

*Dance for Healthy Aging with
Parkinson's Disease: Dance
Your Way Through Life*

PROGRAM MANUAL

Abbreviated Version

For Organizers

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"The following Table of Contents outlines all content available in the full manual. Selected sections are included in this abbreviated version for preview purposes."

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Introduction

Dance can be a powerful tool for people living with Parkinson's disease (PD) to improve mobility, confidence, and social connection. The Tufts *Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's Disease* workshop brings local community members, care partners, and primarily occupational therapy students, along with students from other disciplines, to collaboratively explore the benefits of dance. The Tufts *Dance for Healthy Aging* workshop serves as an interdisciplinary learning opportunity deepening understanding of movement, wellness, and adaptive strategies for individuals living with PD.

This manual is designed to support those organizing and facilitating the event, ensuring it remains a valuable and impactful experience year after year.

Purpose

This manual outlines essential information for program organizers, students, and facilitators planning and managing the *Tufts Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's Disease* program.

Key purposes of the manual

- Supporting event organizers in planning and executing a successful program
- Ensuring the event is organized and remains consistent with program goals
- Establishing a foundation for continual improvements and future iterations
- Ensuring consistency in program structure while allowing flexibility for adaptation

Program Overview

The Department of Occupational Therapy partners with the Department of Theatre, Dance, & Performance Studies to present two full-day workshops led by world-renowned dance and choreography instructors Pamela Quinn and David Leventhal of Mark Morris Dance Group. The workshop engages people with Parkinson's (PwP), their families, friends, and allies, as well as occupational therapy and dance students, faculty, and professionals. Participants explore the use of critical thinking, a dance mindset, and creative tools such as imagery, props, and music to create and perform small group dances. The dances enhance ease and control of challenging daily life activities for PwP while facilitating social bonding and emotional joy. The content of the workshop is framed around the imagery of "dancing your way through life" to guide each participant in applying what they learn and value from the workshop to an individualized health self-management plan e.g., how to select and balance PD participation opportunities in dancing, boxing, singing, exercise, with hobbies and activities of daily living. This process respects everyone's capacities, needs, and valued daily life activities to maximize biopsychosocial health and quality of life while aging.

Goal & Objectives

Overarching Goal:

To increase the number and quality of wellness community services that support active and healthy aging-in-place among diverse people with PD and their care partners.

Program Objectives for Occupational Therapy Students:

1. Improve familiarity with PD and its impact on daily life
2. Increase knowledge of the movement capacity of people with PD
3. Increase understanding of the social participation potential of people with PD
4. Develop skills for engaging people with PD and care partners in dance-based movement interventions
5. Increase understanding of how to collaborate with the PD community
6. Increase intention to engage in or facilitate similar wellness programs in the future

Program Objectives for People with PD & Care Partners:

7. Increase intention and confidence to participate in similar wellness programs in the future
8. Promote meaningful social participation, joyful movement, and personal expression through dance
9. Demonstrate how creative strategies from principles of dance can promote participation in one's valued and preferred activities beyond the activity/occupation of dance.

Research & Impact

This section outlines key findings on the research-backed benefits of dance for all participants and highlights the program's impact with direct quotes from past program evaluations.

Enhancing movement, confidence & daily function

Dance is an evidence-based practice to improve movement, balance, and coordination for individuals with Parkinson's Disease (PD).

Research has shown that dance-based interventions can help individuals:

- Improve gait, balance, and motor control [1, 2]
- Gain confidence in movement, reducing fear of falls [4]
- Apply creative movement strategies to daily activities, promoting functional independence [4]

This workshop reinforces the idea of “dancing through life”, encouraging participants to integrate movement strategies into their daily life. Participants often begin the workshop with hesitation - “I’m not a dancer”- but leave with a renewed sense of control over their bodies.

“The most valuable part of the workshop was being more present in my body.”

Community Participant

Creating connection & collaboration

Dance fosters teamwork, social engagement, and problem-solving, essential for daily life, rehabilitation, and professional growth [2]. This workshop emphasizes:

- Group movement and partner work
- Person-centered collaboration

- Breaking down hierarchical roles

"I enjoyed collaborating with the community members in creating a dance that reflected meaning for them. I learned about community members' experiences and perceptions - both are critical when working with clients."

Student Participant

Students and professionals gain a deeper understanding of therapeutic alliance, moving beyond traditional patient-provider dynamics to recognize the power of collaboration in care.

Strengthening emotional resilience & reducing stigma

Dance promotes emotional resilience, self-expression, and community connection, vital for mental and emotional well-being. Research indicates dance can:

"This class helped me feel more powerful in my life and hopeful... anything is possible."

Community Participant

- Reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, improving overall mood [3, 5]
- Encourage self-expression and identity preservation in individuals with PD [6, 7]
- Challenge stereotypes and stigma about disability and movement differences

This workshop cultivates a non-judgmental space, where movement is celebrated in all forms. Participants move away from a self-conscious "I-they" mentality toward a shared, expressive "we" experience.

See Appendix C: References for Research & Impact of Workshop

Team Structure & Roles

Role	Responsibilities
Event Coordinator (s)	Plan and organizes event, oversees logistics and other roles
Program Manager (s)	Facilitates all communications re: planning, logistics, parking, registration, program evaluation; oversees volunteers
Facilitators & Instructors	Leads dance sessions, guides participants through schedule, manages timing
Volunteers	Greet participants & complete check-in guide participants re: space (coat rack, shoe rack, bathroom, lunchroom), assists with set up and questions, helps with entrance accessibility & parking
Tech & AV Support	Sets up and manages audio/music

Pre-Event Planning

This section outlines logistics, scheduling, and safety to help prepare for the event in an efficient and organized manner.

Logistics & Set Up

Transportation & Parking

Location: Jackson Gym Dance Studios, 50 Talbot Avenue, Medford, MA (Tufts University Campus- Brick building with white door, next to Aidekman Arts Center)

Public Transportation

Tufts' Medford / Somerville campus is accessible via the MBTA subway, bus, and commuter rail. Participants should be informed to visit the MBTA website for more info on public transportation to and from Tufts. The Medford/Tufts stop on the Green Line is the closest stop to the Jackson Gym Dance Studios.

Parking & Drop- Off

Parking availability may change from year to year. The Program Manager will contact the current Department of OT Administrator to coordinate digital parking permits for participants (about 3 weeks before the Event).

- Participants typically fill out the digital parking permit via QR code when they arrive at the Gym. The digital parking permit ensures free parking at any available visitor parking locations on Tufts Medford campus. (e.g: Dowling Hall Garage and Lower Campus Garage)
- We request students to leave spaces near the Gym open for community members and park on Boston Ave or at the 574 Boston Ave lot.

Signage & Directions

- Ensure clear signage directing participants to the event

- Volunteers should be stationed outside to guide participants to the building entrance or an alternative stair-free entry. The alternative entrance is available through Cohen Auditorium with an elevator to access the Dance studio level.

Accessibility Considerations

- Jackson Gym has approximately 10 steps with a railing to enter at the main entrance.
- Accessible parking spots may be available on Talbot Avenue directly in front of the building
- See [Appendix A: Digital Resource Folder](#) for parking maps

Safety & Risk Management

- Before the event, a fall prevention lecture is given to students to educate them on fall prevention strategies and safety during the Dance (Phoebe Moulin's 2026 Doctoral Experiential Capstone Project)
- Identify and eliminate any hazards, mark potential tripping hazards
- Follow University emergency procedures & protocols
- Provide safe and accessible modifications for participants as needed
- Ensure a supportive and accommodating environment for all mobility levels
- Tufts Emergency Response Guide contains instructions to assist members of the Tufts community in responding to a variety of emergencies.
 - Link: Tufts Safety & Emergency Response Guide
 - In case of emergency, call University Police: 617-627-6911
- See [Appendix A: Digital Resource Folder](#) for Fall Prevention Lecture & Safety information

Event Day Overview

It's event weekend! This section outlines what to expect on each day of the event and offers guidance for managing logistics to ensure a successful and engaging experience for all.

Event Day 1: Student/Professional Training & Orientation Day

This day is designed for students and dance professionals, introducing key concepts and preparing everyone for the community event on Day 2

- Instructors & Dance Team Arrival: Arrive early for set up and preparation
- Student Check- In: Students should check in upon arrival to monitor attendance
- Orientation: Event coordinators and program managers will orient students to space (re: storage for belongings, restroom, rules of space).
- Morning Session: Includes program introduction, warm-up and dance exercises
- Lunch Break: A 1- hour break; students and professionals responsible for bringing own lunch on Day 1
- Afternoon Session: Continue with dance and engagement activities
- End of Day Wrap-Up: Debrief with students and professionals, review key learning, assign Day 2 roles, and clarify logistical tasks:
 - Participant check-in assistance
 - Elevator operator roles
 - Parking permit support
 - Coat/shoe rack management
 - Guiding to lunch

Event Day 2: Community Participant Day

This is the main event day where students, professionals, and community members come together for a shared dance experience

- Instructor & Dance Team Arrival: Arrive early for set up
- Student Arrival: Students must arrive and be ready at least 30 minutes before the planned participant arrival
- Participant Welcome & Check- In: Students and volunteers assist with check-in, name tags, wayfinding (re: coat rack, shoe rack, restrooms), entrance accessibility via elevator and parking permit needs
- Morning Session: Includes welcome, team introductions, warm-up, and dance exercises
- Lunch Break: A 1-hour break; Complimentary lunch and refreshments provided to all participants, students, and instructors (students should help guide participants to lunchroom via elevator or stairs)
 - Local researchers are invited to share a brief introduction to their studies, recruit participants, and share flyers during lunch break
- Afternoon Session: Typically includes small group activity, creative exercises, and a group sharing opportunity
- Closing: Debrief, Thank participants, instructors, sponsors, organizers. Distribute and send digital program evaluation links (pre-scheduled to be sent out by 3 PM).

Post-Event Planning

This section outlines key considerations for after the event, including program evaluation, follow-up, and documentation.

Program Evaluation & Feedback

- Qualtrics Program Evaluation surveys should be updated during Fall Preparation (August-January).
- Program evaluations: Program evaluations should be distributed to community participants, professionals, and students to gather feedback on the event. Ensure all participant evaluations are distributed (digitally) by 3 PM on Day 2. Follow up as needed to encourage completion.
- Student & Staff Debrief: Schedule a short debrief session for students, instructors, and coordinators to reflect on what went well and what could be improved for next year
- See [Error! Reference source not found.](#) for Program Evaluation examples

Participant Follow-Up

- Thank You Messages: Send personalized thank-you emails to participants, volunteers, and instructors
- Distributing resources: Music links and other resources, including [Motivate PD](#), a client-centered social self-management manual developed by Lani Silverstone as part of her 2024 Doctoral Experiential Capstone project, aiming to support people with Parkinson's Disease through involvement in daily activities.
- See [Appendix F: Motivate PD](#) for Program Evaluation examples

Honorarium & Documentation

- Honorarium Distribution: Coordinate with OT Administrator to ensure instructors submit paperwork and are paid in a timely manner
- File Storage: Upload evaluation data, attendance sheets, and photos to the designated location in the Digital Resource Folder
- APDA Event Report: Within 30 days of program conclusion, APDA requires:
 - A list of all participants with contact information- email, address, and telephone
 - A post-program summary report with how the program went, how the funds were allocated, and the impact the program had on the Parkinson's community
 - Copies of the program participant evaluations
 - Copies of any media the event received
- Update Program Manual: Update the manual based on feedback and evaluation results to ensure future events reflect lessons learned and suggested improvements

Program Timeline

Task	Assigned To	Task Timing
Fall Preparation (August- January)		
Fall Planning Meeting (Confirm dates, roles, venue)	Team	8 months before
Begin APDA grant application	Grant Writer	6 months before
Update Registration forms/flyers	Event Coordinator	5 months before
Update Qualtrics Program Evaluation	Event Coordinator	5 months before
Submit APDA grant application	Grant Writer	3 months before
Outreach & Fundraising (January-March)		
Distribute student flyer & registration link	Program Manager	3 months before
Set up fundraiser of choice/request lunch donation	Program Manager	2 months before
Distribute dance professional/researcher flyer & registration link	Program Manager	1 month before
Distribute community registration flyer to APDA MA	Program Manager	1 month before
Send email blasts to previous e-list of community participants	Program Manager	1 month before
Planning & Logistics (March-April)		
Draft Event Schedule/Plan	Instructors	1 month before
Hold spring Planning Meeting (roles/schedule/final questions)	Team	1 month before
Place food order for lunch/snacks	Program Manager	3 weeks before
Confirm parking accommodations for participants	Program Manager	3 weeks before
Send event confirmation & logistics email to all participants	Program Manger	1-2 weeks before
Schedule send program evaluations to all participants (On the last day, at end time)	Event Coordinator	1-2 weeks before
Event Implementation		
Event checklists finalized/complete	Program Manager	1-2 weeks before
Attend and execute event weekend	Team	Event Day
Post-Event Wrap Up		
Process honorarium Payments	Administrative Support	Post-Event (1 week after)
Event debrief & review feedback	Team	Post-Event (2 weeks after)
Program Evaluation Data analysis	Team	Post-Event (2 weeks after)
Submit final report to APDA	Team	Post-Event (3 weeks after)
Update manual based on event feedback & debrief	Program Manager	Post-Event

Event Checklists

Event Planning & Set Up Checklist

Food & Beverage

- ☐ Lunch order placed
- ☐ Food delivery or pick up confirmed
- ☐ Dietary accommodations planned: vegetarian and gluten-free options (with food labels)
- ☐ Lunch location and set up confirmed (tables & chairs)
- ☐ Snacks/coffee/water arranged
- ☐ Napkins/utensils/plates/cups

Tables & Seating

- ☐ The appropriate number of chairs & tables confirmed for the event

Audio

- ☐ Lavalier microphones/speakers acquired & tested
- ☐ Hand-held microphone for students/participants speaking

Signage

- ☐ Print event sign "Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's" for entrance
- ☐ Print "Elevator this way" sign
- ☐ Print APDA Grant Support sign
- ☐ Print sign thanking additional funders/supporters of event
- ☐ Print final check-in for participants and students
- ☐ Print Parking QR code for parking permi
- ☐ Print QR code with link to Motivate PD (previous DEC student Lani Silverstone's work)
- ☐ Print Emergency Protocol sign
- ☐ Secure name tags/pens for sign-in

Photography & Media

- ☐ Photographer confirmed for event
- ☐ Photographer is notified of details of event (date, time, location)
- ☐ Ensure participants are made aware that by participating in the dance, they give consent for photography (can be included in logistics email)

Additional Planning

- ☐ Recruit 3-4 student volunteers to assist at event
- ☐ Ensure dance team & volunteers are aware of roles/responsibilities
- ☐ Secure any props or tools needed for dance sessions (per the instructors request)
- ☐ Fall prevention & safety lecture provided to students

Event Day Checklist

Arrival & Setup

- ☐ Arrive early to set up space
- ☐ Set up a registration table with name tags and a sign-in sheet
- ☐ Arrange the dance floor with chairs and all necessary equipment
- ☐ Confirm food pickup
- ☐ Set up snacks/water table
- ☐ Label food with dietary needs/ingredients
- ☐ Volunteers are stationed to greet and orient participants
- ☐ Ensure participants check-in and create name tag

During Event

- ☐ Ensure participants check-in and create name tag
- ☐ Participants are guided through space including to elevator
- ☐ Assist with dance set up and transitions
- ☐ Capture media (coordinate with photographer)

Participant Engagement

- ☐ Distribute the post-event survey link
- ☐ Collect all sign-in sheets for attendance

Post-Event Checklist

Participant & Stakeholder Follow-Up

- ☐ Send thank you emails to participants, instructors, volunteers, stakeholders
- ☐ Include resources, music, photos, additional community events, or future program opportunities in email

Evaluation & Feedback

- ☐ Distribute or re-send post-event survey
- ☐ Hold team debrief to identify successes and improvements
- ☐ Collect sign-in sheets for records and attendance for APDA final report

APDA Final Report

- ☐ Create a final report of event outcomes, participation, key learnings, and APDA impact 30 days after event
- ☐ Submit final report to APDA Massachusetts

Honorarium Payment

- ☐ Confirm and process honorarium payment (follow up with OT Administrator to coordinate)

Appendix: Templates & Additional Resources

Appendix A: Digital Resource Folder

Box Drive Folder: This Box Drive Folder contains a comprehensive collection of materials, including templates, resources from previous and current years of the workshop, and additional templates referenced throughout the manual. The folder serves as an organized resource for all materials associated with the Tufts Dance for Healthy Aging program.

Link: Box Drive Folder: Tufts Dance for Healthy Aging

Cheat Sheet for Navigating and Organizing Folder: This cheat sheet provides a detailed guide for navigating and organizing the Box Drive Folder.

Link: Cheat Sheet for Box Drive

Appendix C: References for Research & Impact of Workshop

For more research, please refer to the [Dance for PD® research library](#) a digital archive of research on Dance for PD®, the benefits of dance for people with Parkinson's, and other related topics.

Below are references to support the Research & Impact section of the manual

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Appendix F: Motivate PD

Motivate PD is a client-centered social self-management manual developed by Lani Silverstone as part of her 2024 Doctoral Experiential Capstone project. The manual aims to support people with Parkinson's Disease through involvement in daily activities that address the biopsychosocial dimensions of health.