

Boundary Guidelines for The Wednesday Dance Jam:

**Promoting and supporting a consent-
based culture within which to dance**

Intention of the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam

The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam is intended to be a dance focused space. The intention of these guidelines is to create and support a consent based culture within which to practice the art of Contact Dance Improvisation

Kathleen Rea founder and facilitator of the Wednesday Dance Jam:

“I think it is important that there be many types of contact jams and events in Toronto and around the world. Diversity benefits our community. For example, I am personally excited to attend and facilitate contact dance events whose focus is to use contact dance to explore such topics as relationship or intimacy or massage. Exploring the boundaries of what contact dance is when done in a well-framed and consensual manner, in my eye, extends the range of the form. However, I think these exciting directions do not override the importance of still having classic contact dance events whose focus is to create a place for people to “get their dance on” ... a place where each of us consents to explore the kinesthetic joy of contact dance and keep that as our main focus even as other themes weave in and out of our dances.

It is my intention that the Wednesday Dance Jam be such a space.

For me it is all about consent ... that each contact dance event is clear about what it is. Then each of us attending know what we are consenting to when we enter the space. This idea of knowing what we are consenting to when we enter a space even can extend to contact jam with no boundary guidelines. For example, if I go to a contact Jam that has no boundary guidelines then I can enter with clear understanding that the boundaries of that jam emerge organically through the group that shows up and the manner the jam is facilitated and that I consent to that when I enter.

The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam Boundary Guidelines

Intention of these guidelines is to create a dance-focused space and to support a consent-based culture within which to practice contact dance Improvisation

These guidelines pertain to your time at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam, which is defined as time you spend while in the studio and third floor hallway and washroom, dancing or not dancing. It also includes time you spend arriving at and leaving the jam.

Expected Dress

- **Avoid wearing strong perfumes or essential oils.**
- **Exercise basic hygiene** by taking regular showers and wearing clean clothes.
- **Please limit pet dander on your clothes** for people with pet allergies.
- **Do not wear jewelry, watches or clothing with buttons** that might scratch or hit another participant.
- **Avoid wearing long flowing clothes** that can wrap around you or your dance partner.
- **Wear dance clothes that offer a lot of skin coverage.** Due to the sliding and rolling point of in contact improvisation, wearing only shorts and a tank top or bra-top is not advised because it can be dangerous (too slippery or too sticky). It is advised therefore to wear longish pants and a long sleeved or short sleeved t-shirt made of a non-slippery fabric like cotton.

Types of Touch

- **The predominant forms of touch in Contact Dance Improvisation are: 1) rolling point of contact; 2) sliding; 3) giving, taking and sharing weight; 4) using touch to follow momentum. The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam asks that these forms of touch be the predominant focus, with the intention to create a dance-focused space.** Many times, in a dance other forms of touch can play into a dance when a theme or story organically develops. These explorations are welcome if they are consensual (all people involved in the dance are willing) and the touch is not explicitly sexual.
- **Do not intentionally caress another dancer on their breasts or genitals** during a dance or while at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam.
- Body work (example receiving or offering a calf massage) is also part of what occurs in the context of the jam. **The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam welcomes the occurrence of consensual body-work**, and defines consensual body-work as body-work that occurs by offer or request and acceptance or this offer or request. Therefore, during your time at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam is not appropriate to come up to someone and start massaging their shoulders without first gaining their permission.

- Accidentally grazing someone, giving a proximity warning touch or merging someone into a dance if they seem willing are within the context what occurs at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam. **Non-consensual pass-by pokes, kisses, tickles, caresses, massages or pats while dancing or passing by someone in the studio or hallway are to be avoided.** An example of a non-consensual pass-by touch would be coming up to a person from behind and tickling their lower back.

Safety (physical and psychological)

- **Do not grab or lock another dancer into a position that compromises their safety.** Grabbing a person into a locked position during a lift reduces safety because your partner no longer has a choice as to how they will move.
- During your time at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam please **focus on lifting using principles of following momentum and avoid “muscling” or forcing a dancer into a lift.** Muscling or forcing a dancer into a lift can result in a person being lifted when they do not want to be lifted or when they are not ready to be lifted.
- **All dancers are asked to learn technique that allows them to a) avoid being lifted, b) redirect weight when it becomes too heavy and c) redirect to back-to-back contact if front to front contact begins to feel uncomfortable for you.** This allows each dancer to oversee having the type of dances that they want to have. Please ask the jam facilitator to teach you these techniques if you need.

Starting and Ending a Dance

- **Let someone disengage or end a dance when they want to.**
- **Do not pressure a person into dancing with you.** If someone declines when you ask them to dance, do not ask them their reason or pressure them to dance with you repeatedly during the jam.
- **Practice letting go of each dance experience.** No matter how amazing a dance was, try to let go of any expectations for future dances, or what meaning it might have once the dance is over.

Relational and Social

- The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam intends to provide a primarily dance-focused space. While we understand that connections and conversations occur in the studio, **please socialize in the hallway. If you do talk while in the studio, please talk quietly so as not to disturb the concentration of others.**
- **The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam is a screen free space.** Please turn your phone to flight mode and take your phones, tablets and other electrical devices out into the hallway if you need to use them.

- **Do not use, or think of, the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam as a place to find a date.** It is not appropriate to pursue relationship opportunities by asking someone out on a date while at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam.
- **“Cruising” behavior is not acceptable at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam.** “Cruising” behavior in this context involves attending the jam with the main intention to target sexual attention toward those who match the look, gender and age preference you look for in a sexual partner regardless of the whether the people/person is consenting to this attention.
- **The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam asks that you attend the jam with the intention to dance rather than to teach others how to dance.** You may occasionally do some of the following: discuss techniques, share tips, work through new lifts together and make requests (e.g. “Can you give me more hip weight?”), but your main role at the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Class and Jam is to be there as a dancer.
- **Use of intoxicants directly prior to the Jam or during the Jam is not acceptable.**
- **Verbal and/or physical aggression or posturing is not tolerated.**
- **If you attend the Jam with a partner, or you become friends with someone at the Jam, all the above boundary guidelines still apply even though you may have consensual touch and relationship agreements that extend beyond these guidelines in other contexts.**
- **Activities such as spectating, socializing, doing yoga or writing in your journal are welcome if these are not your exclusive activities and you spend a portion of your time at the Jam engaged in dancing.** Newcomers may watch a jam to help them decide whether to engage in Contact Dance Improvisation, but after this introductory process they are asked to attend with the intention to dance.
- **When a more experienced dancer dances with a newcomer, the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation asks that they consider that the newcomer might not understand the culture of a jam.** For instance, the newcomer might not know how to end a dance. It is therefore advised that dances with newcomers should be relatively short ones (not more than five to ten minutes) so that the new comer has the opportunity to dance with other people and acclimatize themselves with the culture of the jam. It also can be a good idea when dancing with a newcomer to briefly show them how to end a dance and to let them know they can do so at any point.

All the guidelines on this card are specific to the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam and are created with the intention to create a consent based culture within which to dance. Other contact improvisation jams may have different intentions and may provide different boundary guidelines (or no guidelines at all).

Promoting Your Boundaries During Dance Improvisation Jams

Intention of the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam

The intention of the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam is to create a place for people to learn about and practice contact improvisation in a consent-based culture. To create a safe-enough space for this to happen, the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam asks that participants honour each other's boundaries. We ask for appropriate, respectful verbal and non-verbal contact. Listed in this document are the guidelines to help sustain an open, safe, expressive, and respectful dance space for all.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

The Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam protects the right of all participants to be free of discrimination, harassment and hate activity, based on age, ancestry, citizenship, creed (religion), colour, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, level of literacy, marital status, place of origin, membership in a union or staff association, political affiliation, race, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sex, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristics.

What You Can Do To Assert Your Boundaries

- **You have the right to accept or refuse any dance without needing to give a reason.**
- **These verbal and physical cues are usually a successful way to end a dance:**
 - Hands together as in prayer, look at your partner and nod your head
 - Tell your partner “thank-you for the dance” and then walk away
 - Tell your partner that you would prefer to dance on your own now
- **If your dance partner did something that you did not like, give them feedback.** For instance, if they grabbed your arm in a way that felt unsafe, you can ask them not to grab you and explain how grabbing decreases your level of safety because it prevents you from being able to make your own movement choices. You can then refer them to the laminated card at the front table of the Jam that outlines safety and boundary guidelines, or direct them to the Jam Facilitator who is present at every Jam.
- **Learn non-verbal techniques to avoid being lifted that you can use when you do not want to be lifted** (the “wet noodle” approach often works best). You can ask the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam Facilitator for tips to help with this. You are also welcome to end a dance or switch to verbal feedback at any point.
- **Learn non-verbal techniques that let you be in control of how much weight is borne on to you** (nudging someone back onto their own weight and refraining from offering ledges or only offering very steep ledges to bear weight often work best). You can ask the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam Facilitator for tips to help with this. You are also welcome to end a dance or switch to verbal feedback at any point.

- **Learn non-verbal techniques that redirect a dance towards back-to-back** (rolling against someone while “threading the needle” or “eating the banana” or “clocking” your arm or making your arms like a “barrel” can help with this aim). If someone is inviting front orientated contact that you are not comfortable with you can use these non-verbal techniques to redirect the dance. You can ask the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam Facilitator for tips to help with this. You are also welcome to end a dance or switch to verbal feedback at any point.
- **Please talk to the Jam Facilitator if you have any boundary concerns.**
- **You can refer a Jam participant to this card, which is on the front table at every Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam if you feel they need education on safety and boundary guidelines specific to the Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam.**
- **Be cautious of anyone promoting themselves as a teacher through tactics that undermine your confidence in yourself and/or your dancing.** Please inform the Jam Facilitator if this occurs.

If you need advice on how to assert your boundaries, or have concerns about someone not fulfilling any of the stated Wednesday Contact Dance Improvisation Jam boundary guidelines, please talk with the Jam Facilitator. You may also email Kathleen Rea kathleenrea@rogers.com with any concerns or questions.

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RDDP Professional Conduct Standards for CI Teachers

REASON d'etre dance productions (RDDP) strives to only hire contact dance educators who have the intention to uphold these standards of practice

- 1) CI educators value and care for students and act in their best interest**
Teachers put the best needs of their student first rather than their own personal agenda.
- 2) CI educators are community role models who act ethically and honestly**
Teachers understand their role and influence on the community as a whole. As role models, they are asked to live up to a higher standard of behavior in all their dealings within the community.
- 3) CI educators have a broad knowledge base and understand what they teach**
Teachers are skilled and experienced in the topics that they teach.
- 4) CI educators engage in learning throughout their teaching career**
Teachers are continually learning and updating their skills.
- 5) CI educators advertise and solicit students in an ethical manner**
Represent yourself in advertisements honestly and clearly. Refrain from tactics of soliciting students that use the practice of persuasion through force or threats or tactics that undermine confidence.
- 6) CI educators understand that the relationship between teacher and student has, by definition, a power imbalance and act with according ethical behavior and responsibility.** When romantic relationships or friendships occur within the teacher/student power imbalance there is the risk that the person with less power may feel a reduced ability to enforce boundaries. The lines that separate what is okay from what is not okay can become blurry. Given that a teacher inherently has power over the student, it can sometimes be hard for the student to even figure out what boundaries they are comfortable with. Thus, relationships with power imbalances have a greater risk of leading to hurt and even abuse. CI educators are asked to be aware of these risks and act accordingly to reduce the risk.
- 7) CI educators use best practices for gathering feedback for their teaching**
The best practice getting accurate feedback is through anonymous surveys in which the person identity is unknown. The reason for this is that students may have trouble speaking honestly about your teaching when speaking directly to you due to the power imbalance between teacher and students. Receiving feedback verbally might also mean that you only hear from those who are comfortable approaching you and this can skew the results. Also, it is important that when receiving feedback verbally of non-verbally that you do not share this feedback publicly unless you have permission do so.
- 8) CI educators educate themselves on different types of abuses of power such as predator victim grooming and gas-lighting so that they can avoid these behaviors and can keep an eye out for people who might be actively engaging in them.** REASON d'etre dance production runs free facilitators training workshops that will give you training on this topic. Check www.reasondetre.com to see when the next one is.