

Best Practices and Other Considerations for Utilizing Dance as a Tool in Peace and Conflict Processes: Two Models

Below were the common models in which the takeaways were identified. This is not to say that these recommendations are mutually exclusive to one model or the other, in fact many are quite interchangeable, and in some definitions of Peacebuilding, the peacemaking and conflict resolution or conflict transformation model is considered a subset of the larger peacebuilding umbrella.

Peacebuilding: Has a primary focus on developing and supporting individual needs which extend to the larger community. Generally therapeutic in nature without a specific goal of addressing a particular conflict or providing conflict resolution in a direct manner. Generally done in an ongoing program, beneficial to all communities with the potential for or where there has been violence. Dance is often integrated with other performing art forms such as theater and visual arts and can be done alone or in conjunction with a targeted dance therapy program or a more traditional form of psychosocial support. Often in this primarily therapeutic or educational model, peacebuilding is not necessarily the primary or only goal.

Peacemaking & Conflict Resolution: Based on the principles of neuroscience and anthropology, practitioners use dance and movement often in conjunction with other multiple-disciplinary art forms as a way to ensure awareness and use of the kinetic physical and emotional responses as part of the conflict resolution and transformation process. Used in a conflict resolution or transformative conflict process, movement-based/dance activities are utilized explicitly as an aid in the mediation of conflict.

Peacebuilding	Peace making & Conflict Resolution
“Choice” is essential. Empowerment through movement requires participants to make movement choices and thus practitioners to ask questions.	Design: Participants in the resolution model tend to take the form more of a “choreographed” or designed workshop model as the resolution model often has more of an “experiential methodology.”
Physicality: Introduce elements of dance such as space and time in order to support the process with the positive biological and emotional responses that come from physical activity.	Shouldn’t be limited strictly to dance or movement, successful programs are often integrated with dialogue, theater arts and/or visual arts.
Generally thematic in nature but themes are more general to life and positive, not addressing conflict or trauma, head on.	Have a clear focus & goal and should speak to the conflict directly with a cognizant awareness of how conflict manifests in the body.
“Therapeutic” but not therapy. Practitioners should approach peacebuilding work with an understanding of conflict sensitivity and knowledge of the context.	As the aim is specifically to address conflict, a conflict analysis should be conducted prior to an intervention.
Models/frameworks should be flexible and adaptable. Necessary to adapt planned activities	Collaboration and co-development key between choreographer & peacebuilding practitioners.

<p>or questions in the moment and practitioners should have the ability to “read the room.”</p>	
<p>Consultation & collaboration must occur with or be driven by local populations. Understanding of and adherence to customs and cultures is crucial. Whenever possible, preferable to be led by locals.</p>	<p>An interest and goal in developing a movement vocabulary as opposed to simply allowing for self-directed movement from participants who would likely rely on familiar pedestrian movements.</p>
<p>Many local styles of dance/movement that are ingrained into culture can provide a vehicle of communication, comfort and unity in some contexts, however more of a western-based modern dance is also used as the movement principles provide more freedom and in some contexts, a neutral or even equalizing language.</p>	<p>Dance principles such as space, boundaries, flexibility and fluidity should be applied to give insights into the physical connections of conflict and providing more layers in understanding conflict by addressing the human emotional side.</p>
<p>Getting people to be “dancers” should not be the goal. Therefore, teaching a dance class or having a practitioner dictate the movement is not the model preferred for peacebuilding. Rather, the movement process should be participatory in nature and driven by the participants themselves no matter how small, gestural or pedestrian a movement may be.</p>	
<p>Practitioners should create a safe and comfortable space for participants including, being accessible and approachable, mindful of spacing (ex. Facing each other in a circle vs. everyone facing a “teacher”), validating movement created by participants (through reinforcement and repetition by all).</p>	