

Sacred Movement



Yoga and dance share more than occasional studio space. Like yoga, dance links breath with movement, explores the flow of energy in the body, and can be an act of devotion or a source of healing. In Indian culture, the most ancient forms of classical dance developed alongside yoga. The god Shiva illustrates their spiritual intersection: he is widely depicted as the cosmic dancer Nataraja, but he also

appears seated in deep meditation as the eminent lord of yogis, Yogiraja.

It's not surprising, then, that many teachers today are blending yoga and dance in a wide array of hybrids—from shamanic-inspired trance dance to breath-centered expressive movement. They are discovering vast potential for healing in these approaches, and, increasingly, teachers are emphasizing therapeutic applications.

On a detour from pursuing a career in modern dance in the late 1970s, Daniel Leven moved to the Kripalu Yoga Ashram and co-founded Kripalu YogaDance (formerly Kripalu DansKinetics)—a joyful movement experience that blends dance, asana, and breath work. These days, Leven uses the modality to help participants access their emotional issues. “Emotions live in our brains and also in our bodies, largely in the heart and gut,” he explains. “Visceral movement”—which Leven describes as moving from the inside out rather than muscling through an exercise—“brings those emotions forward. That in itself is therapeutic.”

“You see people who are sick, old, with all body types, and everybody is loving it,” says Megha Nancy Buttenheim, who has been teaching YogaDance since 1984. “It is not about self-judgment, it is about *abimsa*.” Buttenheim has developed training modules for people with Parkinson’s disease and other special populations. It’s all part of a transformative experience she calls “healing through joy.” —Rachel Cama ■

COURTESY OF NIA TECHNIQUE (NIANOW.COM)

YOGA DANCE CAMP

Whether you're yearning to marry your passions for yoga and dance, or looking for a safe environment (that's not a night club or your cousin's wedding) to explore the freeing and healing power of dynamic expression, there's a yoga-dance fusion out there that will move you.

DANCE OF LIBERATION, New York, NY, parashakti.org

Created by Integral-trained yoga teacher and dancer Parashakti, this approach integrates hatha, dance, breath, and shamanism to help you connect with a deeper sense of self.

JOURNEYDANCE, international, journeydance.com

A shamanic-based style founded by Toni Bergins, JourneyDance mixes asana, dance, and visualization practices in guided sequences, balanced with free exploration.

KRIPALU YOGADANCE, Stockbridge, MA, kripalu.org

This approach to meditation-in-motion combines yoga, guided movement, breath, and work with the chakras in a celebration of joy and grace.

NIA, international, nianow.com

A sensory-based movement modality that draws from martial arts, dance, hatha yoga, and other healing arts, Nia is practiced barefoot to a customized and eclectic music mix.

SACRED DANCE AND YOGA, Los Angeles, CA, hemalayaa.com

Hemalayaa's classes combine aspects of Indian dance with asanas and yogic breath work in a modality that shifts you out of left-brained thinking and playfully honors the divine within.

THE THINKING BODY—THE FEELING MIND, Los Angeles, CA, lindalack.com

Performer and teacher Linda Lack, PhD, has designed progressively linked sequences combining asanas, dance techniques, kinesiology, and meditation to create a dialogue between the body and the mind.