

danceability to empower through movement

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2021-22

Dancer

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 & music and the caregivers that love them. Our classes are open to anyone in the community who would like to join us, special needs or not. 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 late afternoon & evenings from September to May and are 45 minutes long, once a week. 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 & won’t 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, monthly 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. If you have a self-directed plan, we will work with your fiscal manager to add *danceability* tuition to your budget.

Our primary goal is dance education, but having been in business for over 15 years, we know that it can be about so much more: health, wellness, a creative outlet, a sense of belonging, a support system, education, socialization, behavior modification, sensory work & FUN. We hope that through good communication between all of us, your needs will be met.

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! We are not JUST dance instructors, we are professionals in the field...although we are awesome dance instructors too!!

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.

CLASS PLACEMENTS: At *danceability*, we work very hard to make sure that we place our dancers in the very best class for them based on numerous factors: age, current level of movement, ability, medication schedule, bed times, school/work/therapy schedules, completed registration paperwork, adherence to studio policies, distance from studio, etc.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:

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

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.

WEATHER CLOSINGS:

Closings due to weather will be run on Channel 2, Channel 7 and posted on our Facebook page.

A student calendar will be posted on our website at the beginning of the season for all days off. We DO have classes on most of the Monday holidays (otherwise, those dancers would miss out on a lot).

START TIMES

Students should be ready to start class at the scheduled time. Please do not come more than 10 minutes early before the start of class. This is especially important because we need to give everyone time and space to enter in and out of class. Our instructors are busy preparing for class and some students often become agitated waiting in a busy waiting room. If needed, special accommodations for students who need assistance entering class or who may need to wait until the waiting room is less busy 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 allows 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 in as unrestricted a way as possible. 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 underneath are acceptable. We ask that long or loose hair be pulled back as dangling hair distracts 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 instructors are very adept 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 essential that the device be brought to class 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. We cannot store them at the studio for you.

PROGRESS

Although our instructors 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 missing 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. If you need us to help advocate for the dancer, just let us know!*

****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 is serious medical issues; in this instance, please contact us immediately so we can work with you.***

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS

After 3 consecutive absences from class without a valid excuse; the dancer will automatically be 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 absences. Unless other arrangements have been made, you are still financially responsible for the classes missed up until formal withdrawal. Please contact us to work out any concerns or difficulties you may be having before this happens! We can't fix a problem that we don't know about.

FAMILY/VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

We love our volunteers and couldn't do what we do without them! While we love that our dancers and families connect with their volunteers, we respectfully ask that you do not share phone numbers or emails to alert them to absences. If your dancer is going to be absent, we still need their volunteer to come to class so

they can then be prepared to help the dancer catch up the following week or we may need them to help someone else in the class. 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 and sharing information is no guarantee.

SEXUAL AND OTHER UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT

Danceability is committed to providing an environment free of harassment in any form, including inappropriate and disrespectful behavior, intimidation, and other unwelcome conduct directed at an individual because of their inclusion in a protected class. The following are examples of harassment; behaviors not specifically on this list may also be considered harassment:

- Unwanted sexual advances;
- Offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors;
- Retaliation or threats of retaliation for refusing advances or requests for favors;
- Leering, making sexual gestures or jokes, or commenting on another's body;
- Displaying sexually suggestive content;
- Displaying or sharing derogatory posters, photographs, or drawings;
- Making derogatory epithets, or slurs;
- Ongoing teasing about another's religious or cultural practices;
- Ongoing teasing about another's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity;
- Physical conduct such as touching, assault, or impeding or blocking movements

Any harassment is unlawful whether it involves coworker harassment, harassment by a manager, or harassment by persons doing business with or for the Company, such as clients, customers or vendors. Any incidences of harassment should be reported immediately to the Director and/or the Board Chair.

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.

danceability
2021-22 Season
Tuition Information Sheet

Weekly Dance Class - September thru May

Non-Refundable Registration Fee:	\$ 45
Performance Fee (includes costume):	\$ 65
Monthly Tuition :	<u>\$ 75</u> x 8 months
(Sept & May combined as one month)	
TOTAL TUITION COSTS	\$710

10-Week Virtual Fitness Frenzy: \$110 session

Session #1 begins October 4

Session #2 begins January 24

***In an effort to minimize prolonged contact between customers and staff, payments must be made online whenever possible. Group Homes may continue to pay with checks.**

***Danceability online payment options will make it possible to:**

- Set up auto-payments on the same day every month. Paying monthly is preferred.
- Even though the payment is month to month, the season is not month to month. You are committing to attending class for the entire season (Sept-May) and making payments for 8 months.

***Please call us to discuss if you would like to pay in full, would like to use your IndependentHealth Flexfit or BCBS Wellness cards for partial payment of tuition, if payment is coming directly from a self-directed budget, or you have other extenuating circumstances.**

- *If you pay in full for in-person classes you are committing to attending class for the full season*
- *No refunds will be issued for partial months. Any overpayments will be credited towards the 2022-23 dance season.*

***We have extremely limited tuition scholarships this year for those students with documented financial need. Please do not hesitate to ask for an application, but please know that applying is not a guarantee of receiving an award.**

See below for more detailed information

TUITION:

Automatic monthly payments are set up via Paypal subscription. This is the preferred method of payment. If you would like to pay by check or cash instead, or pay the balance in full, please speak to the office manager. Group homes may still continue to pay by check. Again, if you have a self-directed plan, we will work with your financial manager to get *danceability* tuition put into your budget and have payment made directly to us. If you have chosen to have self-directed budget monies directed to you, then please set up an automatic payment plan. Your paypal notification is your receipt, but we will always provide invoices on letterhead if you need them for reimbursement, just ask! **Tuition must be paid in full by the last week of April.**

Adjustments:

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

Extenuating Circumstances:

The monthly automatic payment should take care of most issues, but if you have other extenuating circumstances and need an alternate arrangement for paying tuition, please contact the Office Manager during regular business hours to discuss your situation.

FEES

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

There will be a \$5 processing fee to use credit/debit cards, for anything other than the automatic tuition payments via paypal, to offset the fees charged by our provider.

WAIVERS/DISCOUNTS:

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 2021-22 season, a \$30 Wellness discount is given to those members when they use that benefit to pay tuition. No credit card fees will be charged for these payments. Please contact the office manager if you want to use this benefit for partial payment of tuition. Proof of insurance may be required.

Families and staff are encouraged to apply for third party payment when possible, i.e. NYS Commission for the Blind, OPWDD, family reimbursement through 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 depending on the financial need of the dancer and/or family. A FULLY completed application with appropriate documentation is required to officially apply for a scholarship. See Director for application, criteria and deadline information. Scholarship recipients will be required to sign a contract and may be asked to help with fundraisers or volunteer in some capacity.

****INFORMATION FOR GROUP HOMES****

As social workers, special education teachers, physical therapists and the like, we want you to consider us 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 instructors 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, instructors 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.