



# MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING

*for dancers and educators during COVID-19*

# WELCOME TO THE MENTAL SKILLS MINI-SERIES!

This 7-part series was created to support dancers and dance educators during the COVID-19 experience.

Each lesson includes one video explaining the topic, one video describing how to use the worksheet and a worksheet.

The topics include

- breath and control
- anxiety
- motivation
- comparison
- resilience
- habits
- gratitude

The program can be done over the course of 7-weeks, with the intention that the dancer, or educator, will practice the mental tool for one week.

Just like physical training, the key to mental skills training is *practice, patience, and consistency*. The goal is to create, build, and use supportive thoughts and habits as we move through an unprecedented time.

We are honoured to be joined by councillors and mental performance consultants

- Dr. Matt Brown
- Natalka Lewis
- Poppy DesClouds

Now, possibly more than ever, our dancers, dance educators, dance parents and studio directors will benefit from mental support, mindfulness and mental skills training.

I can't wait to hear how the program is supporting your mental health and performance.

Please note: this program has been created as a public platform and has been created to share mental skills and mindfulness exercises in a transitional time; this is not therapy. If any dancer, educator, or community member is feeling extreme distress or overwhelm and requires additional resources, please seek professional support. Call an emergency hotline, or distress centre, for professional aid.

# VIDEOS

Click the links below to view the videos on YouTube!

## YOUTUBE



- *Lesson 1 - Breath & Control*
- *Lesson 2 - Anxiety*
- *Lesson 3 - Motivation*
- *Lesson 4 - Comparison*
- *Lesson 5 - Resilience*
- *Lesson 6 - Habits*
- *Lesson 7 - Gratitude*

# WORKSHEETS & RESOURCES



**WEEK 1**

*Breath & Control*



CHOOSE A THOUGHT OR EXPERIENCE THAT FILLS YOU WITH EMOTION.

RIGHT NOW, I AM FEELING \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN I THINK  
ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_

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WITHIN THIS, I:

**CONTROL**

**DON'T CONTROL**

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MY PLAN OF ACTION FOR THINGS I DO CONTROL

THINGS I CAN DO

THINGS I CAN FOCUS ON

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# BOX BREATH TRACKER!

Use this worksheet to track each time you pause and practice your box breathing. Listen to your body as a guide and use the tool for however long, and however often, you like! Give yourself a checkmark, happy face or fill in the circle to celebrate your practice.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
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DAY 2 _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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**WEEK 2**

*Anxiety*

# ANXIETY AND THE BRAIN

FOR DANCERS AND DANCE EDUCATORS

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## CONNECT!

WRITE 5 WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY

WRITE 5 WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOUR FRIENDS

WRITE 5 WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOUR DANCE COMMUNITY

WRITE 5 WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOURSELF



## FLIPPED YOUR LID!

WRITE ABOUT A TIME, OR EXPERIENCE, WHERE YOU WERE VERY EMOTIONAL

WHAT HELPED CALM YOU AND BRING "YOUR LID" DOWN?

## ANXIETY AS MY FRIEND!

WHAT IS ANXIETY TRYING TO HELP ME WITH?

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS COMING FROM MY INTERNAL SPAM BOX?

WHAT ARE SUPPORTIVE THOUGHTS I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE INSTEAD?

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP ME PRACTICE SUPPORTIVE THOUGHTS?

# CALM

## SUGGESTIONS FROM NATALKA!

Options to help calm and lower lid:

Breathe

Physical touch

Hot or cold sensations (ie. Hold an ice cube, have a cold or hot shower)

Yell

Shake your body

Progressive muscle relaxations

Butterfly hugs

DO MATH! You can't do Math when you are emotional and with a flipped lid. Doing your times tables or addition will force the brain to connect to the prefrontal cortex!

Counting

Vigorous exercise (ie jumping jacks)

List something around you for all of your 5 senses

Do a soothing activity (have a bath, dance, improvise, listen to music, sing, etc)

Color or draw a picture

Use a scale of 1-10 to rate how big your emotion is right now...then do a breathing exercise or jumping jacks and reassess using your scale

Go for a walk

### **Things to ask/tell self or others once calm is returning:**

What emotion am I feeling?

What is the story of what is happening right now? Tell the story over and over, perhaps with a new ending.

"I am safe"

Play thought detective: "Is this thought really true? Collect evidence to confirm or deny!"

What do I need RIGHT NOW?



**WEEK 3**

*Motivation*

# MOTIVATION

EVEN THOUGH MY GOALS ARE FURTHER AWAY...  
THE LONG TERM GOALS I AM STILL COMMITTED TO ARE:

TODAY, MY GOAL IS TO FEEL: \_\_\_\_\_

I WILL ENCOURAGE AND PRACTICE THIS FEELING BY:

THROUGHOUT THE DAY, I GIVE MYSELF PERMISSION TO

TO FEEL

TO DO

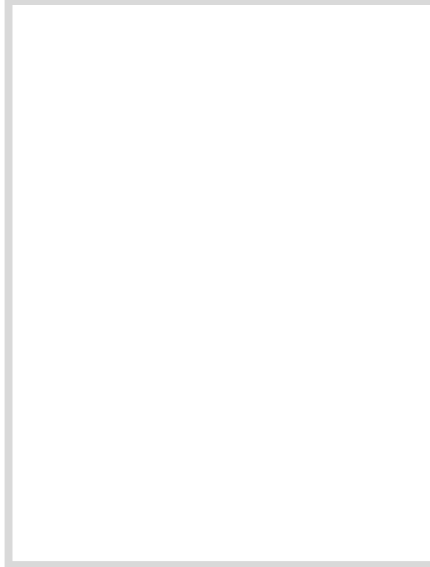
# THIS WEEK!

Throughout the week, use the boxes below to write in your intentional activities.  
The goal is to do one thing in each box per day!

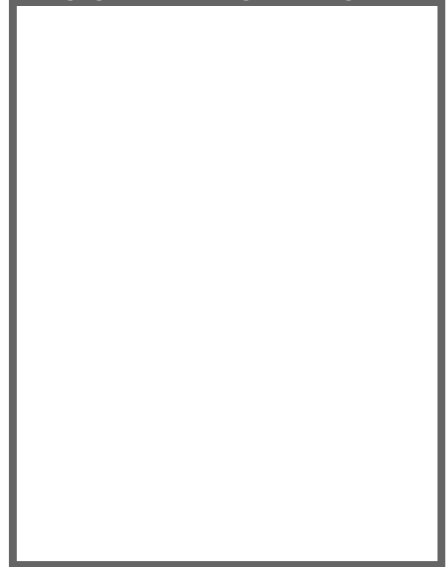
**MOVE**



**GO OUTSIDE**



**CONNECTION OR  
CONVERSATION**



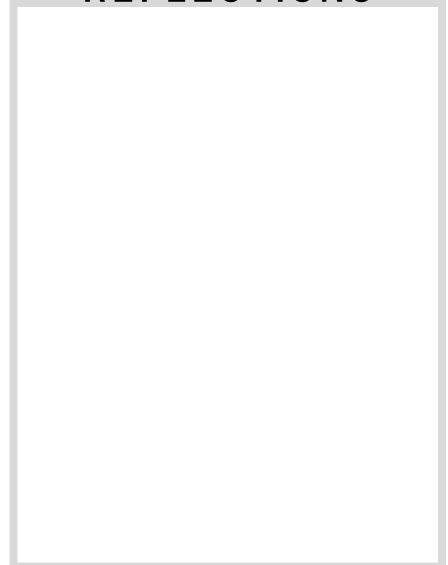
**LAUGH**



**RANDOM ACTS  
OF KINDNESS**



**SELF CARE &  
REFLECTIONS**





**WEEK 4**

*Comparison*





# TRAINING TO BE MYSELF



## REFLECTIONS ABOUT ME

A time I knew, and felt I was ready (what was I thinking, feeling, doing):

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The thoughts, people, messages, and environments that currently inspire, support, and energize me:

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The thoughts, environments, and messages that currently drain me:



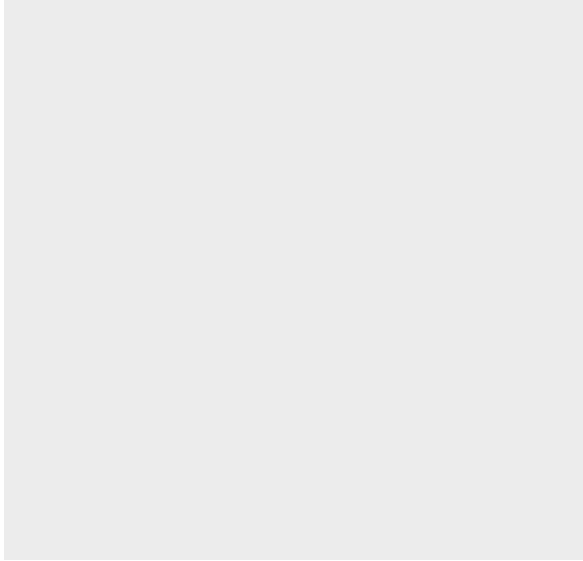
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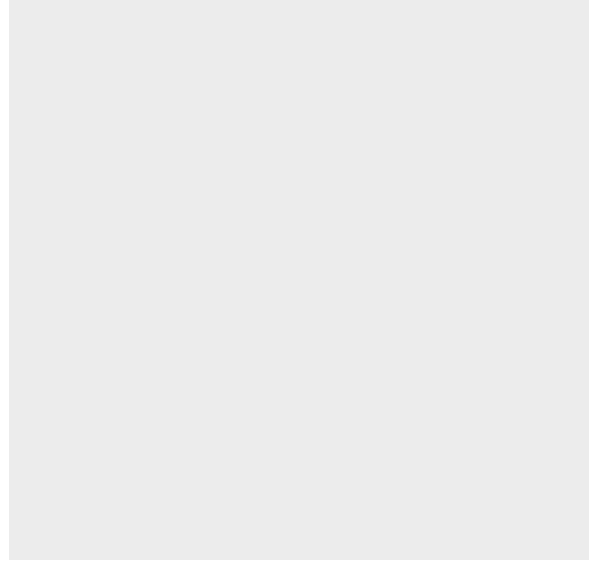
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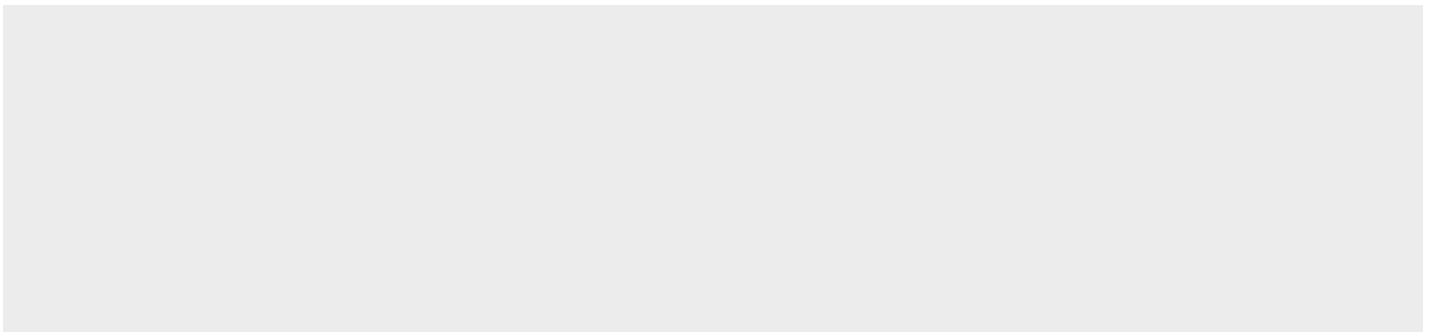
To be mentally ready and present before I start my class, I will:



The most helpful things for me to focus on when I dance, are:

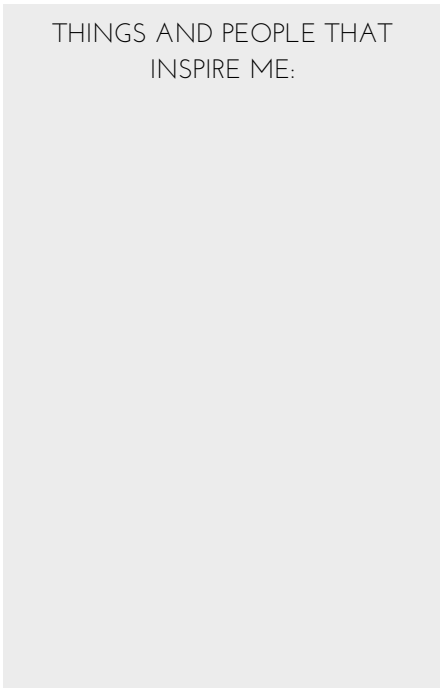


I will take a pause, take a step away, or practice self-kindness when:

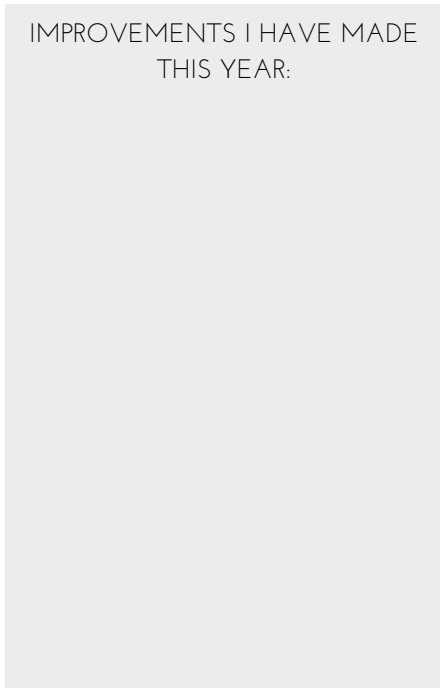


## SEEKING CUES:

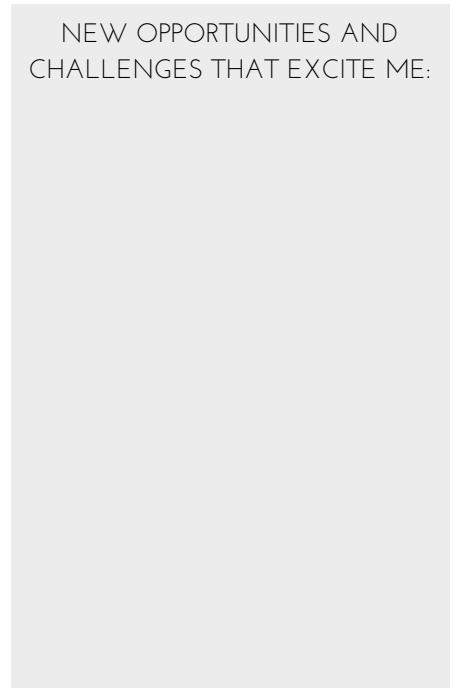
THINGS AND PEOPLE THAT  
INSPIRE ME:



IMPROVEMENTS I HAVE MADE  
THIS YEAR:



NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND  
CHALLENGES THAT EXCITE ME:







**WEEK 5**

*Resilience*

# Resilience

1

What thoughts, feelings, and stressors am I facing in this new normal?

THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	STRESSORS

2

What supports and strategies do I have to help me through this challenge?



3

How do I want to practice these strategies in this new normal?



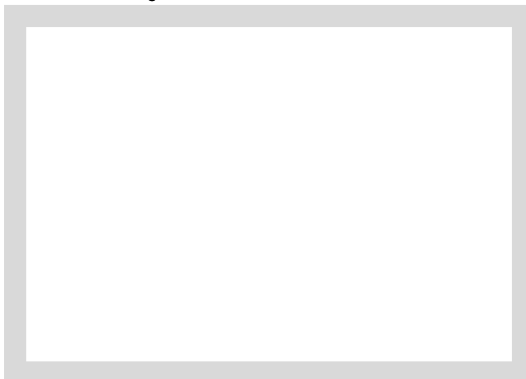
4

Are there any opportunities for me to try something new or different?

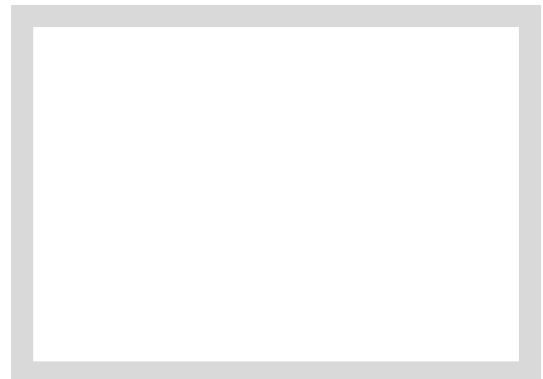


5

What is my personal challenge for today?



How will I know I achieved it?



# Consider...

What would I tell  
a friend in the  
same situation?

Can I transform  
this into  
something that is  
useful/helpful for  
me?

How will I win my  
day today?



**WEEK 6**

*Habits*



# HABITS

building supportive habits and routines

My goal for this week is:

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Beneficial habits that contribute to my goal attainment :

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Who is the type of person who is successful within your goal?

- what do they do?
- what do they prioritize?
- what do they focus on?
- how do they make decisions?
- what do they not do?

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# HABITS

The habit I want to focus on this week:

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The easy parts of this habit (that can be performed in under 2 minutes) are:

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Potential distractions that will get in my way of doing the new habit:

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How can I eliminate distractions:

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The smallest, most simple thing I can do to start the habit is:

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# HABIT TRACKER

Write down the habit you want to focus on.

Give yourself checkmarks, or smiley faces, when you have completed the habit.

There are 14 boxes per habit, but you can give yourself multiple checkmarks within each box!

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Habit_____							
Habit_____							
Habit_____							
Habit_____							
Habit_____							





**WEEK 7**

*Gratitude*



# Gratitude

Choose how you would like to practice gratitude daily. It could be a journal, bullet points, mindful moments, or whatever feels best for you. At the end of the day, fill in the branch and leaves connected to the day that you have practiced your grateful mindset.

