does not have to rely on the client's linguistic and cognitive skills, so it can, potentially, eliminate social and some cultural barriers. *Karkou et al, 2019*



Why is Dance Movement Therapy useful as a treatment modality for trauma survivors?

- * Building a healthy relationship with the body is significant for trauma survivors as trauma is often stored in the body. *Ogden, Minton & Pain, 2006*
- * Embodiment is important for clients, for example, who have experienced sexual abuse as cognitive understanding alone may not be sufficient to lead to understanding.
- * Working at a bodily level provides direct access to unconscious emotions, the body is the place where trauma is stored and it is through the body that clients can make sense of their somatic experiences. *Ho, 2015, Cristobal, 2018*

Kolkata Sanved Dance Therapy Group



Movement helps emotional energy that is 'stuck' to flow easier, promoting integration and wellbeing

Movement can reveal feelings, sensations, emotions and images that have long been buried in our bodies.

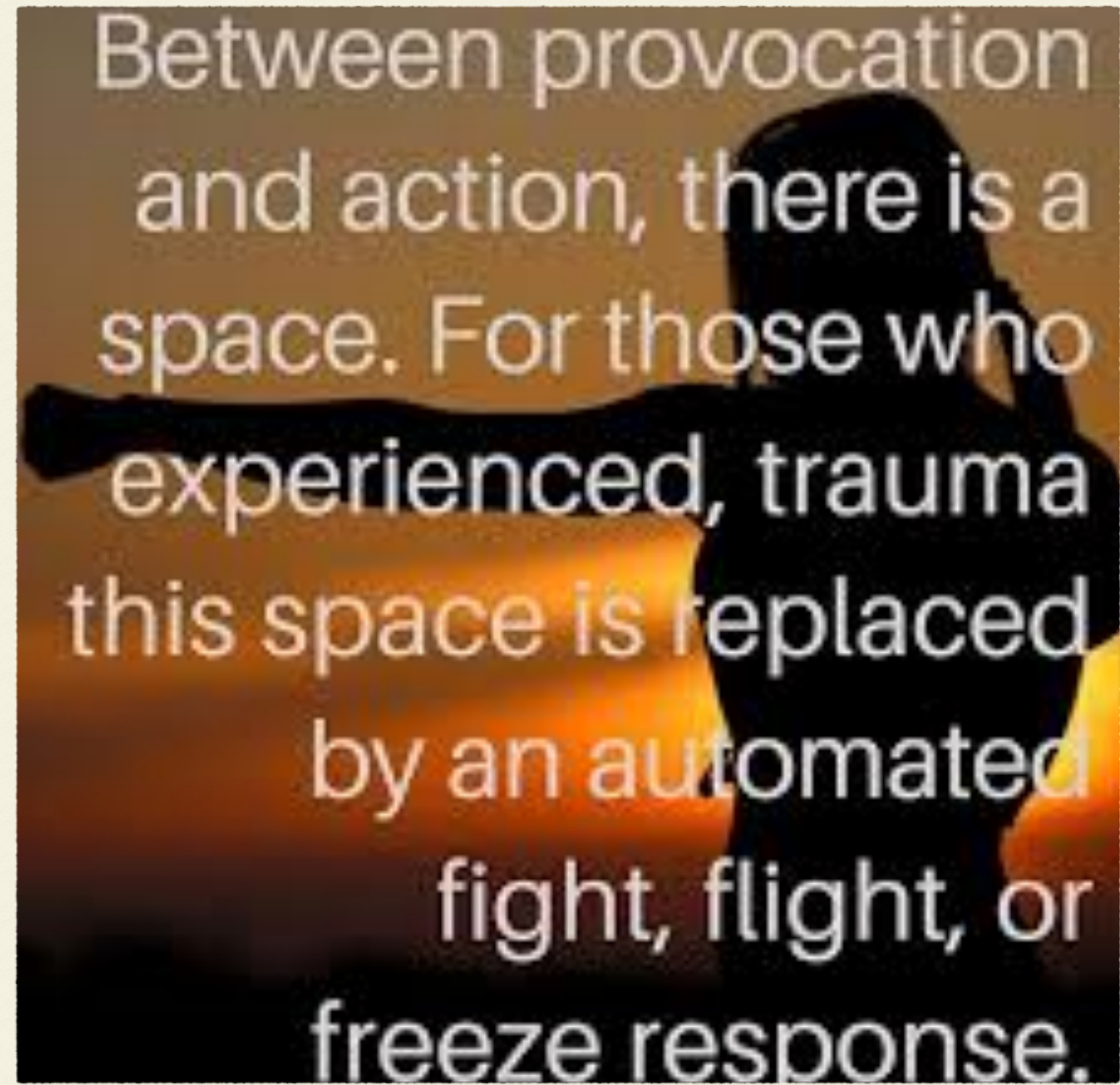
Dance Movement Therapy cannot erase life experiences, but reframes their emotional impact through a shift in energy and perspective. *Halprin, 2000, Bernstein, 2019*



What happens when trauma occurs from a neuroscientific perspective?

When trauma clients are triggered they can enter a fight/flight/freeze state.

Their ability to regulate emotions and process somatic changes is compromised.

A quote about trauma response overlaid on a silhouette of a person. The background is a dark, warm-toned image of a person's silhouette, possibly in a state of distress or contemplation, with a bright orange and yellow light source behind them, creating a dramatic, high-contrast effect. The text is white and centered over the image.

Between provocation
and action, there is a
space. For those who
experienced, trauma
this space is replaced
by an automated
fight, flight, or
freeze response.

*Dance Movement Therapy adopts a
'bottom-up' (somatic)
as opposed to a
'top-down' (cognitive) approach*

Within psychotherapy information can be processed using a 'top-down' approach, ie, relatively more **cognitively**

Or it can be processed in a 'bottom-up' way, ie, using a more **sensorimotor** and **emotional** approach

These three different levels of processing should be balanced and integrated in psychotherapy.

Ogden, Minton & Pain 2006



Ethical therapeutic
interventions and
techniques in
Dance Movement
Therapy
*INCORPORATING THE USE
OF TOUCH*

- * ***THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE***
- * ***TRAUMA AND TOUCH HISTORY***
- * ***FEELING OF SAFETY AND EMPOWERMENT***
- * ***INFORMED CONSENT***
- * ***INTENT OF ANY USE OF TOUCH***

Federman et al, 2019, Matherly, 2013

Ethical therapeutic
interventions and
techniques in
Dance Movement
Therapy
*INCORPORATING THE USE
OF TOUCH
contd.*

- * Awareness of transference and counter-transference issues.
- * Kinaesthetic empathy, attunement, maintaining moment-by-moment awareness.
- * Mirroring to illustrate empathy and validation of the client's experience.
- * Use of symbolism, metaphors and imagery to tap into the unconscious or hard to reach feelings and thoughts.

Halprin 2000, Levine and Land, 2016, Bernstein 2019

What are some of the therapeutic goals in Dance Movement Therapy?

- *To support change in the client's understanding of their psychological state by first promoting safety, stability and boundaries in the body.
- * To promote an increase in sensation and feeling.
- * To build somatic self awareness, and help build healthy relationship with the self and with others by integrating body, thoughts and feelings.

Popa and Best, 2010, Levine and Land, 2016



Why is touch so important?

Touch is fundamental to our learning, our relationship with ourselves and with others.

Touch is the first sense to develop in the embryo in the womb, and it is often the last of our senses to survive at the end of our lives. *Montagu, 1971*

Touch is hugely important for human development, bonding and attachment. *Bowlby 1969, Ainsworth and Wittig, 1969*



What significance does touch have for trauma survivors?

Trauma often leaves a person 'speechless' as the trauma is hard to put into words.

Brooke, 2007

Touch provides a means of non-verbal communication and this is why touch within Dance Movement Therapy can be so empowering for trauma survivors as they can relearn and reclaim their relationship to their bodies.

Westland, 2011, Matherly, 2013

Ethical guidelines for the use of touch in psychotherapy

**The Association of Dance
Movement Psychotherapy,
UK 2013**

**Some of the ADMP UK's
code of ethics and
standards:**

- Under no circumstances do psychotherapists engage in sexual or abusive physical contact with clients.
- The client's permission to engage in physical contact during the therapeutic relationship is paramount and must be an issue of ongoing consensual decision making between client/s and psychotherapist. admp.org.uk

Ethical guidelines for the use of touch in psychotherapy, *contd.*

American Dance Therapy Association, 2020

- Dance movement therapists understand touch as fundamentally supportive to human growth and development ... In the context of therapy, touch may provide safety; support the client's grounding, organisation and regulation; establish body boundaries; facilitate self-awareness, human connection and group cohesion; comfort and ease pain.
- Dance movement therapists employ touch only as they can reasonably expect it will provide therapeutic benefit to the client. *adta.org*

Types of touch within Dance Movement Therapy

PHYSICAL TOUCH

TOUCH BY PROXY

SELF TOUCH

NURTURING TOUCH

Cristobal, 2018, Matherly, 2013

Literature and research on the use of touch within DMT for a trauma population is limited.

- Need for greater research and understanding of the use of touch in Dance Movement Therapy.
- Need for the codes of ethics in various organisations to state explicitly the importance of issues such as power and status, gender and culture in relation to the use of touch.

Westland, 2011, Popa and Best, 2010, Matherly, 2013



Why Dance Movement Therapy that incorporates touch is significant as a therapeutic modality for trauma survivors



The potential of the body for becoming an instrument of change and healing is unlimited.
Bernstein, 2019

The creative potential of trauma survivors to learn to view their bodies not as a source of danger, but as an ally for recovery.
Bernstein, 2019, Cristobal, 2018

What are the future implications for interpersonal touch and DMT in a global pandemic?

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