



Healthy Dancer Canada

The Dance Health Alliance of Canada

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING HEALTH CONCERNS

with your Dance Teacher, Choreographer, or Rehearsal Director

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Dancing is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. It is important for dancers to make conscientious efforts toward preventing and managing their injuries and health issues. Be honest about your health concerns in order to get the support necessary to ensure you receive appropriate care that facilitates a safe recovery and return to full health.

- **Make a meeting outside of class or rehearsal time.** In-studio time is limited and full of distractions. You want to have time to fully explain your situation and to get your director on board with your recovery plan.
- **Be clear about your diagnosis.** Some directors may understand what the diagnosis means; others may not. Often you will be speaking with someone who has more dance experience than you have. Starting with the description of the diagnosis instead of the actual term can help navigate this scenario.
- **Emphasize that your practitioner is asking you to modify and/or take the time off.** When stating what you can and cannot do start with “My practitioner says I can/can’t do...” This hopefully avoids situations where your director tries to get you to fully perform when you do not feel ready or fully healed.
- **Present an action plan of what you will be doing to keep your body active while injured.** All your director sees is what happens in studio. Perhaps there is supplemental training you will participate in outside of rehearsals to help with the healing process and to avoid getting out of shape. You may also have specific ideas of how you will modify your class/choreography so as to remain as involved as possible. Your director should know what to expect to see you doing when you are not able to fully participate.
- **Give a timeline.** We can never be certain how long it will take to recover from an injury or health concern, but generally a follow-up visit is planned. Tell your director when you have your next appointment with your practitioner or when your test results are anticipated. Provide a time frame when to expect an update about your progress.
- **Follow-up!** If you promise to follow up with your director in a week, make sure you do it, even if you have no new information.
- **Stay true to yourself.** Remember that it is your body and your career. Whether or not your director is on board with your recovery plan, stick to it. Yes, there are short-term consequences to missing class or rehearsal time but those consequences are far less damaging to your dance future than what could happen if you do not properly take care of yourself. No matter what anyone else thinks, listening to your body should remain the priority.

- **Changes to long-term work habits.** Your practitioner may suggest ways that you need to change how you work after you return to full activity, such as changes to your alignment or certain movement habits. Share these with your teachers so they can provide assistance in the process when you are back in class and rehearsals.
- **Family presence.** Review this sheet of tips and suggestions with your family/support network and encourage them to be present and involved in your communications and care.
- **For more information,** refer to our Resource Pages *Communication Form for the Dancer, Dance Educator, and Health Care Professional* and *Translating the Language of Dance and Science* at www.healthydancercanada.org.

Please send feedback about this resource to resources.healthydancercanada@gmail.com.