

Significance of Slow and Small Movements in Japanese Dance Therapy

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For reference:

Exercise 1: 'Ne-nyoro' lesson

- 1) Lie down on the floor on your back. Stretch your knees.
- 2) Your partner catches both your ankles, and holding them together, shakes your legs to the left and right briskly, making your entire body wave.
- 3) Check if the head is swaying to some extent as a result of this waving. Your partner changes the shaking speed and the amplitude so as to make an irregular movement in the body.



Exercise 2: Simple arm rotation.

- 1) Lift the right or left arm, release tension from the shoulder and allow it to fall freely (while taking care not to hurt your elbow and shoulder joint).
- 2) Use the elbow to control slightly the arm's fall, and turn the arm's falling movement into a swinging movement.
- 3) By using the inertia of the arm's swinging movement, lift the arm again.
- 4) Keep swinging the arm by focusing on its weight and inertial movement, while avoiding muscle tension.

Exercise 3: Arm-standing exercise.

- 1) Lie down on the floor on your back. If you have back problems, you may keep your knees bent). If you still find this position painful, then stop doing this exercise altogether.
- 2) Stretch your arms wide open, with your palms facing up, along the floor.
- 3) Rest your arms on the floor.
- 4) Try to touch the floor with all of your finger nails in order to stretch your arms farther.
- 5) Release tension from your entire body and take a rest for a while.
- 6) Slowly lift your forearms, keeping your elbows on the floor, until each arm forms a right angle.
- 7) Breathe normally. Try not to close your throat when you move your arms.
- 8) Slowly lift your entire arm. Do not rush. This is a precious moment to perceive your arm weight, and so encounter Noguchi's 'god of gravity.'

9) Continue lifting your arms, raising your shoulder blades off the floor.

10) Stretch your arms all the way upward. Keep this position for a while.

11) Release tension from your shoulders and allow your shoulder blades to rest on the floor while your arms are extended upward.

12) Feel your shoulder blades on the floor and try to locate the point on which the weight of the arm rests.

13) Try to suspend your arms up in the air with as little muscle tension as possible. Keep your arms in this position for a while.

14) When you feel tired, release tension from your shoulders and lower your elbows to the floor gradually. Feel how heavy your arms are while lowering your arms.

15) Rest your elbows on the floor. Then, release tension from your elbows, allowing your forearms to lower gradually.

16) Rest your arms on the floor. Feel that your body is more relaxed and tranquil.

17) Repeat the exercise a few times. Try to keep your arms up with as little muscle tension as possible.



Exercise 4: Three minute palm opening and the finger dance

1) Make a fist and spend at least 3 minutes to open your hand.

2) The palm opening movement should be continuous although you might experience awkward reactions or 'squeaky' movements in the finger joints. Keep breathing normally.

3) After this exercise, try a 'dance of fingers.' Explore the movement of fingers like stretching, bending, and twisting (with and without wrist movements).

4) If you are lying, you can try this exercise after the arm standing lesson (exercise 3), and create a whole arm-dance, engaging finger, elbow, and shoulder movements.



* These exercises are mainly for therapists to train one's own body-mind sensitivity. The detailed explanations will be available in "Oxford Handbook of Dance and Wellbeing" by Dr Vassiliki Karkou, et al. (in press): the chapter "Butoh Dance, Noguchi Tai-so and Healing" by Dr Paola Esposito, Oxford Brookes University, UK, and Prof Toshiharu Kasai, Sapporo Gakuin University, Japan