

# Family Dance! Dance as a Healthy and Fun Family Activity

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Thank you for taking the time to learn about the process of learning to use dance as a healthy and fun family activity.

## Purpose

This leader's guide is designed to allow maximum flexibility in how you deliver the lesson, while providing important frameworks and strategies for engaging your audience. As a leader in your community, you have an opportunity to provide useful, evidence-based, and reliable information about how to build resilience in families through dancing. This lesson and leader's guide focuses on working with families with children as young as 2 (or even younger so long as they are toddlers), and as old as 6. The preliminary research indicates that these are the ages of children who can share a space and this activity together well. As a courtesy, however, please allow the younger and older siblings of 2- to 6-year-olds to attend so families can participate together. The goal is for families to be able to participate together!

## Goals of the Sessions

The goals for these sessions are focused on all of the benefits that come from healthy, fun family engagement. Before you begin demonstrating the dance steps, let your participants know the goals and perspective we take in teaching the program below:

- » The short term goals are for you to learn how to **use dance as a family activity** and to learn to **use mindful-mindedness** approaches and scaffolding strategies to help enhance children's thinking and learning.
- » The medium-term goal is for you to **use dance as a fun and healthy family activity outside of these sessions** (e.g. at home, after school



activities), and to use mindful-mindedness approaches and scaffolding strategies to help enhance your children's thinking and learning.

- » The long-term goals for this program are for you to **use dance as a fun, healthy family activity that keeps you active, connected, and healthier than those who do not use dance as a family engagement activity**. We also aim for you to use mindful-mindedness approaches in other activities to support your children's ongoing development, and not just dance.

## Approach to Delivery

It is important when presenting this lesson that the facilitator be sure of two things. First, be well versed in the content of the lesson. This includes the frameworks, as well as the steps. You just need to be able to model and demonstrate the steps so that adults and children can watch what your feet and body do and then attempt to copy it. Second, and even more important than learning and knowing the steps, is to have fun, be creative, and be very engaged with the audience. This lesson was not designed to

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be static instruction; rather it is an interactive and dynamic process of engaging the audience with this material for their families' benefit.

### *Preparing for the Lesson:*

- » Read through the entire leader's guide (MF3356) and fact sheet (MF3355) before presenting.
- » Continually remind yourself that this is **not** dance class! This is using dance as a means for healthy, fun, family engagement.
- » Prepare your presentation of mindful-mindedness and scaffolding as reflected in the fact sheet.
- » Prepare yourself, practice steps, and watch the videos in advance of the family dance sessions.
- » Have a way to play music at a volume that can be heard in the space you have to conduct this activity.
- » Select and/or prepare a playlist of songs appropriate for the audience.
- » If possible, before the participants arrive, remove the chairs from the space you will be using.
- » Have water available, either through bringing enough for your participants, or making sure a drinking fountain is close enough that participants can access it without difficulty.
- » Remind yourself that adults and children will *both* be learning steps.
- » Continually remind your participants that this is **not** dance class!
- » Have an evaluation form and writing utensils available for each adult participant to complete at the end of the lesson. Note: if there are two adults for each child, ask *both* adults to fill out evaluations. We are interested in how everyone perceives the program.
- » **Group leader: Within a week after this session, please send completed evaluation forms to Bradford B. Wiles, School of Family Studies and Human Services, 343 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506. Thank you.**

### Helpful hints

*Sound system:* Smartphones serve as great juke boxes, and either a small, wired, powered speaker or

a wireless, charged, Bluetooth speaker often suffice for filling a space with sound. Even old-school stereos often have a line-in jack for an auxiliary player. If you need help for your specific application, please ask your extension professional to help you identify and secure what you will need.

*Song selection:* These sessions should be fairly high-energy activities, so fairly high-energy tunes are a good match. In addition, mixing in songs for children and adults can help all ages increase their participation. For example, mixing in a Disney song, and then a song from your own youth can bridge the generations.

*Preparing the space:* Keeping families together and dancing is much easier if the adults are unable to sit and observe. Removing the chairs might seem unfair at first, especially to those who might need a break, but doing so facilitates full participation by the adults. If a situation arises where someone needs to sit down, then have a chair available outside of the space.

*Mastery is not the goal:* There is nothing wrong with adults and children learning the steps and building on the dance skills they have learned, but mastery is not the goal here. You will likely find adults who are very focused on mastering the steps, sometimes even at the expense of helping their children gain mastery! Remind yourself and your audience that these sessions are meant to take advantage of dance as a fun and healthy activity.

### Important Reminders

- » Before you begin, always keep in mind that any physical activity can cause injury. Please make sure that you are healthy enough to perform light exercise, and make sure to listen to your bodies as you engage in these activities. In developing this program, one of the most repeated lessons we learned from families is that they did not anticipate how much exercise they would get by dancing. Please pace yourselves, and make sure you and your child take appropriate breaks and drink plenty of water.
- » Have fun and use dancing as a healthy activity virtually anywhere, and at any time. This class is set up so that everyone — children and adults — learns how to use dance as a family activity.

- » This is **not** dance class. You will learn dance steps, but it is much more important to have **fun!** Learn and do the steps at your level and ability.

## Program Delivery

If at all possible, have more than one person lead the sessions. A ratio of 10 to 1 (participants to leaders) seems to work well. This is not a rule, just a guideline. You might consider having some partners help with instruction. After the initial 5 minutes, please include activities that help with learning, dancing, and focus. For example, try balancing on one leg for 20 seconds, and then balancing on the other. You can also stomp and clap in different sequences. For example, do 4 beats with a left foot stomp, then a right foot stomp, then a clap, and another clap. You can mix and match these from all claps to all stomps and anything in between. You can then move into a step, and then back to these stomp/claps/balancing activities. A model of a schedule of activity is below, adding up to 30 minutes:

- » 7 minutes — Introductions, present goals for the program, health and safety warning, benefits of dance, presentation of mindful-mindedness and scaffolding (from fact sheet), and after-session evaluation request.
- » 5 minutes — Learn the three basic steps. Practice changing the order of them, and be sure to use Lightning and Thunderstorms to give adults and children a chance to let loose.
- » 7 minutes — If possible, break into smaller groups of three to four adults and their children, and let them lead the small groups. For example, ask an adult who seems good at it to demonstrate a Step and Clap step, and then have every adult and child go around a circle giving it a best shot. **please** let hilarity ensue! It will be funny.
- » 7 minutes — Come back together as a group, and learn more advanced steps. Make sure the group is ready for this. If they are not confident, then just focus on practicing the steps already learned.
- » 4 minutes — have a final song planned that everyone can dance to. If you feel comfortable with your participants, ask each one to call out a different step when it comes to their turn around the full circle. For example, start with a song, practice a Shuffle, then ask a child to add the next step. Then add your own, then ask an adult, and so on.
- » **Always have fun!**

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*Directions: Please answer the following questions; however, completing this survey is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. You will not be identified with your answers in any way. Please do not put your name on this form. Thank you for answering these questions.*

**How do you rate this lesson? Check one:**

- Excellent     Good     Average     Poor     No opinion

**Do you think this information will be useful to you in your own life? Check one:**

- Yes     No    If yes, how?

*Please rate your answers to the following questions on a scale of 1-5 with 1 indicating “disagree completely,” 2 indicating “disagree somewhat,” 3 indicating “neutral,” 4 indicating “agree somewhat,” and 5 indicating “agree completely” by circling your response for each question.*

**Scale: 1-Disagree completely, 2-Disagree somewhat, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree somewhat, 5-Agree completely**

**Because of this lesson, when I am with children:**

I am more likely to think about dancing with children as a healthy and fun activity to do with them.

1      2      3      4      5

I am more likely to use dance as a way to engage with the children in my life.

1      2      3      4      5

I am more likely to tell my family and friends about the benefits of dance as a family engagement activity.

1      2      3      4      5

I am more likely to learn other steps to teach them to the children in my life.

1      2      3      4      5

I am more likely to think of dance as much more than just dancing.

1      2      3      4      5

**Will you share this information with others?**

- Yes     No

FCE \_\_\_\_\_ Other organization \_\_\_\_\_ Family \_\_\_\_\_ Friend\_ Other (*please explain below*):

Gender:  Male     Female     Prefer not to respond    What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

If you attended this session with a child, what are the ages of the children?

Thank you! Please give this survey to your lesson leader. The information you provided will help us improve family life education. If you are interested in being contacted in the future on the impact of this lesson in your family life, please provide the following:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**For Leaders Only:**

Leader’s name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number or email: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of group: FCE \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Date when lesson was given: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of men: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of women: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed surveys to your county/district Family and Consumer Sciences agent, or mail directly to:

Bradford B. Wiles, Kansas State University, 1324 Lovers Lane, 343P Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506