

commune sense'

Movement Guide for the Classroom

commune sense'

This is a series of exercises coming from the dance and performance arts field which can be practiced by students in general education. These exercises are easy to adapt for all bodies and physical conditions.

We have created three different packages:



WAKE UP!
Awareness through movement



GET OUT THERE!
Trust and confidence building through movement



CHILL OUT
Relaxing through movement

In each package you will find a series of short videos with instructions that you can watch by yourself or with your students. Some exercises can be done while watching the video, some others need to be practiced without the video.

Students might take some time to get used to such exercises, to trust them and focus. Everything that is new can be scary, but dare to sow the seed and you will surely reap the fruits.

We encourage all teachers to propose these experimentations to the students and to give them time to relax through the practice and enjoy it to their full power.

COMMUNE SENSE project is aiming at breaking different barriers through the practice of contemporary dance. Our main goals are to acquire new experiences collectively, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, increase young people's initiative, discover others, discover art and culture and a whole range of means of expression. Today's world separates mind from the body. Bodies are treated as objects, measured, improved, devoid of their spiritual dimension. Or the other way, the mind is often not in touch with the body. Therefore, we recommend to treat this guide as the exploration of the wholeness of life and as a fun activity to smuggle in daily school life or at work. This package is proposed to all teachers/educators, students of various abilities and everyone who is willing to let in more sunshine in their lives.

The guide is born of the collaboration between educational institutions from Reykjavík, Iceland and Warsaw, Poland and funded by the EEA Iceland, Liechtenstein & Norway Grants.

commune sense'



WAKING UP YOUR BODY

:: face

:: upper body



WHEN:

- before a speech / presentation / performance
- in the morning class or whenever your students are sleepy
- to start your day

WHY TO USE IT:

You can say so much without uttering a word, simply by the expression written on your face.

Facial warmups massage your face to loosen the muscles around your mouth, eyes and forehead. The receptors in your skin allow you to interact with the outer world through the sense of touch. They carry information such as heat, cold, pain and pressure. These exercises are made to wake up the skin and muscles of your face and upper body and remind ourselves how much the body can experience through skin and tissues beneath it. Warmups are an essential part of any pre-performance routines and can allow your face to be more expressive. It releases tension, strengthens facial muscles and increases circulation and blood flow to the skin. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation, stretching and tightening of the muscle. Don't be afraid to have fun with it! Be silly!

WAKING UP YOUR MIND

:: walk



WHEN:

- at the beginning of the school year or at the beginning of the day
- before a group working session
- to get focused
- for team building work

WHY TO USE IT:

This exercise will train your students' awareness of the space around them and the space between individuals. It is a good practice to bring consciousness to an individual's personal space. It is also a listening exercise and will be helpful when you need the group to re-focus and to get into a group working mode.

HOW TO USE IT:

The video is a fast forward version of the exercise. You can watch it before leading the group. Remember to give a little pause after each instruction.

Start walking in silence at your casual walking pace without bumping into each other. Try to use the whole space so there is no empty spot and be aware of the others. Look around you and observe everything that is in the space: walls, the floor, trees, clouds, etc. You can also look at each other but keep an open focus so you always see everything happening around you.

commune sense'



Start experimenting with the walk - go sideways, go backwards.
This part can be going on for 2-3 minutes.

The group will gradually accelerate the pace.
Moderate when the pace is too slow or too fast.
Gradually slow down the pace until you get to the casual pace.

Keep on walking. Now anyone in the group can say stop and the group needs to stop instantly. Then another (or the same person) can say start and the group needs to start at once.

You can do this for quite a while and encourage students to try to surprise each other by changing the rhythm of the starts and stops.

Now, nobody says anything, the group as a whole listens and stops or starts together without uttering a word. This is all about listening to the whole group and not being able to see who starts or who stops first.

Keep doing this until it is impossible to see anymore who starts and who stops.

Keep on walking, but imagine the space is gradually getting smaller.

Try to go as close to each other as possible without bumping into each other.

Now, the space opens again gradually.

You can let the group close and open the space again a few times without you giving further instruction.

WAKING UP YOUR MIND

:: secret friend



WHEN:

- at the beginning of the school year or at the beginning of the day
- before a group working session
- to get focused
- for team building work

WHY TO USE IT:

Practicing “Secret friend” will train your students’ awareness of the space and of The Other, their capacity to listen to each other and work as a group. It is a good exercise for groups whose members are still new to each other or even to help the group to focus.

HOW TO USE IT:

The video is a fast forward version of the exercise. You can watch it before leading the group. Remember to give a little pause after each instruction.

Start walking in silence at your casual walking pace without bumping into each other. Try to use the whole space so there are no empty spots and be aware of others. Try to keep an open focus.

This means that you do not look at one point but you are aware of everything happening in your gaze.

Choose one person without saying it out loud or letting anyone know who that person is. The chosen person is your secret friend. You are going to keep as close to your secret friend as possible, but try not to make it visible. Keep walking.

commune sense'



Leave your secret friend, open the space a bit. Now you choose your secret enemy and you try to keep as far away from that person as possible.

Now, leave your secret enemy and open space. Choose two people to be your secret angels and keep equal distance between them.

Then, choose one secret enemy and one secret friend. Try to keep as close to your secret friend and as far to your secret enemy as possible.

Choose one person and one spot in the space. You are trying to bring that person and lead them to the space. You want this person to feel that he/she is taken care of. Please be aware that if your group has not reached trust in each other and general respect of each other's personal space yet, you might skip this last part of the exercise.

WAKING UP YOUR MIND

:: chair game



WHEN:

- before a group working session
- to get focused
- for team building work
- whenever you feel like you need to bring some fun in the classroom!

WHY TO USE IT:

The “Chair game “ is a fun game you can play anytime in your class when your students need to move around a bit and get focused. It is a great listening game and it is real fun to practice it.

HOW TO USE IT:

You can watch it before leading the group. The aim of the game is to sit on the chair and to re-organize so that you sit on the chair before another person does it.

Clear the space from tables and other objects and keep one chair per person.

Spread the chairs around the space and make them face all directions.

One person walks away from the chair and starts walking again slowly towards the empty chair.

Someone will try to sit on the empty chair before the walking person. A new empty chair is then available and the group tries to sit on it before the walking person does.

This exercise needs to be done in complete silence, the group can not communicate a strategy with words.

If it gets too easy, you can always try to have two empty chairs.

TRUST AND LISTENING

:: blind walk



WHEN:

- in the beginning of the school year
- when you have new students
- to build up trust
- to train self-confidence
- to listen and respect others

WHY TO USE IT:

The “Blind walk” is a trust exercise used in performing arts. It will train your students’ capacity to trust your senses more than eyes and to discover space through touch, hearing, smell, etc. It will also teach them to take care and trust in each other.

HOW TO USE IT:

The video is a fast forward version of the exercise. You can watch it before leading the group.

One person is leading, the other one is with closed eyes.

The person who is „blind” is about to experience space in a new way. Most of the time we rely on our sight to understand the world around us, but during your walk you need to stay conscious of what you hear and feel. If you feel uncomfortable anytime, if the pace is too fast, please tell your guide. The guides will be responsible for the partners and their safety throughout the exercise. It is a good way to have one hand on the shoulder and to be quite close to the person you lead.

Start slowly. When you feel that your partner trusts you, change the pace. Go backwards, sideways. Stop and start again. Treat it as a dance practice. Add different directions to the blind walk: up, down, left, right. And then stop and change roles.

TRUST AND LISTENING

:: trust circle



WHEN:

- in the beginning of the school year
- when you have new students
- to build up trust
- to train self-confidence
- to listen and respect others

WHY TO USE IT:

With "Trust circle" your group will train the ability to focus on each other, organize in silence to manage the task, trust and care for each other. It is a great exercise in team building work and very often used in performing arts practices to get a group to work well together.

HOW TO USE IT:

The video is a fast forward version of the exercise. You can watch it before leading the group.

Make a circle of preferably 5 people. One person goes in the middle of the circle and closes eyes. When ready, the person in the middle can give in their weight to other people in the circle. The person in the middle tries to keep straight, but not completely locked in the body.

People standing in the circle catch the person and accompany them in different directions. They need to be ready all the time. They should bend your knee, put your feet a bit apart, ready to catch the weight. Be in a position where you feel strong. You should always be at least two to catch a person, never alone. It is good to position your hands to receive the weight on shoulders, above chest, on the back and on hips.

When accompanying the body to go in a different direction, do it slowly, otherwise it will be difficult to receive that person.

The group needs to support even more if they feel that the person in the middle is a bit scared. Then go a bit more slowly. If you are in the middle and you want to stop, stand and open your eyes.⁸

TRUST AND LISTENING

:: the line



WHEN:

- when your students need to move and get focused
- to train self-confidence
- to listen and respect others

WHY TO USE IT:

This exercise we learned from the choreographer Nicole Beutler and it is a version of numerous exercises used in contemporary dance, called “Flocking”, when students dance together in some kind of improvised unisson. New ways of dancing are going to be explored. Students will learn from each other’s movements and spend time getting into each other’s moves. It is a good exercise for people who are not used to dancing in public, as the focus is here on one another and not on how the movement looks like.

HOW TO USE IT:

The video is a fast forward version of the exercise. You can watch it before leading the group. In this video we had 4 dancers only, but you can do the exercise with more people. Half a class or the whole class?

At the beginning do „The line” in pairs and then as a group.

Start in a neutral position, close to each other and in the same orientation.

Try to let the movement happen and then develop the movement together. Remember about constantly developing the movement and not staying in one movement all the way through. Keep the movement for a moment and then transform it into another one.

It also helps to be mobile in your feet and hips so you can change orientation.

Try to listen to each other well, so that from the outside we cannot see who is leading and who is following.

Take your time when starting to tune in together.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

:: improvisation presentation



WHEN:

- before going to a dance class / performance
- before introducing a movement exercise
- to work against pre-conceptions and stereotypes about dance

WHY TO USE IT:

Charly Bouges, contemporary and hip hop dancer explains how movement improvisation can be a great source of expression, inspiration and bring a feeling of freedom.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

:: scanning the body



WHEN:

- to introduce movement improvisation to your students
- before attending a dance class/dance show
- when students need to move
- to train self-confidence
- to respect The Other

WHY TO USE IT:

Scanning exercises are used in contemporary dance practice for dancers to understand how their body works and how to search for new ways to move their own body. It is also an exercise where you have to use your imagination to create movement. Students will learn improvisation tools, learn to respect and understand their own body and to express themselves through the body.

HOW TO USE IT:

This exercise is in three parts - one technical part, one imagination part and one part where we mix technique and improvisation.

In the technical part you will focus on what moving is for your body, muscles, articulations, bones.

You will use your head, arms and legs separately.

commune sense'



First, you will work on stretching and returning to normal. Try to go as far as possible, in different directions and feel what is moving for your body.

Head first

Then arms

And legs

Now, you will explore all the ways your body's articulations can take. Go into every direction.

Head first

Then arms and hands

And legs

Finally, you will change the rhythm and speed up your movement. Try to manage movements by changing rhythm and speed.

Head first

Then arms and hands

And legs

Now we go into the second part of this exercise called „Imagination“. You will embody an animal using your head, arms and legs. You will act the way the animal acts, how it moves. When the animal is hungry, how does it search for food? When the animal is alert, how does it show attention and curiosity?

Start with your head

Then arms

And legs

In the last part of this exercise we will mix the technique and the imagination. We will now be able to move one part at a time or many parts together. Our animal will be able to move around the space, to reach with one or all parts of the body and to change the speed and rhythm.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

:: the cypher



WHEN:

- to introduce movement to your students
- before going to a dance class
- introducing a movement exercise
- before attending a dance show
- to train self-confidence and respect The Other
- to practice careful listening
- to train physical expression
- to have fun!

WHY TO USE IT:

„The Cypher” word comes from hip-hop dancing and is about sharing movements with others and improvising together. With this exercise your students will train self-confidence and learn how to support each other. The more time they spend doing this exercise, the more relaxed and willing to cooperate they will become. This activity is a real energy booster and stress reliever. It is good to repeat this exercise a few times, so the students get more confident.

HOW TO USE IT:

Choose music you like dancing to. Create a circle.

Each student can come in the middle of the circle to move.

The aim is to stay connected with what is happening around. Try to create connections. Keep focused on the group together. Be ready to propose and to accept invitations from others. It is complete improvisation, you don't have to move in a certain way, you can move as you want and go for it!

When doing this exercise for the first time, you can add the rule that one person invites another inside the circle to dance and that the group around needs to cheer loudly each time a new person dances into the circle.

RELAXING THE BODY

:: on a chair

:: upper body



WHEN:

- in the morning class or whenever your students are sleepy
- to start your day
- to release tension
- to boost energy in the classroom
- after longer sits by the computer or classroom desk

WHY TO USE IT:

There's too much sitting, not enough moving. Sitting long hours can cause back pain, shoulder and upper back tension while increasing hip tightness. These gentle exercises can be done at home, in the classroom and will help improve your flexibility, balance and strength in general. It is also good for posture, maintaining flexibility in the upper back and for loosening tight neck muscles. The movements increase blood flow and keep your joints active and lubricated. These stretches can truly change the way you feel while at school or work.

HOW TO USE IT:

On a chair - Choose a solid, stable chair that does not have wheels. You should be able to sit with your feet flat on the floor and knees bent at right angles. Avoid chairs with arms, as these will restrict your movement. Build up slowly and aim to gradually increase the repetitions of each exercise over time.

Upper body - Stand straight, lower your arms and tighten your belly muscles. Follow by making really smooth circles in your wrists, elbows, arms, shoulders and neck. Then put all small movements together and start making circles in all upper body joints. Repeat.

RELAXING THE MIND

:: meditation presentation



WHEN:

- before meditation
- before yoga class
- at any time of a day
- to work against preconceptions and prejudices about meditation and yoga

WHY TO USE IT:

Jacob Neff, contemporary and hip-hop dancer presents meditation as a physical practice. He explains how it can help you to connect to your ideas and imagination and to take care of your mental health.

RELAXING THE MIND

:: informal meditation presentation



WHEN:

- at any time of a day
- to work against preconceptions and prejudices about meditation and yoga

WHY TO USE IT:

Informal meditation is about being who you are where you are, finding presence in everyday life and knowing all is well, no matter where you are or what's happening around you. With that in mind, here we present one of many ways of informal meditation practice in your daily life through the story of Jacob Neff, contemporary and hip-hop dancer presenting informal meditation as Present Moment Awareness.

RELAXING THE MIND

:: breathing



WHEN:

- in the morning class
- to relieve tension in the group
- before presentations/speeches/public performances
- to start your day
- after longer sits by the computer or classroom desk
- in anxiety and while being overwhelmed with work
- when sensory overload

WHY TO USE IT:

Managing stress is easier said than done, but there is evidence that deep breathing can be an effective intervention to help improve many health conditions. It slows down the heart rate, reduces your blood pressure, helps manage symptoms of anxiety and relaxes your muscles. You feel better and your ability to think rationally is at its highest.

As with physical exercise or meditation, deep breathing will be most beneficial if you treat it as a daily practice.

Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

COMMUNE SENSE project benefits from a grant with a value of 135 000 euro received from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Grants



Zawirowania