The effects of a Dance/Movement therapy ante-natal program for first-time mothers on labour and birth.

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**Abstract**

**Objective/Background:** Research shows that active labour promotes mobile and upright positions during labour, benefiting the labouring woman. Dance/movement therapy may encourage an active birth experience by allowing the labouring women to follow the rhythms and changes of the various stages of labour by remaining in an upright and mobile position.

**Methods:** A Creative-arts ante-natal research program for first-time mothers merged psycho-education with movement/dance, art, music, relaxation, guided imagery, and symbolic representation in order to assist women to prepare for the process of labour and birth. Of 117 women in the pilot study, 46 first-time mothers were assigned by convenience sampling to a creative-arts therapy eight-week ante-natal program. Thirty women were allocated to the Questionnaire-Only control group. There were also forty-one women allocated to another intervention group where they received informal support and discussion. The women in the Creative-Arts therapy program moved to Roth’s 5 Rhythms™ and music and were asked to imagine that each of the 5 musical rhythms/themes (flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness) progressively aligned with the stages and phases of birth; early First Stage, active First Stage, Transition or late First Stage, Second Stage and Third Stage labour respectively.

**Results:** The Creative-Arts therapy group reported feeling significantly more in control during labour and birth and better able to express their feelings during labour compared to the Questionnaire-only Control group and more so than the Informal Support Group.

**Conclusion/Discussion:** Dance/movement therapy and the 5 Rhythms™ may assist women better prepare for labour and birth and warrants future research in the area of increasing coping during labour and birth.

**Key-words:** dance/movement therapy, birth experiences, first-time mothers
References:
