

Learning to Create, Creating to Learn

Teacher: Sonja H. Sutherland

For the creative movement classes, I incorporate my experience in Feldenkrais®, Aikido and dance to facilitate creative explorations of how we perceive ourselves and our relationship to our environment. Through dynamic movement games and structured improvisations, my classes explore basic elements of time, space, energy and quality of movement.

To give you some idea of what goes on:

To begin class (or at some appropriate time during class), we sit in a circle and play various breathing games, exploring and paying attention to our breath. We play some circle games of leading and following rhythms while sitting as well as while incorporating full body movement patterns. This leads us to drum games.

I play a slew of rhythms on a Kids Konga drum and the children play versions of freeze dance (hopping, whirling, crawling, rolling, jumping, slithering, gliding, leaping, etc, etc while I play rhythms, and freezing when the music stops). For each day I select of theme and incorporate this into our games. For example, the theme for the class may be: Spatial relations. Some aspects of this theme that we could explore through our movement improvisations include: shapes(pointy, smooth, silly, sad, angry, strong, light...); level changes (high, low, middle); negative spaces (spaces inside and between shapes), floor patterns (paths that may be curvy, angular, squiggly, full of potholes), air patterns, etc. For freeze dance, I call out a directive such as “next time the drum stops, make a twisted shape”. When I stop drumming and they all create their own unique twisted shapes, I may say: “Now see if you can keep your shape and travel with it through space”. We play games where shapes transform in 10 counts into other shapes, or shapes attach themselves to others and then travel through space as one unit, shapes melt to the floor, explode in the air...

Near the end of class, we play group games which include running, hopping, galloping, slithering versions of tag. After lots of moving, they all lie back down on the floor and sense their breathing once again. “How is your breathing now? While I play this song on my flute, pay attention to how your breathing changes... Does it slow down or speed up? Where in your body can you feel your breath?” They eagerly share their discoveries as we prepare to go upstairs.

We learn to create; we create to learn.