

# Puttin' on the Dance 3!

Dancing Forward Together - 2025 - Belfast, Maine

## Keeping the Flow- Handling Disruptive Behaviour

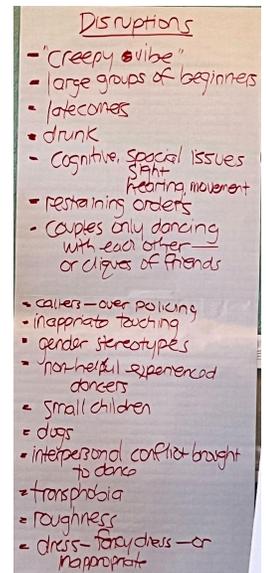
Facilitator: Michael Wright

At dances, we celebrate a culture of respect, safety, inclusion, and kindness. Many groups have written community care policies and procedures to promote and protect these values. But what do we do when a dancer behaves otherwise? In this workshop, we will share our experiences of disruptive behavior and how best to address it, including role-playing realistic scenarios.



### 1: What types of disruptive behavior have been a challenge for you?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Creepy vibe”</li> <li>Large groups of beginners</li> <li>Latecomers</li> <li>Drunk/high</li> <li>cognitive/spatial issues (sign, hearing, movement)</li> <li>Restraining orders</li> <li>Couples only dancing with each other or cliques of friends</li> <li>Over policing of others</li> <li>Harassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inappropriate touching</li> <li>Enforcement of gender stereotypes</li> <li>Non-helpful experienced dancers</li> <li>Small children</li> <li>Dogs</li> <li>Interpersonal conflict brought to dance</li> <li>Transphobia</li> <li>Rough dancing</li> <li>Dress - fancy or inappropriate (e.g., shirt off)</li> </ul>
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Not all disruptions are “bad”.

### 2: What approaches have you used to manage disruptive behavior?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't assume you'll get the best outcome - plan for the worst</li> <li>Truly listen to both sides</li> <li>Empower people to make decisions with positive outcomes</li> <li>Alert callers, dance managers and/or safety reps</li> <li>Address the problem - don't ignore it or assume best outcome</li> <li>Retain humanity when addressing the problem</li> <li>Listen carefully to all sides even if you know a person involved</li> <li>Callers watch (e.g., late beginners? Reteach a few things; encourage hands up on shoulder blades in safe space)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get the right people involved - someone who is not a friend; different perspectives</li> <li>Be aware of your own bias</li> <li>Make people aware of how the dance space is different than “normal” life</li> <li>Have a 1:1 convo, but in a public space, not in a side room</li> <li>Not 1:1 convos -at least two dance reps in the convo, so one person can listen.</li> <li>Follow up with person who made the complaint</li> <li>Talk about the culture of this space as different than others</li> </ul>
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### **3: Takeaways and useful statements from Forum Theatre role-play**

- “Your comfort can’t jeopardize someone else’s safety”
- Bring in statements that both parties can agree on (e.g. “I know we all want to be able to have fun enjoying the dance” “I think we want everyone to feel safe” - how can we meet both needs?)
- Speak in a loud and clear voice
- Talk about impact to whole community; we all want to have a good time
- Check in after you’ve made a request to confirm that the other person heard you. Get them to confirm
- Have a specific ask
- Don’t crowd the person you’re talking to and don’t touch them unless there’s a reason to do so.
- Tie your conversation into your Code of Conduct/Community Care Policy and that this is developed by the community. These are our values so if not... maybe not the space for you.
- People may be unaware that their behavior is “creepy” and may be grateful for kind feedback.
- Take time to gather your thoughts so that you can be calm and specific. Huddle with other leaders.
- Make sure you have a way to track incidents.
- Talk more slowly
- Have a strong presence
- Problem: experienced dancers may know to avoid the weirder but harmless people, but new dancers don’t know that! Solution idea: At the beginning, instead of organizers or “dance ambassadors/doulas” dancing with new people, they could dance with the slightly weirder but harmless people to keep them from asking new folks.
- Make sure to use “I” and “we” statements, not “you” statements.
- Offer to physically show them
- Have a system planned out on how to deal with these situations ahead of time.
- Practice role playing the conversation before it happens - nice to practice in low-pressure situation.
- Behavior with friends can be different than with others if have consent
- Focus on shoulders up
- The responsibility of the dancer to make their partners/neighbours feel as comfortable and safe as possible
- Idea of expected behaviours
- “I appreciate”
- Talk and model to all dancers about this — so more can feel empowered to change a situation (e.g., here’s language to use; here’s a non-verbal way)
- Talk about how we were all beginners at some point.
- Separation of safety and inclusion - where’s the line?