



The DANCING DIALOGUE

Using the Communicative Power
of Movement with Young Children



by

Suzi Tortora, Ed.D., ADTR, CMA

· P A U L · H ·
BROOKES
PUBLISHING CO.®

Baltimore • London • Sydney



Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Post Office Box 10624

Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624

www.brookespublishing.com

Copyright © 2006 by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

All rights reserved.

"Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co." is a registered trademark of Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

Typeset by Auburn Associates, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland.

Manufactured in the United States of America by Versa Press, East Peoria, Illinois.

The vignettes in this book are composites based on the author's actual experiences. In most instances, names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality. Actual names and identifying details are used by permission of the individuals or their parents/guardians. All photographs in this book are used by permission of the individuals pictured or their parents and/guardians.

Purchasers of *The Dancing Dialogue: Using the Communicative Power of Movement with Young Children* are granted permission to photocopy various materials from the book for clinical or educational purposes. Readers also may access free of charge from <http://www.brookespublishing.com/dancing> various blank forms and resources related to the book. None of these materials may be reproduced to generate revenue for any program or individual. Photocopies may only be made from an original book. *Unauthorized use beyond this privilege is prosecutable under federal law.* You will see the copyright protection notice at the bottom of each photocopyable page.

Pages 29, 40: Quotation from DUINO ELEGIES by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by David Young. Copyright © 1978 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Page 323: Quotation from THE RUNAWAY BUNNY, REVISED EDITION by MARGARET WISE BROWN; COPYRIGHT 1942 by HARPER & ROW, INC. RENEWED 1970 BY ROBERTA BROWN RAUCH.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tortora, Suzi.

The dancing dialogue : using the communicative power of movement with young children / Suzi Tortora.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-55766-834-9 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 1-55766-834-5 (pbk.)

1. Movement education. 2. Needs assessment. 3. Dance therapy for children. I. Title.

GV452. T676 2006

372.86'8—dc22

2005025312

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data are available from the British Library.

Table 4.1. Questions to be used when asking parents or caregivers about subtle, obscure, and difficult behaviors, or when observing child's behavior firsthand

Questions to obtain specific details about a child's behavior:

Does the child exhibit any subtle, obscure, or difficult behaviors?

- Hand flapping
- Head banging
- Biting self or others
- Licking self, others, or objects
- Unusual finger gesturing, such as picking, flicking, scratching, poking, pinching, fluttering, twisting, or tapping self or others
- Frequent manipulating of an object, such as a rubber band or piece of cloth
- Engaging in perseverative actions
- Rocking
- Jumping with intense self absorption
- Flinging or rubbing limbs
- Throwing body onto floor
- Acting unusually in approach and withdrawal within the environment
- Staring off into space with the whole body or individual parts of the body active or still
- Idiosyncratic gestures, postures, or sequence of movements

Questions to obtain details about specific movement factors in a child's actions:

- Is there a rhythm to the action? How would you describe the rhythm?
- How does the child start and stop the action? Does it seem related to anything in the external environment? To a personal directive?
- What is the intensity level of the action?
- Can the child modulate action (i.e., the speed, use of space, tension level, intensity, degree of strength) in appropriate response to the context of the environment?
- Does the child demonstrate ease or difficulty in maintaining the movement action to stay engaged in an activity or the environment?
- Does the child smoothly transition or add more complex movements to the current action sequence? In response to environmental input? In response to an internal personal directive?

Questions to obtain details about specific social factors in a child's actions:

- Does the movement enable the child to engage in, focus on, and participate with the surroundings?
- Does the movement distract or disengage the child from the surroundings?
- Does the action invite others to join in?
- Is the action a solitary experience that separates the child from the environment?
- Does the child use the nonverbal action to initiate, create, and extend relationships with others?
- Does the child use the nonverbal action with others to extend a personal, physical, or environmental exploration that does not really extend the social involvement of the person?
- What is the quality of eye contact during interactions with others while the child is performing this action?
- What is the child's emotion level of expressivity and engagement when performing the action?
- How is the child's emotional level of expressivity and engagement portrayed through the nonverbal movement action?
- How does the action support or hinder the child's ability to engage in verbal or non-verbal dialogue?

- Is the child able to respond to verbal or nonverbal dialogue within a natural time frame, maintaining a spontaneous banter, or is there a long pause or lack of response while the action is being performed?

Questions to obtain details about specific internal factors in a child's actions:

- Is the child receiving any sensorial feedback from this action? If so, what might that be, and how may it be serving the child?
- What may the purpose of this action be for the child? Focusing attention, discharging pent-up energy, tuning into internal sensations, tuning out external environment, “movement scripting,” or traumatic reenacting of an image?
- Does this action provide self-regulation for the child?
- What degree of excitement is this action exuding?
- Does this action invite or elicit engagement from others and the environment?
- Does this action withdraw the child from others and the environment?

Questions to obtain details about specific external factors in a child's actions:

- To what elements of the environment may the child be responding?
 - Is this a new environment?
 - Are there elements in the environment—physical or emotional—that may be affecting the child's behaviors?
 - How does the child respond (either overtly or subtly) when someone in the environment initiates contact?
 - Does the child's behavior become disorganized physically, emotionally, or socially?
 - Does the child tense or release body musculature?
 - Does the child pull away
 - in the torso by twisting, retreating, or making the body concave?
 - withdrawing a hand, arm, or leg; moving the whole body away; or turning the head away?
 - Does the child reach toward the person
 - in the torso—leaning into or expanding the body, creating a convex shape?
 - approaching by extending a limb, moving the whole body toward, or turning the head toward the person?
 - providing eye contact or looking away?
 - being emotionally expressive nonverbally?
 - Do the child's actions draw you toward or away from the child?
-

Descriptions Worksheet was influenced by recent works that drew on nonverbal and experientially based actions and interactions in studying the functioning and expressivity of several different populations. Research within the topics of nonverbal communication and sensory integration reinforced the point that *how* an action is performed should be highlighted when considering the effectiveness and efficiency of that action as communication. Donnellan and Leary pointed out that “all communication requires movement” (1995, p. 43) in their discussion about the movement differences characteristic of people who have conditions including ASD, mental retardation, Parkinson's disease, and Tourette syndrome. Through analyzing the mechanics of movement-making, they categorized each condition's