

Empowered Connections: Consent on the Dance Floor

By Leading Authentically

For many of us, dance is a passion, a release, a community of like-minded individuals — it should be a safe space. However, there is plenty of room for our dance communities to improve how our dancers exhibit consensual behaviour. Sexual harassment and inappropriate touching are incredibly common on the dance floor, especially for follows. Leading Authentically is striving to build supportive, safer, and connected dance communities, through consent-based dance workshops. We are committed to ensuring that everyone feels welcome and comfortable when they are dancing. We partner with dance community leaders (schools, socials, events, etc.) to foster safer, healthier dance communities for everyone, through interactive, skill-building workshops.

“Empowered Connections: Consent on the Dance Floor” is a workshop series which is committed to addressing gender-based violence in the Latin dance community, with individual workshops that can be tailored to a variety of audiences. Using practices of embodiment and community accountability, this consent-based dance workshop series seeks to transform what it means to “lead authentically”, for both leaders and followers in dance. We educate leads on skills of healthy communication and how to be accountable when harm does happen. We educate follows to be empowered to ‘lead’ and speak up if they experience harm, through skill development in effective feedback and agency.* Through our experiential, movement-based workshop, we teach skills of consent, healthy communication, effective feedback, boundaries, respect and connection. We employ a combination of dance exercises, as well as conversation and community facilitation.

What are the impacts of the workshops?

- **Healthier, safer dance communities**
- Improved client experience which will contribute to new clients and the increase of existing clients
- Improving meaningful connections
- Striving for decreased levels of sexual harassment and assault
- Striving for increased reporting of sexual violence incidents

What are the benefits for participants?

- Increased ability to assert boundaries through effective communication
- Increased comfort on and off the dance floor, which will help to dissuade predatory behaviour
- Recognize responsibility for one’s partner and one’s actions in general
- Enhanced ability to be present and mindful which **creates better dancers** and more engaged communities

How are we going to do this?

- Work to establish a safe(r) and brave space for the dance participants
- Develop participants' skills in providing meaningful feedback in dance relationships
- Develop participants' skills in being more present with their partners for more engaged and connected dances
- Develop participants' awareness of their impact on their dance partners' experiences
- Create a support system to prevent and address inappropriate behaviours
- Ideate the type of Latin dance community that we wish to strive for and be a part of
- Have Designated Community Allies during the workshop for support
- Foster an environment post-workshop where the participants continue to build awareness and positive action around respect, open communication and consent, for improved dance communities.

**Leading Authentically acknowledges that gender-based violence is a systemic issue and we are dedicated to addressing it as such. Harm can and does occur to anyone on the dance floor, regardless of their role. That being said, gender-based violence in the Latin dance community is a gendered issue and is heavily influenced by power dynamics (meaning that significantly more women/follows have lived experience with harm and more men/leads cause harm). We are committed to fostering environments of safety and accountability in Latin dance.*