
Dance and Psychological Well-being

Lecture: Review of Articles

Writing a literature review

Coping with Performance Related Anxiety

Self Sabotage

Articles - Review

Presentations

- **Dancers' perceptions of psychological skills training:** Stephanie J. Hanrahan
- **Stressors, Recovery Processes, and Manifestations of Training Distress in Dance:** J. Robert Grove, Ph.D., Luana C. Main, Ph.D., and Lucinda Sharp, M.Psych.
- **Stress, Emotions, and Motivational States Among Traditional Dancers in New Zealand and Japan:** Y. Kuroda, G. Geisler, P. C. H. Morel, J. Hapeta

Literature reviews

A literature review is a search and evaluation of the available literature in your given subject or chosen topic area.

It documents the state of the art with respect to the subject or topic you are writing about.

A literature review has four main objectives:

- It **surveys** the literature in your chosen area of study
- It **synthesises** the information in that literature into a summary
- It **critically analyses** the information gathered by identifying gaps in current knowledge; by showing limitations of theories and points of view; and by formulating areas for further research and reviewing areas of controversy
- It **presents** the literature in an organised way

When will you need to write a literature review?

A literature review shows your readers that you have an in-depth grasp of your subject; and that you understand where your own research fits into and adds to an existing body of agreed knowledge.

Here's another way of describing those four main tasks.

A literature review:

- demonstrates a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establishes the credibility of your work;
- summarises prior research and says how your project is linked to it;
- integrates and summarises what is known about a subject;
- demonstrates that you have learnt from others and that your research is a starting point for new ideas.

Why write a literature review?

- The first step of any research project is to review the field. So let's think about surveying, synthesising, critically analysing and presenting in more detail. A literature review does the following.
- Identifies gaps in current knowledge.
- Avoids reinventing the wheel – i.e. it saves you wasting time researching something that's already been done.
- Allows you to show that you are building on a foundation of existing knowledge and ideas – i.e. carrying on from where others have already reached.
- Identifies other people working in the same field. Knowing who's already working in your area and getting in touch with them can be an invaluable source of knowledge and support.
- Demonstrates the depth of your knowledge about your research.
- Identifies the important works in your area and shows that you've read them.
- Provides an intellectual context for your own work, and enables you to position your project in relation to others in the field.
- Identifies opposing views.
- Puts your own work in perspective – are you doing something completely new, revisiting an old controversy in the light of new evidence, etc?
- Demonstrates your research skills – i.e. you not only know about work in your area, you also know how to access it.
- Identifies information and ideas that may be relevant to your project.
- Identifies methods that may be relevant to your project.

Key points to remember

Here are some things to bear in mind when researching and writing your literature review.

- It is not a descriptive list.
- It is not a book by book and article by article summary.
- It is not a survey of every single thing that's ever been written about your topic.
- It must be defined by a guiding concept i.e. essay question, research project or objective.
- It must tell the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established and agreed in your area and outline their strengths and weaknesses.

The structure of a literature review

A literature review should be structured like any other essay: it should have an introduction, a middle or main body, and a conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction should:

- define your topic and provide an appropriate context for reviewing the literature;
- establish your reasons – i.e. point of view – for reviewing the literature;
- explain the organisation – i.e. sequence – of the review;
- state the scope of the review – i.e. what is included and what isn't included. For example, if you were reviewing the literature on obesity in children you might say something like: There are a large number of studies of obesity trends in the general population. However, since the focus of this research is on obesity in children, these will not be reviewed in detail and will only be referred to as appropriate.

Main body

The middle or main body should:

- organise the literature according to common themes;
- provide insight into the relation between your chosen topic and the wider subject area e.g. between obesity in children and obesity in general;
- move from a general, wider view of the literature being reviewed to the specific focus of your research.

Conclusion

The conclusion should:

- summarise the important aspects of the existing body of literature;
- evaluate the current state of the literature reviewed;
- identify significant flaws or gaps in existing knowledge;
- outline areas for future study;
- link your research to existing knowledge.

How to do a literature search

Before you can write your literature review, you need to find out what's out there. To do this you need to do a literature search.

- *Define your terms.* The first thing to do is to define your topic or research project; or, if you have been given a set question, make sure you understand it. Ask yourself what the key concepts are. Compile a list of keywords – and synonyms for them – and this will help you to develop a research strategy.
- *Search creatively.* When you've done this, you need to identify all the relevant information sources. This may include: libraries, indexes and electronic databases, and the Internet.
- *Use the library.* Do you know what's in the library that's relevant to your topic? Make sure you do – it's an obvious place to start so don't forget it! Remember that every book and journal published in the UK is held at the British Library and you can do inter-library loans. Ask your library staff for assistance.
- *Journals.* Remember that journals are the best place to find the most recently published research. And don't forget that many journals are now online only publications.
- *Don't limit yourself to obvious sources.* For example, libraries contain books and journals but they also contain unpublished MA and PhD theses that may contain research relevant to your topic. Similarly, make sure you do speculative searches i.e. try typing in 'The Journal of Dance and Psychology' – you may be surprised what comes up.
- *Conference papers.* These are collections of papers presented at conferences and, like journals, often contain 'cutting edge' research. These collections are published on the Internet, in special editions of relevant journals and in one-off books.

BREAK

Performance Related Anxiety

Feelings associated with positive and negative performance – rather than mental health related

To increase awareness of arousal states:

Think back to your performance

Visualise the actual performance, as clearly as possible

Focus on what you felt and thought

Take 5 minutes to relive it

Complete the questionnaire

Do the same for your worst performance

Checklist for Performance States

Performed Extremely	1	2	3	4	5	6	Well Performed Extremely Poorly
Felt Extremely Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt Extremely Anxious
Felt Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt Unconfident
Felt in Complete Control	1	2	3	4	5	6	Had no control at all
Muscles were relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Muscles were tense
Felt energetic	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt fatigued
Self-talk was positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	Self talk was Negative
Felt Focused	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt unfocused
Felt effortless	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt great effort
Had high energy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Had low energy

Checklist for Performance States

Compare your responses

How are your thoughts and feelings between the two.

This is the beginning of awareness training for performance.

The task could be used to better understand your performance states across a longer period of time.

Complete after each performance and compare, monitor variables.

You could use it for classes and rehearsals too.

Arousal outcomes might be facilitative or debilitating – arousal isn't always bad.

When you are aware you can understand them and then help to interpret them in a positive manner.

Dancers who see their anxiety as facilitative are more likely to use both problem-solving focused and emotion focused coping. They perform and cope better when aroused and stressed.

Those that see them as debilitating are limited in their coping strategies. These dancers might need additional support.

Using Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Anxiety produces unnecessary muscle tension

The harder you try – doesn't always mean the better it is

Rest your dominate forearm on the table, palm down.

Tense all of your muscles in your hand and wrist, Try and tap your index and middle fingers back and forth. Do so for 30 seconds.

Relax your arm and repeat.

Three time periods to consider for performance

Critical to interpretation of anxiety

- After performance
- 1 or 2 days before
- Day of performance

Research has shown that athletes are noted to prefer physical (e.g. muscle relaxation) rather than mental relaxation techniques before competition, where as they prefer mental relaxation techniques (e.g. imagery) to cope with everyday anxieties

Be mindful of what works for you.

Somatic Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Progressive Relaxation – Edmund Jobson (1938)

Tensing and relaxing specific muscles

1. Learn the difference between relaxed and tensed
2. Tension and relaxation are mutually exclusive – can be both at the same time
3. Decreased physical tension leads to decreased mental tension
4. Widely used and varied over the years

Consider why and how this might be useful and in what situations.

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Progressive Relaxation – Ost (1988)

Varied the technique for dancer to relax in 20-30 seconds

Phase 1. 15 mins progressive relaxation – twice a day

Phase 2. Release only phase. 5 to 7 mins

Phase 3. 2 to 3 mins – using self instructional “relax”

Phase 4. A few seconds

Somatic Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Breath control

Now...

Physical orientated relaxation technique

Take a deep breath, completely

Easy way to control muscle and mental tension

Imagine lungs divided into three

1. lower level of lungs, push diaphragm down and force abdomen out

2. Middle – expand chest, raise ribs,

3. Upper chest and shoulders raised slightly

Dancers are trained to coordinate breath with movement, what can we learn from our own practice

Hold for several seconds

Holding breath in increases muscle tension

Slowly release the breath, pull abdomen in and release the shoulders and chest

Deep, slow, complete breath usually triggers a relaxation response

Increased sense of stability, centeredness, relaxation, maintains composure and control

Cognitive Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Relaxation response (Herbert Benson - Benson, 2000; Benson & Proctor, 1984)

Basic meditation but no spirituality or religious significance

Mediation has limited controlled studies to prove its effectiveness

Supports keen awareness, effortlessness, relaxation and focused performance.

Requires four elements:

1. A quiet place, limit distractions and external stimulation
2. Comfortable position, sit not lie down
3. Focus on a single thought or word and repeat over. Word should be relax, calm or ease. Every exhale say word.
4. Passive attitude. Challenging to achieve. Need to learn to let it happen, allowing other thoughts and images move through as they will, without attempting to attend to them.
5. If something comes to mind let it go, refocus on your word.

Don't worry about how many times your mind wanders: continue to refocus each time you notice.

20 mins a day. When might it not be useful.

Cognitive Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Further Reading

Pages 281 to 284 of Foundation for Sport and Exercise Psychology

BREAK

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Objective

Empowering students and dancers with well-being tools and exercises that will enable them to practice self-care and maintain good mental health and avoid the psychological pitfalls that come with dance training.

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Core Areas

- Mindfulness – To build resilience and control over negative thinking
- Affirmations – To build self-belief and self-compassion
- Gratitude Practice – To build appreciation, awareness and connection
- Goals & Intentions – To build a strong 'why' and strengthen the rewards they are working toward.

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Mindfulness

Any activity that helps them arrive into the present moment and switch off the monkey mind that swings into the past and leaps into the future.

- Over playing something that has happened and wishing it could have been better.
- Worrying about something in the future and coming up with lots of scenarios of what might happen.
- The only reality we have is now. The past is done and cannot be changed, and the future is unknown and cannot be fully controlled. When we invest time into the present moment, we strengthen our connection to reality which builds self-esteem, peace of mind and a trust that all is well.
- Some techniques – Meditation / Mindfulness / Mindfulness Walking / Reading / Running / Hobbies that relax you and allow you to switch off and get immersed in / Yoga / Tai Chi
- A good practice for dancers is coming into the present moment by coming into the body (embodiment) The body and breath is always in the present moment.

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Affirmations

'A belief is just a thought you keep on thinking' - Abraham Hicks

- Many beliefs we hold about ourselves are developed in childhood or influenced by society and the media and many are outdated or no longer serve us. At any point we have the ability to create new beliefs about ourselves and affirmations can help with this.
- What limiting beliefs do they have about themselves?
- EG. I'm not good enough, I'm not tall enough, slim enough, I can't keep up, I don't get it, I'm lazy etc etc
- These statements are unhelpful and, in most cases, grossly over exaggerated so bringing them into the light and challenging them helps to make them smaller and gradually phase them out of our belief system.
- They need to be replaced with statements such as:
- I am trying my best, I am enough, I respect myself and my body, I am not afraid to get help, I am learning every day
- They don't need to be over the top. In the first instance they just need to help them take the focus away from the negative and turn to the positive.

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Gratitude Practice

Simple act of writing 10 things everyday (as a starting ground) that they are grateful for. Writing 10 things forces us to think about the smaller things.

We might start with:

- I'm grateful for my health, my parents, being a dancer, my friends, money etc but then we have to move onto things we notice in each day.
- Someone smiled at me, the beauty of nature that surrounds me, the help I received today in class, that song I heard on the radio, that first cup of coffee this morning, a text I received etc etc

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude is immense and life changing.

Could there be a shared gratitude board somewhere on campus that everyone can contribute to? Seeing what others put up might help them to open up to the abundance of good things around them.

Maybe you do this weekly and they can add to it over a week then you clean it off on a Monday and start again?

Self Care for Dancers and for life

Goals and Intentions

- People are more likely to move away from the things they DONT want than they are to move towards the things they DO want.
- Many people keep the status quo for fear of change, failure or even a fear of success.
- Setting goals and intentions really helps to understand why we are doing what we are doing and what the benefits are. It also helps us to connect with the feelings we are striving to feel.
- Ultimately everything we are doing is to obtain a feeling. For example, many people want success to get financial reward. What does financial reward give us? Holidays, nice clothes, cars, trips out, house etc etc.... why do we want all these things? To FEEL good. To feel adventure, to feel attractive, happy, joyful, excited etc etc. It ALL comes down to feelings.
- The thing is you can feel all of that without money, but society has conditioned us to believe we need to first get the money or the success before we can get the feeling. Actively trying to connect with good feelings through simple acts turns you into a magnet for more.
- Setting goals and making them visible is good for students because it helps to keep them on track.
- What do they want to achieve? When do they want to achieve it by? How will they know they've achieved it and how will they feel when they have achieved it?
- When we ramp up the benefits, we ramp up the motivation and the reward is so much bigger.

We will be looking at goal setting in much more detail next week, but this is something to start to think about.

Self Sabotage

Self-sabotage is the fine art of taking action against yourself, convincing yourself you don't want the things you actually do and driving away opportunity.

So what are the tell-tale signs of self-saboteurs?

- **1. Self-saboteurs focus on the negative and ignore the positive**, which can not only lead to chronic feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment, but also can cause others to want to avoid being around them. You often see this kind of negative focus in high-achievers when they make a minor misstep in an otherwise stellar performance, and are unable or unwilling to celebrate all the things that they did great because they're consumed by the one thing that wasn't as great.
- **2. Self-saboteurs allow fear to guide their thoughts, plans, and actions.** Self-saboteurs are so worried and afraid of what "might" happen ("I'll fail," "I'll look stupid") that they become frozen by their fears. As writer and blogger Olusegun Jegeda writes, "Fear is like a virus that wrecks havoc in our lives. It develops into mistrust, anxiety, worry, hopelessness, and other negative emotions. It paralyzes us and hinders our progress in life. When fear grips you, you become powerless. It's the greatest obstacle to personal success."

Self Sabotage...

- **3. Self-saboteurs focus on the past**, which can lead to missed opportunities in the present. There are two ways this happens. Some self-saboteurs live in their past glory; others can't let go of past failures. Either way, being stuck in the past makes it difficult to move forward. Examples of these kinds of self-destructive behaviours include wallowing in pity, getting caught up in "would've, could've, and should'ves," or using alcohol, drugs, or food to ease the "pain."
- **4. Self-saboteurs feel that deep down inside they don't measure up.** "I'm not as smart." "I'm not as attractive." "I'm not as skilled." "I'm not as fit." "I'm not as wealthy." Maybe these things are true, or maybe they're not. But regardless, the problem with making these kinds of comparisons is that there will always be someone, somewhere who is something or has something more. Therefore, making these kinds of comparisons only serves to make the "comparer" feel as if she or he is never "good enough."
- **5. Self-saboteurs settle.** Rather than pushing for what they want, self-saboteurs settle for less because they don't see themselves as worthy or deserving of anything more.
- **6. Self-saboteurs drive people away.** Often rooted in underlying feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure, self-saboteurs push others away. Most often, they do this by being overly critical and negative of those around them.
- **7. Self-saboteurs are masters at procrastination.** They put off major projects and responsibilities until the last minute, and then have to rush to get them done in what usually ends up being a mediocre performance.

7 Ways to stop self-sabotaging behaviour

Here are some ways to start breaking the pattern of self-sabotage

1. Invest heavily in getting to know an all-important person.

The person we are talking about is *you*. Self-sabotaging behaviour thrives on inner confusion and lack of identity. If you aren't clear on who you actually are, it's easy to convince yourself that you want something you don't.

Get to know yourself so well that there is no longer any room to trick yourself into doing what you don't want.

2. Write your way out of the habit.

To recognise who you really are it is necessary to learn to listen to your own thoughts and feelings. Journaling is a proven tool to help on this front. When we put pen to paper often enough, our truth can spill out.

Tried journaling before and it didn't work for you? It might be that childhood fear of 'being found out' means you are always writing as if someone is watching and judging. A technique to counter this is to agree with yourself to rip up or burn everything you write. It frees the unconscious to let go.

3. Value your values.

Personal values, our beliefs about what is important in life, are strong markers about what we truly want from life.

Too often we confuse our own personal values with those of our parents, peers, or even society, and it's a very quick route to sabotaging our own happiness.

Do you really value wealth, or deep down would you rather live a simple life if your parents didn't disapprove? Is your value "fun", because your social group demands it, or do you secretly prefer to spend your free time studying and honouring your value of wisdom?

4. Learn about core beliefs and go digging for yours.

Core beliefs are the ways of seeing the world we learn as children and assume are 'facts' – when very often they are anything but. And they can be so hidden in our unconscious we don't even realise what they are, or how much they are informing our decisions.

Negative core beliefs are also the main driver behind self-sabotaging behaviour. For example, if you think "I am not worthy of love", even if you deeply long to be loved, you will sabotage any attempt.

Taking the time to identify your core beliefs empowers you to then choose new beliefs that lead towards, instead of away from, the things that you truly want.

5. Develop self-compassion.

Negative core beliefs such as “I’m not worthy” or “bad things always happen to me” are fed by low self-esteem, another major component of a self-sabotage habit.

Just ‘deciding’ to suddenly have good esteem, though, rarely works. Feeling good about ourselves is a long process that requires commitment.

But if there was a shortcut to self-esteem, it might be the art of self-compassion. It suggests that instead of trying to reach the almost impossible goal of always liking yourself, try to simply have empathy and understanding for yourself instead.

6. Make it mindful.

Most self-sabotaging behaviour is driven by negative thinking patterns we don’t even know we are having.

The technique of mindfulness brings your attention into the present moment, so you can actually hear such thoughts and train yourself to not take action on them.

Mindfulness also helps you be present to your feelings, which you can use as a navigation tool to help you determine what feels like sabotage and what feels like something you actually want.

7. Keep it simple.

The more complicated we can convince ourselves things are, the more we can throw our hands up in the air and refuse to go forward, i.e., sabotage our progress.

Simplicity can come from taking out the drama. This means recognising any pattern of black and white thinking that is causing you to make things bigger than they are (and maybe learning about the other forms of cognitive distortions, too).

Then simplify your goals and make them fool-proof by following tried and tested goal setting techniques like SMART.

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Article Reading and Literature Review

Next week

Article reviews

Goal Setting
Concentration
Imagery

Mental skills training and plan development