

Dance Movement Psychotherapy

This information leaflet is intended to enable you to make an informed decision about Dance Movement Psychotherapy

What is Dance Movement Psychotherapy?

Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMP) is a form of psychotherapy that uses dance, movement and body responses to understand lived experiences and express/communicate thoughts, feelings and emotions. This is particularly useful when working with children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN) as they can express themselves creatively and playfully, without relying on verbal communication. Specifically, DMP is based on the theory that our movement enables expression of a less conscious process and that the body and mind are inseparable. During DMP, our bodies are the primary vehicle for communication, meaning emphasis is placed on making connections between somatic responses to how we feel emotionally.



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Key concepts in DMP

1.

Body and mind integration

DMP is based on the foundation of a body-mind connection which cannot be separated. How we feel is inevitably experienced in our bodies. Interventions in DMP help build the bridge between our physical and emotional selves.

2.

Heightened self-awareness

In the beginning of all DMP sessions, there is an aim to activate the sensory system through physical interventions (movement, music, props and visual aids). This helps individuals to feel connected with their body and how it is responding to what is happening around them.

3.

Non-verbal process

In DMP, the therapeutic process does not rely on the need for verbal expression - it is there to support the movement/physical process. There is no pressure to articulate feelings as we aim to understand what our body is telling us.

4.

Improvisational movement

Improvised movement provides an opportunity for individuals to freely move and explore feelings playfully and creatively. It also sometimes allows suppressed feelings to surface and offers a chance to be curious and make sense of them.

5.

Physical/movement skills

Working with the body in movement improves our physical skills related to spatial awareness, kinesphere (personal space), balance, coordination, flexibility, motor skills, energy, stamina, and overall awareness of our physicality and internal systems.

6.

Creative interventions

In DMP, the therapeutic process is supported by the use of props in order to encourage imagination and to create metaphors for thoughts and feelings. Particularly in group work, props are passed between members to strengthen social interaction and encourage more divergent and creative thinking.



What happens in a DMP session?

DMP is client-led, meaning that the client is in control of what is expressed during therapy. Sessions are usually one hour long (including being picked up and dropped back to lesson), and will run at the same time and in the same place every week, giving a sense of consistency and containment. After the referral is accepted and consent is received, there will be an assessment period (usually 3-5 sessions depending on specific needs) and then, if after the assessment DMP is deemed appropriate, an agreed length of therapy will be arranged.

The assessment period is in place to establish what the client already knows about the therapy, and to give a more detailed introduction on what it is/what a session may look like. The therapist will also try to identify any goals the client wishes to achieve, and co-create ground rules for both therapist and client to follow for each session. Typically, there will be a review after six sessions (not including the assessment period) to determine whether the therapy continues.

The sessions offer a safe space for the therapeutic work to unfold, with importance placed on the potential of building a containing therapeutic relationship. DMP sessions also provide an opportunity for participants to experience themselves differently and improve ways of relating with others.



What Dance Movement Psychotherapy is not...

DMP is not a recreational activity or a dance/fitness lesson. People who attend DMP sessions do not need to have any previous dance background or ability. The focus is on using the body in movement (and the process), to express feelings - rather than creating a performative piece, learn choreography or improve technique.

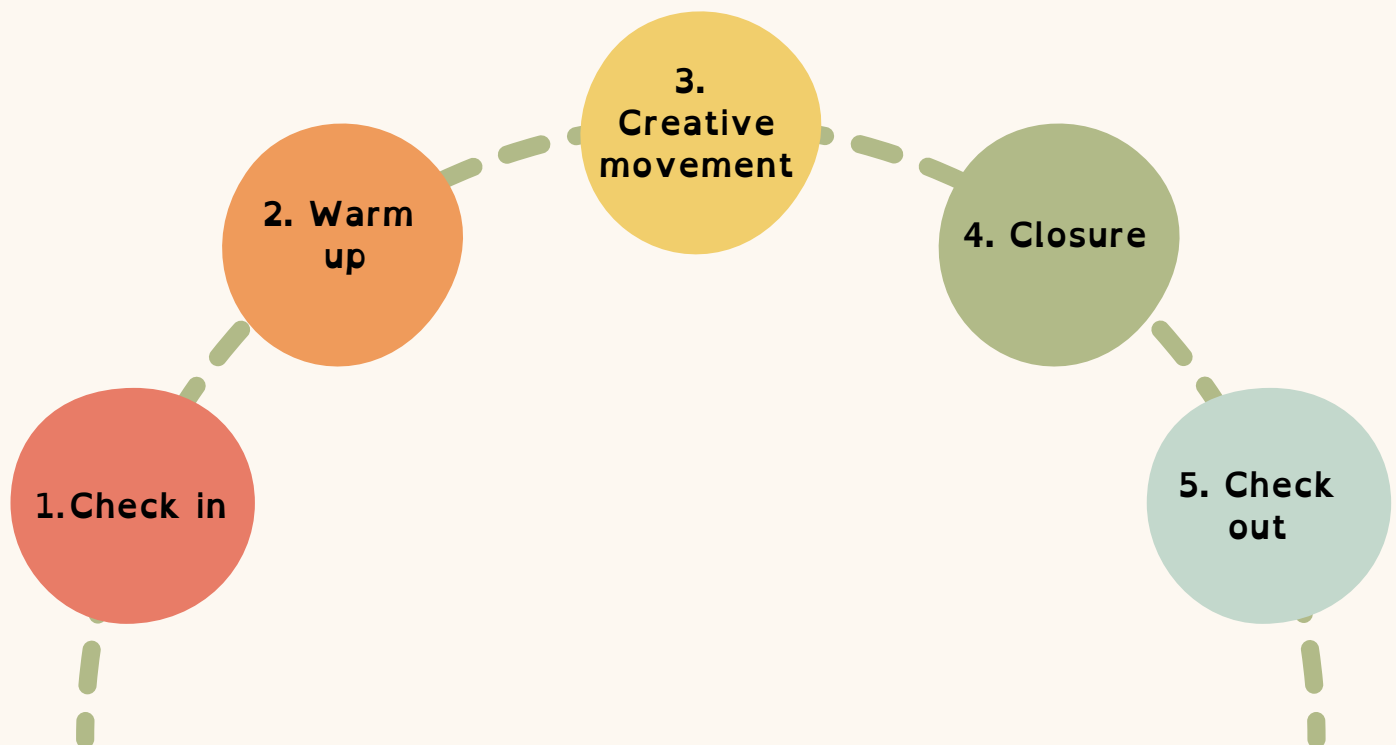


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Session format

A usual session consists of:

- **A verbal check in**, to allow space for present thoughts and feelings to be acknowledged. This is often supported by visual prompts tailored to their SLCN. In this stage, the client is also encouraged to think about how their body also feels, so that they can get familiar with connecting feelings to body responses/sensations.
- **A warm up** follows the check in, to awaken the body and increase physical awareness in preparation for body-mind integration. This is often achieved by using props such as sensory balls to introduce physical sensations felt on the body. During the warm up, participants are also encouraged to stand and mobilise their bodies, gaining a sense of themselves in the space.
- **Creative movement exploration** develops themes and feelings that may have surfaced during the check in. This is an opportunity for clients to engage their creativity and process emotional content on an embodied level. During this part of the session, props and music will often be used to support the therapeutic process.
- The session is always brought to an **end with a closure**. This means bringing the body back to a regulated state. Clients are given the opportunity to reflect on the session either verbally or non-verbally. This could be through sharing their thoughts and a movement/gesture for example.
- **A check out** is necessary to make sure that participants are feeling OK and ready to return back to their school schedule.



What is a Dance Movement Psychotherapist?

A DMPist is someone who is trained on a course recognised by the Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapists (ADMP UK). DMPists are master level clinicians who work therapeutically with clients from a range of backgrounds to enable clients to achieve positive change, personal growth and development. The therapist is there to facilitate an environment whereby the client is able to be listened to in a safe space, to interpret their creative expression and help make sense of personal content. DMPists offer embodied interventions that take into account the client's lived experience. They help the client to better understand their social system, the relationship they have with their own bodies, and emotional responses that may be difficult to process verbally. Each DMPist's approach will be unique, and supported by their own education, training and personal values.



About me

I have recently moved back to the Isle of Wight from Surrey, where I have worked in various different settings including both mainstream and SEND schools. I studied a BA degree in Dance Studies at the University of Roehampton from 2014-2017, and then went on to complete an MA in Dance Movement Psychotherapy from 2017-2020.



I am now working with the multidisciplinary team at St Catherine's School and College consisting of; Education, Care, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy and Art Therapy. As of September, DMP is now a new service available at St Catherine's, which offers an alternative, creative modality of therapy.

I can offer both 1:1 and small group sessions with tailored, client-centered goals. I am supervised weekly by Tom Evans (Head of Occupational Therapy), Sarah Kinsey (Art Therapist), and also by a qualified external supervisor registered with the ADMP UK.



How long will my child have Dance Movement Psychotherapy for?

Students will be offered DMP for a duration deemed appropriate in the assessment period. There is no set time limit to the therapy, and the therapist will check in with the client regularly about how they are feeling about the sessions. A six-weekly review will also be offered, which gives the client a chance to share their feelings towards the sessions and determine if there is anything they would like to do differently.

There is no permanent commitment to the sessions, if the client does not wish to continue with the sessions, the therapeutic contract may be terminated after a sufficient ending/closure.



Where do referrals come from?

Students at St Catherine's can be referred, currently, via the Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Department, class teachers and therapists at St Catherine's. A self-referral system is also available to sixth-form students. The DMPist will assess the pupil's needs and allocate assessment sessions if the referral is accepted and consent received.

Where will the sessions take place?

DMP sessions will take place at St Catherine's School, in a safe, confidential space. For sixth form students a therapy room will be used at St Catherine's College.



How is data/information stored?

All therapeutic information will be stored securely and confidentially at all times and in line with the GDPR requirements. Any electronic data will be held on a secure password-protected device and kept within the school grounds.



How will I find out how my child is doing?

DMP sessions are confidential, so it is important that this is respected. You will be issued with a "supporting a child through DMP" letter upon starting therapy.

Confidentiality & Privacy

The therapy session is not discussed with anyone else, but if a child or young person mentions that:

They (or someone else) are currently being harmed,

They (or someone else) have been harmed in the past,

They (or someone else) is at risk of future harm,

it is the therapist's job to pass on these types of concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

How to Complain?

The St Catherine's School complaints procedure can be used if any complaints arise, but please make contact with the DMPist in the first instance where possible, if there are any concerns.



Contact information

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like further information.

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Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapists (ADMP UK)

<https://admp.org.uk/>

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