

Chapter 1 : David O. Rankin (Author of Dancing in the Empty Spaces)

Dancing in the Empty Spaces is the product of thirty years of disciplined meditation. It presents a variety of topics, but is purposefully diverse, nonlinear, and devoid of ultimate resolutions. Like Zen, it revels in the mystery of paradox and celebrates the intensity of the present moment.

Please no street shoes. Please maintain appropriate dress at all times. We love to dance and we need to be safe too. By taking part in the dance you acknowledge responsibility for your own safety. Be aware of your surroundings and your impact on others. Dance into the empty spaces. If you are particularly sensitive to loud sounds, earplugs are available for yourself and for your children. If conversation is necessary, please move off the dance floor. Feel free to make sound, but respect the silence in quieter parts of the dance. Please be mindful to turn OFF your cell phone before entering the dance space. And always, use your verbal "NO" loudly at any time if your boundaries are not being respected. All who enter agree to participate. You are free to arrive anytime between 10 and 11 am. The doors will close at 11 am, as the opening and closing circles are important to the cohesion of the group. We encourage you to arrive on time and stay until the end whenever possible. If you choose to witness, practice taking in the whole room and everyone in it without staring, judging, or creating stories. Try to stay present in your own body even if you are not moving. Stillness is a part of the dance. As a witness you are not just a passive observer, but a part of the experience. Boundaries may not be known until encountered and may change at anytime. Ask non-verbally and verbally for permission to dance with another. A NO can be communicated verbally or through prayer position. Please be willing to get a verbal NO, no eye contact or perhaps no acknowledgement at all, especially if someone else is in their own dance. You dance in a community. We ask for your sensitivity to how your expressiveness impacts others. Please be aware of the dance we do between authenticity and community. Intend to not deliver a no with shame or blame and to not take a "no" personally. This displays to other dancers, "I am dancing solo". Our dances are open to all and as a public activity; this is not a space for sexual touching. Your presence indicates that you honor this agreement. Please ask for guidance from a facilitator if you feel unclear about the difference between sensual self-expression and sexual engagement. If you are new to ecstatic dance, give yourself time to learn and understand the guidelines before dancing in a close contact dance with another. We want the dance floor to be a space of freedom, authenticity and joyful vibrant energy. Sexual predators and those who do not honor guidelines will be asked to leave. Let the facilitators know if you need assistance at any time during or after the dance. There can be a lot of moving bodies. Although everyone is responsible for their own safety on the floor, you are also responsible for the safety and supervision of your child. Please keep small children with you or a designated caregiver at all times to prevent accidents. Chasing one another in the space is dangerous and not permitted. There are three particular times when we ask that children be quiet, settled, and in your presence -- during opening circle, and while soft music is playing at the end of the program and during closing circle. If it is clear that their energy is physically or verbally distracting during these times, we ask you to please step outside with them and return when you can. The music can be loud. To protect tender ears, we recommend that you use the provided headphones or earplugs for your self and especially for young children. Welcome to Ecstatic Dance! Through dance, we believe everyone can discover, explore, unleash, and enhance their individual potential. By engaging our senses and listening to our bodies, we connect to others and shape a consciousness that extends beyond our own.

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