



CURRICULUM GUIDE
House of Hope Assembly
Student's Guide
Grade Levels 9-12+

WWW.ESPERANZADANCEPROJECT.ORG

Photography by Larry Hanelin



“ She had an anatomical heart with wings tattooed on her forearm with the Spanish word “esperanza,” which translates to “hope.” Was this tattoo her desperate attempt to find hope in her life when in reality, she had spiraled deeply to a place of complete hopelessness? ”

About



Esperanza Dance Project

Esperanza Dance Project (EDP) was created in 2011 to raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence and subsequent trauma, as well as to provide practical resources for those who identify with, or know someone who identifies with, these experiences.

Dance is emotion in motion. It elicits strong visceral reactions that create connections. EDP uses the transformative power of art to create safe spaces, help youth identify and feel their emotions, and recognize that they are not alone. We do this by integrating dance, music and narrative into our powerful middle and high school performances.

Ultimately, the goal of EDP is to breathe hope and courage into the lives of those who have experienced the trauma of sexual violence.

This curriculum is designed to give students, teachers, counselors and other school staff a platform to initiate a discussion about the impact of sexual violence and to provide resources for ongoing education and healing.



Before The Show

Works of art always have themes. Most of the time, every audience member experiences the theme differently. You are about to see a dance performance. This performance uses dance, music, and narration to communicate about problems that teenagers can face. Specifically, House of Hope discusses sexual trauma, the healing process, substance misuse, self harm and suicidal ideation, mental health, body dysmorphia, and eating disorders. How do we recognize these issues, ask for help, talk about them, and help others who might be struggling?

Things to Think About During the Assembly

- Why did the choreographer choose these particular songs for the assembly?
- Why did the choreographer choose these particular costumes for the assembly?
- What kinds of movements are the dancers making in each piece?
- How are all the pieces different? How are they all the same?
- What is the purpose of the narration in between each dance? How did you feel when you heard it?

Definitions

Choreography: The sequence of steps and movements put together to create a dance.

Choreographer: A person, or group, who creates a dance.

Sexual Violence: An umbrella term that encompasses sexual harassment, abuse, rape, and assault. Survivors of sexual violence did not cause their assaults and are not to blame. Perpetrators (the person who assaults the survivor) are fully responsible for their actions. Perpetrators may be strangers, but are more often known to the survivor. Usually the perpetrator is an acquaintance, partner, spouse, or other family member. The behaviors of perpetrators can be confusing to survivors, as they can sometimes appear loving and gentle, in order to manipulate the survivor into keeping the sexual abuse a secret. Despite how the sexual abuse takes shape, it is never the fault of the survivor.

Survivor: A person who has experienced sexual trauma.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A condition that can develop when someone has experienced significant trauma. Symptoms of PTSD include irritability, substance misuse, nightmares or flashbacks of the traumatic event, trouble sleeping, and feeling anxious. Although not all survivors of sexual violence will develop PTSD, many will experience some of its symptoms, which may last for years after the event.

I Don't Pray Anymore

Music: The Big Bang (Remix) by Simon Collins
Choreography: Beth Braun and the company



Overview

The opening dance, "I Don't Pray Anymore", introduces the audience to House of Hope. The narrators open the assembly with a conversation about sexual trauma. The dance piece following the narration features the full company dancing to fast-paced music.

Learning Objectives

To initiate a discussion with students about the pervasiveness of sexual violence and the silence surrounding it. The audience begins to understand that friends, teachers, and family members could be survivors.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the theme or intent of the dance? What evidence in the dance brought you to that conclusion?
2. Why are the dancers dressed in normal clothes rather than elaborate dance costumes?
3. What is the significance of the gesture where the dancers cover their mouths?

Journaling Questions

1. Who are the people in your life that you trust?
2. How would you feel if someone you knew had been sexually abused by someone they trusted?

Did you know?

93% of childhood sexual abuse survivors know their abuser. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey)

Give Me Novacaine

Music: "Give Me Novacaine" by Green Day
Choreography by Beth Braun

Overview

Give Me Novacaine demonstrates the difficulties of living with the trauma from sexual violence. Many individuals who have experienced sexual violence (or know someone who has) turn to substances to dull the pain of living with this reality.

Learning Objectives

To discuss the dangers of using substances in order to "dull the pain" of any difficult and/or traumatic experience, but particularly sexual violence.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the choreographer choose the song "Give Me Novacaine" by Green Day for this piece?
2. Why do the dancers start clumped together? Why do they dance in a group throughout the piece?
3. How did the changing tempo of the dance support the theme or intent of the piece?

Journaling Reflection Questions

1. When you are feeling angry or upset, what kinds of things do you do to cope? (Watch television, cry, yell, talk to a safe person, etc)

2. Is there anyone in your life who drinks or misuses drugs who you are worried about? Who could you talk to about this concern or what resources could provide you with support?



Did you know?

Signs of abuse include sleep problems, depression, withdrawal from friends or family, hyper-sexuality/promiscuity, inappropriate boundaries, reluctance to go to school, unusual aggressiveness, eating disorders, self harm, body memories, and disassociation.

Hurt

Music: "Hurt" by Nine Inch Nails
Choreography by Beth Braun and the company

Overview

Hurt, explores the darkest side of sexual trauma. It illustrates the emotional scarring of the psyche and the behavioral issues that can result from post-traumatic stress.

Learning Objectives

To discuss the difficulties of surviving sexual violence, and having healthy, intimate relationships. To teach students warning signs and behaviors associated with anxiety and depression.



Discussion Questions

1. What did you observe in this dance that demonstrates the emotional impact of sexual trauma? What helped you come to this conclusion?
2. What was the choreographer's intent for using the song "Hurt" by Nine Inch Nails for this piece?
3. What was the purpose of beginning the dance with a soloist?

Journaling Reflection Questions

1. Who do you talk to when you are feeling upset?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a good listener if a friend or family member needs to talk about something?
3. Is there anyone you know who might be depressed? Do you know how to talk to them about it?

Did you know?

- **By the age of 21, 80% of individuals who suffered abuse qualify for a psychological diagnosis. Individuals with a history of sexual abuse are more likely, especially when coupled with depression, to attempt suicide. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006)**
- **"Teen girls are experiencing record high levels of violence, sadness, and suicide risk... 3 in 5 (57%) US teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021." (CDC News Room, last reviewed 2025)**
- **"LGBTQ+ teens continue to face extremely high levels of violence, and mental health challenges... More than half (52%) of LGBTQ+ students had recently experienced poor mental health." (CDC News Room, last reviewed 2025)**

To Cry For You

Music: "Livkot Lecha" by Arik Einstein
Choreography by Beth Braun

Overview

To Cry For You represents the experience of secondary survivors such as parents, friends, teachers, family and loved ones of a sexual violence survivor.



Learning Objective

For students to discuss the role of supportive people in the lives of the survivors and the struggles those individuals may also face.

Discussion Questions

1. The song that the choreographer uses, Livkot Lecha by Arik Einstein, is in Hebrew. What was the choreographer's intent for including different languages in the assembly?
2. What is the symbolism of the large piece of blue fabric used in the piece?
3. Why do the dancers hold hands? How does this support the theme or intent of the piece?

Journaling Reflection Questions

1. When have you needed the support of others?
2. It's important for secondary survivors to take care of their own emotional well-being. Where might a secondary survivor find support?

Did you know?

When sexual violence happens, often there are secondary survivors as well, such as siblings and the non-offending parent/s. Sometimes, depending on the context of the abuse and the identity of the abuser, family and friends feel shock, anger, sadness, anxiety and fear.

Set You Free

Music: "She's Only Happy in the Sun" by Ben Harper
Choreography by Beth Braun

Overview

Set You Free leaves the audience with feelings of hope and a reminder that healing can happen. As we heal, we find things in our lives that make us want to keep living.

Learning Objectives

To encourage students to understand that there is hope and love after sexual violence and that survivors can lead positive, fulfilling lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the choreographer choose to end with Ben Harper's "She's Only Happy in the Sun"?
2. Why do the dancers from all the different pieces come back to the stage?
3. What impact did the groups of dancers posing at the back of the stage have on you?

Journaling Reflection Questions

1. What experiences have you survived that have made you stronger?
2. How might you be a part of a survivor's recovery from sexual trauma?



Did you know?

Time cannot change what happened, but time can help shape our relationship with our scars. We can learn how to accept, forgive, and love the person we have become.

Resources for After the Assembly

We understand that many students, faculty, or staff may be affected by the content of this assembly. There will be qualified staff available to provide support to individuals who find that they need to talk to someone. Staff will also be able to connect individuals with local resources for ongoing concerns.

Local Resources

Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault (SACASA)



SACASA offers a range of services to victims of sexual violence in Pima County and throughout Southern Arizona including forensic medical exams, follow-up care, and therapy.

Contact: www.sacasa.org or call their 24 hour hotline at 1-800-400-1001

Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF)

The *Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation* provides programs that cultivate a healthy and stigma-free society including *Eon Youth Lounge*, a center for LGBTQ+ youth and allies, and *The Anti-Violence Project* which supports LGBTQ+ survivors of violence (i.e. sexual violence, domestic abuse, and hate crimes).

Contact: www.saaaf.org or (520) 628-SAAF (7223)

(800) 771-9054 (Toll Free) Anti-Violence Crisis Hotline: (800) 553-9387



Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse



Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse provides domestic abuse crisis intervention and housing, prevention, education, support, and advocacy services to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Contact: www.emergecenter.org or 24-Hour Bilingual Crisis Line and Shelter (520) 795-4266, (888) 428-0101 Toll-free

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)

The nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. Contact: www.rainn.org or the National Sexual Assault Hotline 800.656.HOPE (4673)



Arizona Children's Association - Las Familias



Las Familias specializes in the treatment of children and adults who have experienced sexual trauma. It promotes a safe environment to heal and learn coping skills to develop trusting relationships through the Children's Program and the Non-Offending Parent Program.

Contact: 800-944-7611 or arizonaschildren.org

Get Involved with Esperanza Dance Project

Email: esperanzadanceproject@gmail.com

www.esperanzadanceproject.org

📷 @esperanzadanceaz

Volunteer at events, Join the Company, Donate,
Attend a Peer Advocacy Training



What Can I Do about Sexual Violence? *For Students*

As a peer, you have an important role to play in supporting survivors of sexual violence. You know your friends and loved ones better than anyone, so if you notice any of the following warning signs, talk to your friend or loved one about getting help.

Depression Warning Signs

- Sleeping more than usual, or not sleeping at all
- Decreased appetite
- Feeling of hopelessness or sadness
- Irritability
- Thoughts of dying or death
- Restlessness

Substance Misuse Warning Signs

- Declining grades or performance at work
- Aggressiveness, irritability
- Lying
- Avoiding friends and family
- Suspension from school or work
- Drinking and driving or getting in trouble with the law
- Spending time with new friends who may be a negative influence



What to do when a survivor discloses to you?

First and foremost, **believe them**. A lot of the psychological harm happens after the fact as a result of the response a survivor receives.

Listen to the survivor. Do not interrupt them while they are talking to you.

Assure the survivor that it is **not their fault**.

Assist the survivor in **finding help** (see resource page).

If You Are a Survivor

And you would like to talk to someone, please see the resources page or talk to an Esperanza Dance Project staff member about getting connected to services.

If you are in a crisis, please call SACASA at 1-800-400-1001



This project is supported in part by the Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona, which is funded by the City of Tucson and Pima County.



This project is supported in part by the Arizona Commission on the Arts, which receives support from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts.



This project is supported in part by the Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona.

"House of Hope" Assembly *Permission Slip*

Esperanza Dance Project, the parent organization of the "House of Hope" Assembly, is a community based non-profit organization that uses a multimedia dance performance to educate about the issue of childhood sexual trauma and deliver a message of hope, strength, and empowerment.

The House of Hope Assembly and curriculum aim to:

- Increase awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence
- Educate students about what to do if they or someone they know, experience sexual violence
- Provide students information about local, practical resources
- Inspire hope and courage in those who have survived sexual violence

The assembly will take place on _____ at _____
(Date) (Name of High School)

Parents and guardians are welcome to review our curriculum at any time. Please contact Beth Braun at (520) 302-3590 to arrange for a review.

Please return this permission slip regardless of whether or not you wish your child to participate.

There will be school counselors and additional advocates available to support any student in need of support.

I want my child to participate:

I, _____ parent/guardian of _____

Parent/ Guardian's Name (please print)

Student's Name (please print)

I DO give permission for my child to participate in the House of Hope Assembly.

Signature

Date

I DO NOT WANT my child to participate:

*your student's teacher will make arrangement for an alternate safe place for your student to be during the assembly time.

I, _____ parent/guardian of _____

Parent/ Guardian's Name (please print)

Student's Name (please print)

I DO NOT give permission for my child to participate in the House of Hope Assembly.

Signature

Date