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Circle Dance as a Teaching Tool in Occupational Therapy

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1. Circle Dance
It derives from the tradition of folk dances and is practised worldwide. Participants hold hands in a circle and repeat a pattern of steps, following the rhythm dictated by the music and related to specific dances.1

2. Teaching tool
Circle dance has previously been introduced to the OT curriculum of the University of São Paulo by the first author. It has recently been introduced to BSc (Hons) and MSc Occupational Therapy programmes at the University of Cumbria as a tool for working with groups.

3. Objectives
Students learn the dances, reflect on their experience and consider the therapeutic use of circle dance in an OT setting. Self-expression is not the primary aim and the process of learning movements and positions takes place within a social and cultural context.3

4. Approach
The teaching approach focuses on skills acquisition and develops the students’ ability to perform the dances in a collective way, whilst teaching the cultural and historical background of the dances.4

5. Evaluation
It suggests that circle dance is perceived as a unique and enjoyable occupation, which provides an opportunity to connect with others through movement, whilst promoting well-being.

“Inspiring! It has opened my eyes as to how dance can have a therapeutic effect on my body, mind and soul.”

“Very good experience! I am not a person who would volunteer to dance but I felt confident and included.”

6. Conclusion
The students perceive circle dance as a potentially valuable tool for working with groups in various settings. However, they highlight the need for further training which would give them the necessary skills and confidence to apply circle dance in a therapeutic way.

References:

Acknowledgments
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