

Integrating mindfulness and dance movement psychotherapy in dementia treatment and care:
A path to holistic, person-centred, and compassionate dementia care

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KEY TAKEAWAY: A mindfulness-based dance movement psychotherapy programme offers a holistic, person-centred and compassionate alternative to medicalised dementia care, promoting autonomy, dignity, connection and active engagement of those with the condition and their caregivers.

• INTRODUCTION	• METHODS	• RESULTS	• CONCLUSIONS	• REFERENCES
Dementia services remain fragmented, dominated by a biomedical model that overlooks the psychological, emotional, and social needs of people with dementia (PwD) and their caregivers. No approved drug treatments prevent, delay, or reverse dementia, underscoring the urgent need for holistic, person-centred care. Current evidence robustly supports psychosocial and creative interventions, specifically mindfulness and arts-based approaches, such as dance movement psychotherapy (DMP), as effective modalities for promoting embodiment, improving emotional regulation, and strengthening relational connection.	Qualitative consultations and semi-structured interviews were conducted with an international sample of 31 practitioners, clinicians and academics with expertise on non-pharmacological approaches in dementia, in addition to PwD and their carers Reflexive thematic analysis, guided by a critical realist approach, explored professionals’ perspectives on integrating mindfulness and DMP within dementia care frameworks to promote holistic, person-centred, and compassionate care.	Participants challenged the dominant biomedical model, advocating for multidisciplinary, biopsychosocial approaches grounded in compassion and embodied understanding. Mindfulness and DMP were identified as key vehicles for bridging psychological, social, and somatic well-being. Meeting diverse needs depended on multidisciplinary collaboration, clear communication, shared decisions, and active involvement of PwD and families in care planning. Inclusivity, accessibility, and human rights were identified as central principles ensuring PwD remain socially engaged and visible.	Integrating mindfulness and DMP within dementia services offers a compassionate, holistic alternative to medicalised care, promoting autonomy, dignity, and relational connection. Embedding these interventions within clinical and community settings could transform dementia care, enabling PwD to live with meaning, agency, and dignity. Future research should focus on implementation pathways, workforce training/ upskilling, and equitable access.	Chan, J., Leung, D. K., Walton, H., Wong, G. H., & Spector, A. (2020). Can mindfulness-based interventions benefit people with dementia? Drawing on the evidence from a systematic review in populations with cognitive impairments. <i>Expert review of neurotherapeutics</i>, 20(11), 1143-1156. Gialama, M. (2023). <i>The “Mind Your Next Dance”(MYND) Programme: a mixed methods study of a mindfulness-based dance movement psychotherapy for people with mild to moderate dementia and their caregivers. Vol. 1</i> (Doctoral dissertation, National University of Ireland Maynooth). Karkou, V., Aithal, S., Richards, M., Hiley, E., & Meekums, B. (2023). Dance movement therapy for dementia. <i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i>, (8). World Health Organization. (2021). Global status report on the public health response to dementia.
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