



Dr. Charné Furcron gets in touch with bodily emotions





Photo Credit: Dana Marie Lupton

Furcron is outside, standing on her left leg, facing the sun. She reaches her arms out in front of her. Her hands are at a 90-degree angle, and her palms are also facing the sun. She is lifting her right leg so that her knee is at stomach level, and her foot is flexed. She wears a black shirt, a black skirt with small white polka dots and shimmery black leggings, contrasting the soft gray of the cinderblock wall behind her.

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By: Julie Galle Baggenstoss

The therapeutic component of dance has been part of Dr. Charné Furcron's life since she was a child. She brings her experiences to [Moving in the Spirit](#), where she encourages youth to tap into the strength of movement to develop intangible skills that they can carry through life.

Dance therapist Dr. Charné Furcron works with kids and teens in a role that is connected with her own childhood experiences. She has a 27-year tenure with the Atlanta-based youth development program and dance school, Moving in the Spirit, which has been recognized for its excellence in arts education and youth development since its launch in 1986. Furcron thinks about relationships as she works in dance, considering how one person identifies with another and also how one connects to the self, which is where her destiny with movement began as a young child.

"I am neurodivergent, which means I have an audial processing disorder, attention-deficit disorder and dyslexia," says Furcron. "I am learning disabled. Moving was my way of learning early on." She remembers that her mother, who was a school teacher, rejected special

education classes offered to her daughter and instead dug into extra education time at home. Furcron says that is where she taught herself how to learn.

She can tell you now that she is a kinesthetic learner. It seems a perfect category for the dancer who forges a path for youth in the intersection of movement and cognitive awareness while encouraging youth to advocate for themselves. “Now, I’m excited that more people are becoming aware of the various differences and the ‘intersectionalities’ of our identities, so that people can actually be in the room and say, ‘Hey, I’m neurodivergent. I need some support,’” says Furcron. “And, I really appreciate that, because I realize with myself I would never say that to people. I’m glad that we’re moving to a place where people are accepted for who they are.”

For Furcron, dance class becomes a window into her students’ lives. “Many times at Moving in the Spirit, when parents were concerned about academics and how their students learned . . . and [were] falling behind, then I actually realized, ‘Oh, they’re dealing with a learning disability,’” says Furcron. “I would try to support the parents with trying to figure out how the kid learns. Once someone can figure out the best way for them to absorb, grasp the material, then they can put those things into place and carry it out through their lives.” The notion of seeing dance students as whole people, and bringing in their thoughts and emotions about life outside of the studio is part of the important work that Furcron carries out for Moving in the Spirit.

A long path of education is behind Furcron’s leadership. She earned an Ed.D. in Counseling Psychology from Argosy University, Sarasota, two Master’s degrees in Dance Therapy and Counseling and a B.F.A. in Modern Dance from Texas Christian University. In addition to a list of academic credentials, she holds seven professional licenses that qualify her to work as a therapist, and she serves in leadership roles for the [American Dance Therapy Association](#) and the [National Dance Educators Organization](#). While Furcron does not practice therapy in her role as Director of Education, her background makes her keenly aware of how dance sharpens reactions to life, including anger, stress and joy. Through this lens, she develops classes for kids ages three to 18, trains teachers and oversees program evaluation for the organization.



Photo Credit: Dana Marie Lupton

Furcron is standing on her right arm. Her legs are in the air at a 45-degree angle, and her right leg, extending horizontally in the photo, follows the blue and gray roof of the Louvre, several meters behind her. Her right arm intersects the lower corner of the Louvre Pyramid, just a few feet behind her. She is wearing a bright yellow knit shirt and black pants, and she is barefoot. A few people in the background of the photo are looking at her, though they are out of focus.

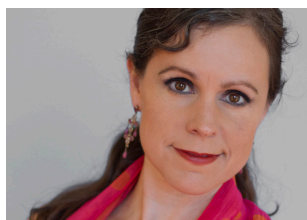
“Some of the uncomfortable feelings that might come up with students that I’m working with, they become part of the choreographic process,” she says. Sometimes, those emotions are uncovered during “family time,” a tool used by the program’s performance companies. Furcron explains that, with a dance therapist present, “We take the consensus of the group to see what the group temperature is. It might be that we have to deal with some anger. Once you peel off anger, you start to deal with hurt. And, that’s where the exploration begins.”

This is one aspect of the relationship that a person has with the self that is methodically addressed during dance classes at Moving in the Spirit. It sits at the intersection of the mind-body connection that guides Furcron. There is also an awareness of relationships with other people. Furcron aims to support students where they are. “If a student has a negative experience, I might have them tap into those feelings.” She says that she wants to be aware of the opportunities for students to change their narratives, as individuals who are part of a group, such as the dance class. “If this happens in a group process, not only does that person have their own changed narrative, but they have the other people in the room that are supporting them that could offer them different ideas to deal with some of the issues that they’re dealing with,” says Furcron. In such situations, emotions open opportunities to explore movement.

Likewise, dialogue about emotions leads to new phrases of movement. On the flip side of Furcron’s work, movement leads to understanding of emotions. “I feel like people are with their gadgets,” she says. “You’ll be on Zoom, and you’ll be over here looking at something else. I just think we’re out of touch with our bodies because of all of the distractions that we have.” Furcron wants her students to “get back to their bodies,” where she says emotions are felt. “I even asked them to roll back the script [and ask themselves], ‘Where am I feeling this in my body?’” Kids can learn to be aware of feelings and carry that technique through life.” She explains, “When they have different feelings or sensations in their bodies, they can remember, ‘When I was feeling stressed, I felt it in my heart, my heart was beating really fast,’ and they can bring some awareness to some problem solving.”

Furcron’s use of therapy tools in the dance studio is part of her overarching career as a dance therapist. She says that she is among one of 12 such professionals in Atlanta, the city which serves as the hub for the southern chapter of the American Dance Therapy Association. They work together to promote the profession by helping people understand that instead of aiding injured dancers, they should bring movement into the counseling environment. “When you have an addiction, there’s a lot of hurt, some rage or anger,” says Furcron. “I would allow the work with the client to get more in touch with the body and be more aware of where they’re feeling those feelings. And, instead of using, replace [that with] an activity or somatic practice, so they don’t relapse.”

Words such as “addiction,” “conflict” and “hurt” might not be the first that are conjured when someone discusses dance class. Furcron demonstrates that recognizing these matters, as well as joy, love or happiness, opens conversations that are at the base of relationships – with friends or strangers or the self. Through relationships, allies are formed, she insists. “It all goes back to those relationships.”



Julie Galle Baggenstoss is a scholar and frequent lecturer in the field of flamenco history and culture. She has an M.A. in Spanish from Georgia State University, where she analyzed flamenco through the lens of Spanish history, literature, and linguistics. She is the Executive Director of A Través, 501c3, dedicated to flamenco arts in the state of Georgia, and she is a founder of the Atlanta Flamenco Festival. In addition to performing and working with students in grades K-12 as a teaching artist, Julie teaches flamenco at Emory University.

More from Julie: [Perlizabeth De Leon blends commercial and concert dance for both stage and screen](#)
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