

danceability

to empower through movement

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2022-23

Family

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 is 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 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 to accommodate the best class fit for their loved ones.

Payments involve an annual registration fee, monthly tuition, and a performance fee for 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 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, travel time to the studio, etc. Things we cannot accommodate are other extracurricular activities, pairing dancers with friends, siblings' activity schedules, etc. We do not offer makeup classes for absences.

SCHEDULING CONFLICTS: Because we put so much effort into finding the right class placement for each dancer, we are unable to accommodate scheduling conflicts due to other activities (sports, school clubs, etc.). When discussing your dancer's schedule with the Director in order to find an appropriate placement and class time, please take into account your dancer's other activities and make a firm commitment to attend dance class at your scheduled time. While we understand the occasional absence when unexpected events arise, making it a habit impairs the progress your dancer makes in class each week, the relationships they are forming with classmates and volunteers, and their achievements in the Annual Performance. We cannot make tuition adjustments for missed classes other than those due to hospitalizations. You can do it all, just not all at the same time.

FORMS: Our liability release and photo/media releases are part of the registration forms. Please read and sign off on them when registering your dancer. If you have any questions, please reach out. Our medical release form will be emailed to you for submission to your dancer's physician once your registration has been accepted. If you have a question about whether your previous medical release is still valid, please reach out to the Office Manager. We cannot accept medical forms from other entities (Special Olympics, school districts, employment, etc.). Our medical release form is the only one we can accept and must be received in a timely manner so your dancer can attend class.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:

Please read the **Studio Information Board** inside the studio. In addition:

***REMIND APP:** Please download the REMIND APP for the most up-to-date studio-wide information like snow closures, special events, and safety issues.

- 1) Download App
- 2) Find Class: **Danceability**
- 3) Code: **able2dance**

We do our best to keep our website (www.danceabilityinc.org) up to date as well, but it is not a source of day-to-day info.

*Like us on **FACEBOOK:** <https://www.facebook.com/DanceabilityInc>

*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 716-651-0094.

WEATHER CLOSINGS: Closings due to inclement weather will be run on Channel 2 website, Channel 7 website, posted on our Facebook page, and sent out on **REMIND**.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS: A student calendar is posted on our website at the beginning of the season. 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 can 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 716-651-0094.

PROPER DANCE ATTIRE: 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. 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 a dancer uses in their everyday life be used in dance class. In a few circumstances, the device must be brought to class to ensure safety for the dancer, instructor, and volunteer. These devices include belts, wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, etc. Please speak with your class instructor to determine if a device is beneficial in class and if so, bring them with you each week. We cannot store them at the studio for you.

PROGRESS: Although our instructors try their best to communicate well with families and staff, please feel free to inquire about your dancer's progress from the teacher. If the teacher cannot speak to you at that time, please leave a phone or email message, and the teacher will get back to you promptly. The teacher, not the volunteer, should address any questions or concerns.

ABSENCES: Please notify the studio at **716-651-0094** if your dancer is absent from class. This is a 9-month program, and we plan on your dancer being here for the duration. A medical release is **REQUIRED** before returning to class if your dancer is missing due to an extended medical absence. 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. The group home manager and/or agency must 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 the agency. *For example, People, Inc. vans can be borrowed within the agency if properly arranged. Let us know if you need us to help advocate for the dancer!*

****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; we all need to honor that. The only exception is serious medical issues; in this instance, please contact us immediately so we can work with you.***

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS: *After three consecutive absences from class without a valid excuse, the dancer may 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 are made, you are still financially responsible for the classes missed up to 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.

VIOLENT OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS: *Danceability* staff has the experience, education and patience to work through dancers' negative behaviors through behavior modification methods such as modeling, positive reinforcement, distractions, reward systems, sensory breaks, etc. However, when a dancers' behavior becomes aggressive or violent towards themselves or others, we will 1) ask a parent to be present in class, 2) work with the parent, volunteer and student to quickly modify the behavior. However, should the behavior continue, the student will be temporarily withdrawn from classes until such time that interventions succeed in changing the behavior and it no longer occurs within the dance class, and hopefully elsewhere.

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 be prepared to help the dancer catch up the following week. We may need them to help someone else in the class, 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.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS: Many of our high-school age and older students are looking for volunteer opportunities to fulfill school requirements or for other reasons. In-class one-to-one volunteers must be able to respond quickly to situations to keep their dance partner safe, be able to provide physical assistance and verbally relay information from the instructor. For those reasons, becoming an in-class volunteer may not always be appropriate. However, we have plenty of other volunteer opportunities throughout the year that would be beneficial. We always need help at events, with mailings throughout the year, help with building maintenance, organizing our props and materials and other administrative tasks. Please be aware that these may not be regularly

scheduled activities. Let us know if your dancer is interested in any of these opportunities and we will work with you to find a good fit.

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.

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 Executive Director and/or the Board Chair.

danceability
2022-23 Season
Tuition Information Sheet

Weekly Dance Classes 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 DANCE TUITION COSTS	\$710

FITNESS FRENZY

***8 week In-Person Fitness Frenzy Sept 26-Nov 21 - Cost:\$80**

***6 week Virtual Fitness Frenzy Jan 2-Feb 13 - Cost: \$60**

***8 week In -Person Fitness Frenzy March 6-May 1 - Cost: \$80**

**Each session must be registered for separately*

***Payments must be made online whenever possible. Group Homes may continue to pay with checks or cash.**

***Danceability online payment options 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.**
- **The \$45 registration fee and the \$65 performance fee is collected with the first auto-payment. The performance fee will be refunded if your dancer does not perform.**
- **A link to set up PayPal auto-payments (registration fee, performance fee and monthly tuition) can be found on the online registration form.**

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

- **No refunds will be issued for partial months. Any overpayments will be credited towards the 2023-24 dance season.**
- **No refunds will be issued for missed classes due to illness. We will credit/adjust tuition in cases of hospitalizations lasting more than 2 weeks.**
- **There is a \$10 fee for returned/bounced checks.**

***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.**

TUITION: Automatic monthly payments are set up via a 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 contact the Office Manager at 716-651-0094. Group homes may continue to pay by cash/check/money order. If you have a self-directed plan, we will work with your financial manager to get *danceability* tuition put into your budget and where possible, have payment made directly to us. Please set up an automatic payment plan if you have chosen to have self-directed budget monies reimbursed to you. Your PayPal notification is your receipt, but we always provide invoices on letterhead when requested. **Tuition must be paid in full by the last week of April.**

Tuition Adjustments: We do not offer makeup classes for absences but will adjust tuition for hospitalizations lasting more than two weeks.

Extenuating Circumstances: The automatic monthly 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 process credit/debit cards in person to offset the fees our provider charges.

WAIVERS/DISCOUNTS/THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS: *Danceability* is part of the Independent Health FlexFit Family and can also accept the Blue Cross Blue Shield Wellness Debit card. As part of our agreement to accept these funds, 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 tuition payment. 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 the Executive Director for application, criteria, and deadline information. Scholarship recipients must sign a contract and may be asked to help with fundraisers or volunteer at some point during the season. The annual registration fee of \$45 is not covered by a scholarship and will be the responsibility of the family/dancer. The Scholarship Committee meets in mid-October and awardees will be notified shortly thereafter. If you have applied for a scholarship, please do not stress about tuition payments before that. If only a partial scholarship is awarded, we will work with you to set up a reasonable payment plan to cover the amount that is your responsibility.

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

Our instructors are social workers, special education teachers, physical therapists, and mental health professionals; thus, 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! We care, our volunteers care, and their classmates ask.
- **ENCOURAGE:** Many adults have difficulty 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 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 return to the waiting room 5 minutes before 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. Instructors plan classes, volunteers drive here, and 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.