

danceability

to empower through movement

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Handbook & Policies

Welcome! We are so happy you have decided to join us! Our mission states that we are “*an individualized dance, fitness and movement program serving the special needs community. Our studio is led by qualified staff and dedicated volunteers who create a nurturing environment that empowers our students to flourish and grow while promoting a healthy lifestyle...and we have a little fun along the way!*”

Danceability caters to individuals with, but not limited to, the following disabilities: Angelman’s syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, learning disabilities, mental, emotional and seizure disorders, etc. We promise to be more than a dance program. *Danceability* seeks to be a recreational retreat for those who love dance and music and the caregivers that love them. We pride ourselves on the connections we create and maintain with all who come into our studio. We want you to feel that our program is a place where you can talk, vent, seek advice from peers and just relax.

Classes run Monday through Thursday evenings from September to May and are 45 minutes long. Students will be assessed and placed into a class based on the following criteria: a) ability, b) age, and c) class size. We will work hard to find the best fit for each student and will not hesitate to make a change if necessary. We ask that families and staff be as flexible with their schedules as possible in order to accommodate the very best class fit for their loved one.

Payments involve registration fee, tuition and a performance fee that only applies to those participating in the annual performance. Families are encouraged to seek third party payment; contact your service coordinator and insurance company to see what money is available for recreational and wellness activities. You may be surprised! We will provide you with an invoice and they will help you from there.

Our primary goal is dance education, but having been in the field for years, we know that it can be about much more; education, socialization, behavior modification, sensory work, FUN and having someone listen. We hope that through good communication between us all of us, your needs will be met.

RULES & POLICIES: Please read the following rules and policies carefully. They were designed for your information, your dancer’s safety and well-being, and the overall implementation of a high-quality program.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:

Please read the **Studio Information Board** inside the studio. This will have the most up-to-date information each week.

To receive the yearly paper newsletter: email your mailing address to danceabilitywny@gmail.com

To follow our blog: www.danceabilitywny.wordpress.com

To become our facebook friend: <https://www.facebook.com/DanceabilityInc>

To follow us on Twitter: @DANCEABILITYWNY

BUSINESS HOURS:

Because we are a nonprofit, *danceability*'s staff is small and our weekly office hours fluctuate from week to week. If you wish to make a payment in person or set up a meeting, please call the studio at 651-0094.

CLOSINGS:

Closings due to weather will be run on Channel 2, Channel 7 and will also be posted on our Facebook page. A student calendar will be handed out at the beginning of the season for all days off.

START TIMES

Students should be ready to start class at the scheduled time. Please do not come more than 10 minutes early prior to the start of class. Our instructors are busy preparing for class and students often become agitated waiting in a busy waiting room. When needed, special accommodations for students who need assistance entering class will be arranged with your instructor.

PICK-UP TIMES

Students should be picked up *inside the waiting room* at the appropriate time. We ask that parents and staff meet their dancers inside for safety reasons. Meeting your dancer inside also gives the opportunity for the instructors to relay important information and updates. If other pickup arrangements need to be made, please call us at 651-0094.

PROPER DANCE ATTIRE

NEW! Proper attire in dance class is essential to helping the dancer move freely and as unrestricted as possible. Proper dance attire includes; t-shirts, tank tops, sweatpants, yoga pants, leotards or tights. **ABSOLUTELY NO JEANS.** Dresses should not be worn but dance skirts with tights or leggings are acceptable. We ask that loose hair be pulled back as dangling hair is a distraction to the dancers. If purchasing proper dance clothes is a problem, please let the staff know and a solution will be worked out.

For most dance classes bare feet or socks with grips on the bottom is the preferred option, but students should bring socks in case they need to borrow tap or jazz shoes. Dance shoes can be borrowed during dance class, however we may not be able to provide all sizes or multiple shoes in the same size. We ask that you bring any modalities needed to maintain proper foot alignment, balance, etc. Occasionally we will dance without these supports as feeling the floor through direct contact with the foot is beneficial for dance movement.

EQUIPMENT/ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Our teachers are very versed in modifying dance movement, however in many cases it is most beneficial that any assistive devices that a dancer uses in their everyday life be used in dance class. And in a few circumstances it is important that that device be brought to class in order to ensure dancer, instructor and volunteer safety. These devices include: belts, wheelchairs, walkers, etc. Please speak with your class instructor to determine if a device should be brought and if so, please bring that device each week. As you will see our space is limited and we are unable to store them for you from week to week.

PROGRESS

Although our teachers try their very best to have good communication with families and staff, please feel free to inquire about your dancer's progress from the teacher. If the teacher is unable to speak to you at that time, please leave a phone or email message and the teacher will get back to you in a timely manner. Any questions or concerns should be addressed with the teacher, not the volunteer.

ABSENCES

Please notify the studio at **651-0094** if your dancer will be absent from class. This is a 9-month program and we plan on your dancer being here for the duration. If your dancer is absent due to an extended medical absence, a medical release is **REQUIRED** before returning to class. Valid excuses include: individual or family illness, hospitalization, surgery or death in the family.

For those dancers from group homes, inadequate staffing or unavailable group home transportation will not be considered valid excuses. It is the duty of the group home manager and/or agency to ensure that their client is being brought to the service for which they paid. That may mean calling a supervisor or borrowing transportation or staff from another home. *For example, People, Inc. vans are available to be borrowed within the agency if properly arranged.*

****For those dancers who receive scholarships, good attendance is not an option, it is required or they will lose their scholarship. Donors have generously given their money to send a dancer to class and we all need to honor that. The only exception to this are serious medical issues, in this instance please contact us immediately and we will work with you.***

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS

After 3 consecutive absences from class without a valid excuse; the dancer will be automatically withdrawn from class. In cases of withdrawal, tuition refunds may be made for the remainder of the season, but not for classes missed due to unexcused absence. Unless other arrangements have been made, you are still financially responsible for the classes missed up until formal withdrawal.

FAMILY/VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

We love our volunteers and couldn't do what we do without them! While we love that our dancers and families really connect with their volunteers, we ask that you please do not share phone numbers or emails for the purposes of alerting them to absences. If your dancer is going to be absent, we still need their volunteer in class so they can then be prepared to help the dancer catch up the following week. We may need their help to cover another volunteer's absence or there may be other projects we need help with. They may also need to show proof of consistent volunteer attendance to schools or employers.

If you are interested in finding someone to do respite care or babysitting, please let us know. We will pass on the information to those volunteers who have expressed an interest, although please realize it may not be the same volunteer that helps your dancer in class.

LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS

Danceability is not responsible for lost or stolen items. There is a lost and found bin in the waiting room. Please check there for lost items. This bin will be cleaned out periodically and items will be donated to Goodwill.

As with any concern, issue or question, please contact us directly and we will do everything in our power to assist you. As long as there is open communication we will try to help!

GROUP HOMES

As social workers, special education teachers, physical therapists and the like, we want you to consider us as part of your client's TEAM. We want to share with you OUR keys to success:

- **CALL** us when the individual is not coming. When a dancer is sick or hospitalized; we want to know! Our volunteers care and their classmates ask.
- **ENCOURAGE:** Many times adults have a hard time transitioning to dance, especially when the weather is bad. Let us know. Sometimes all it takes is a phone call from their teacher to say; "Please come to dance, we would miss you" to get them moving. We realize that many of our dancers are considered "independent" but every one of us needs a little push to make healthy decisions now & then. Our clients need it even more.
- **BEHAVIORS:** Please do not use dance as a reward or punishment. Dance should be considered just like any other therapeutic activity; its benefits far outweigh the "fun" factor. If a client is exhibiting poor behavior, dance may be just the thing they need to turn it around. Let our skilled instructors try to make their/your day better.
- **BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS:** If there are words or actions that you know help the dancer to be more successful, or are detrimental, please let us know. Consistency is key.
- **COME IN:** We ask that staff come into the building with the dancer and also return to the waiting room 5 minutes prior to the end of class. This is so teachers can check-in with you about any notes, reminders, or concerns they may have.
- **SHARE INFORMATION WITH THE WHOLE STAFF:** We know that shifts and staff change, but to the best of your ability, please tell all staff about dance; where it is, when it is, that they need to come in and any specific behavior plans set in place with the teacher. For example, maybe your dancer waits in the van until the waiting room is less full before coming inside.
- **ATTENDANCE IS KEY:** We cannot teach and an individual cannot learn if they are not here. They pay money to be here, so they should be here. Volunteers drive here, teachers plan classes, classmates look forward to seeing their friends. If you have multiple clients from one house coming to dance and one of them is ill, please bring the other(s). They shouldn't be penalized and miss dance just because their friend has to. **If a group home shows a consistent lack of effort towards getting their dancers to dance class because of transportation or staffing issues, action will be taken by the Executive Director to solve the problem by contacting the group home manager or their superiors.**

TUITION: (See Chart Next Page)

Method:

Checks are preferred for record-keeping purposes. If it is necessary to pay in cash, please put it in a sealed envelope marked with your dancer's name and what it is for.

Schedule:

If tuition is not paid by the last week of April, including late fees, complimentary show tickets will not be given.

Tuition can be paid in 2 ways:

- paid in full by the 1st week of classes and receive a \$40 discount
- paid in 3 installments payable in September, November & March. Performance fees will be included in the September installment.

Adjustments:

We do not offer makeup classes for absences, but will adjust tuition for hospitalizations.

How to Pay:

Please give payments directly to our Evening Receptionist and she will immediately give you a receipt. If she is not in, please put tuition payments in the locked dropbox marked Tuition. After payments have been processed, a receipt will be ready for you the following week.

Extenuating Circumstances:

If you have extenuating circumstances and need an alternate arrangement for paying tuition, please contact the Office Manager during regular business hours. We will work out a payment plan for you and a document stating the particulars will be created for your signature.

FEES

A late fee of \$5 will be assessed if payments are made after due dates.

There will be a \$10 fee assessed for all returned checks.

There will be a \$5 processing fee to use credit/debit cards, to offset the fees charged by our provider.

WAIVERS/DISCOUNTS:

Only one discount can be given in a season.

A \$40 discount is given to those who pay in full at Fall Registration.

A \$55 discount is given to families with more than one dancer attending.

Danceability is part of Independent Health FlexFit Family and is also able to accept the Blue Cross Blue Shield Wellness Debit card. As of the 2017-18 season, a \$30 Wellness discount is given to those members.

Families and staff are encouraged to apply for third party payment when possible, i.e. NYS Commission for the Blind, OPWDD, People Inc. and other agencies. Contact your service coordinator and insurance companies to see what money is available for recreational and wellness activities.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Scholarships are available dependent on dancer and/or family need. A FULLY completed application with appropriate documentation is required to officially apply for a scholarship. See Director for application, criteria and deadline information.