

Introduction

Many competitive dancers are concerned with their own body image and believe that dieting is a healthy practice and will enhance their performance. Our target audience is college age competitive dancers, between the ages of 18 and 26. Of the participants that were selected, around 60% were female and 40% were male. Surveying both males and females gave us an even better idea of the attitudes towards dieting and body image among all dancers instead of only focusing on females. All of our participants are currently in college and are all at a variety of income levels. The majority of these dancers have part time jobs, while going to school and dancing. Before surveying this class we knew that many competitive dancers diet and even display eating disorders in some extreme cases. In the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, a study was conducted to see whether the dancers that had low body weights and those that had restrictive eating or displayed eating disorder behaviors had higher rates of fractures¹. The association between stress fractures and restrictive dieting was significant. Another study conducted by researchers at Columbia College in New York found that ballet dancers displaying poor eating habits had a very low RMR, leptin levels, bone density and absence of a menstrual cycle². These findings show how harmful some of the

¹ <http://www.ajcn.org/content/51/5/779.long>

² <http://jcem.endojournals.org/content/87/6/2777.long>

behaviors that dancers exhibit can be. In the International Journal of Eating Disorders, a study found that many more dancers in highly competitive programs had eating disorders than those dancers in less competitive programs³. Competitive dancers often have a negative body image and believe that dieting is a healthy practice that will improve their performance.

Analyzing Needs and Behaviors & Identifying Relevant Mediators

We conducted a survey on body image and food attitude behaviors of college level, competitive dancers at Studio One. Questions consisted of the target audiences' beliefs about dieting, factors/mediators that contribute to these beliefs, their personal eating behaviors, and how they feel around food. Some examples of the questions in our survey are: I believe that dieting is good for your health, especially if you have weight goals and performance expectations: Yes, Somewhat, No, Not Sure; Seeing professional dancers/actors/models on television make me feel: Confident, Somewhat Confident, Indifferent, Inadequate, Unsure; I count my calories and monitor what I eat throughout the day: Always, Most of the Time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never; and I eat when I am hungry: Always, Most of the Time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never. We tallied up the results and found that around 70% of the participants do not necessarily count calories; however they do often restrict certain foods. We found that around 50% of our participants rarely/never weigh themselves and do eat when they are hungry. Our participants claimed that they do not feel guilty after eating, do not find it difficult to enjoy food/eating, and

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<http://web.ebscohost.com/mantis.csuchico.edu/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=8&sid=f5b6b63b-beb5-4188-9876-205a6678439b%40sessionmgr4&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=18977923>

feel comfortable eating with other people; also, the majority of our participants have someone to turn to when they are having a hard time, believe what friends and family think about their weight is not a factor, and claim that they know the difference between feeling full and feeling satisfied. However, over 70% of the dancers that we surveyed do feel self-conscious about their body, and feel they are over their desired body weight. 62% of our participants claimed that they feel indifferent when seeing professional dancers/actors/models on television. On the other hand 70% of these dancers feel that in order to have positive feelings about their body they need to get in shape, lose weight, and work out. Only half of our participants feel confident in exercise gear. It was shocking that 85% of the dancers believe that dieting is good for their health and around 70% of the participants believe that weight has an impact on performance. Many of our participants restrict calories, fat and sugar, and believe food is necessary but their enemy. About a quarter of the dancers we surveyed have friends that are concerned with looking a certain way, have friends that diet every so often, and 40% of participants eat out sometimes or rarely eat out.

There were a few limitations in our survey. Only five out of thirteen participants defined feeling full versus feeling satisfied, and eleven out of thirteen participants explained what would help them to have more positive feelings about their body. Other limitations are that this is a small sample size, and we needed questions about being underweight. Overall the majority of the participants feel self-conscious about their bodies and think that losing weight, dieting, becoming more fit, and exercise will make them have more positive feeling about their body. With these results we came to realize that body image is a big concern and needs to be addressed. We also feel that introducing

intuitive eating behaviors will help substitute the diet approach and lead them to a healthier and happier lifestyle.

Theory, philosophy and components

The theory that we selected for our educational intervention is the social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory explains the connection between environment, people and behavior. Personal factors and environmental cues play a big part in behaviors in this theory. SCT consists of constructs explaining particular feelings and mindsets people have or can have leading them to either change or continue on a behavior. Self-efficacy is the confidence that people have when it comes to carrying out the actual behavior.

Acquiring knowledge is needed for behavioral skills, which are the ones they need to make the change. Observational learning occurs from people watching their peers or mentors. Reinforcements help people be motivated to follow through with the behavior by offering an attractive incentive. Reciprocal determination consists of discussing things that could help relate or make your behavior change easier. Expectancies are the values a person gives to the outcome, which is what they expect to get out of the behavior change. We picked this model for our educational intervention because we believe that it matches our overall program. In our needs assessment we were able to conclude how an individual's behaviors are affected by their personal barriers or factors along with their environment. Dancers, both recreational and competitive, are affected by their personal factors more than anything. They all have different personalities but when it came to certain behaviors or how they viewed themselves and a particular behavior was pretty similar. The majority of the dancers we surveyed consider dieting to be a healthy behavior *especially* when it came to achieving a particular goal, and in this case that goal

was improving their dancing. These college students are concerned with their performances yet their knowledge about dieting is very limited and skewed and many do not have an overall positive body image. Many of our participants do not have anything that they want to change, therefore the social cognitive theory is best to help us help these young dancers have a more positive body image, and to understand that intuitive eating is a healthier behavior than dieting.

Educational Objectives

Our goal for this educational intervention is that participants will practice intuitive eating instead of the diet approach all while maintaining a positive body image. The learning objectives we have decided on are important to helping participants understand and be able to make the change. 1) Participants will have the behavioral capabilities to know why diets are not actually ideal for the activities that they participate in. 2) Participants will increase self-efficacy of eating in response to hunger and fullness cues and not by restricting. 3) Participants will become more aware of how their environment influences their personal body image. The specific learning objectives we have designed for our interventions are: 1) Participants will be able to list two negative effects of dieting. 2) Participants confidently select meals and snacks according to their hunger cues. 3) Participants will understand the differences and diversity of body types and list three environmental changes they could make to have more confidence in their body image. By the end of our intervention, we are hoping to see results leading to our goal: positive feelings about body image and intuitive eating rather than dieting.

In our presentation we tackle issues with body image, dieting and intuitive eating. We begin with an activity where we will have the participants list things they do not like

about their bodies. We will then tally how many things our participants could come up with. Our goal is to show exactly how many things people find wrong with themselves and that it is common yet not a healthy behavior. We hope to find at least a couple people that do not list anything to promote loving everything about themselves and bring light to their negative body image. The results of the activity will be discussed after we go over some global statistics. There will be a general statistic regarding body image along with a couple that pertains specifically to dancers. It's important for us to do this activity, with the statistics in the beginning to introduce our topic and why it is important. Next we will show a video on dancers of all shapes and sizes doing what they do best. Then we will go over the stereotypes that go with dancers both male and female and explain how they are not real and shouldn't even be considered. It is important to show participants how their environmental factors can influence their body image. We will then turn our presentation towards dieting. During our survey we found out the high number of dieters among the dancers was around 85% and we want to point out that dieting is ineffective. We will have discussion at this time to talk about their personal negative experiences with dieting. Finally we end our presentation with intuitive eating. We help them understand their internal cues and how to respond to them. We have tips, recommendations, and positive self-talk approaches, which will be listed in our nutritional education material. This is when we introduce our handout and calendar. They will then receive their reinforcement, which is a 35% off coupon to spend on a piece of clothing that makes them feel confident. This order of our presentation is smooth and transitions from topic to topic with a nice flow. Our presentation conquers environment, persons and behavior as stated in the social cognitive theory. Our activity helps us get an insight on the participants

themselves and their personalities and we also see their self-regulation skills with the diet activity. Throughout our presentation the audience will be able to see how their environment and personalities affect their behavior and vice versa, possibly leading them to create a healthier lifestyle as a result.

Theory Constructs

Self Efficacy	Up participants confidence in their ability to add snacks between meals to minimize hunger, by providing a list of easy on the go snacks.
Behavioral Skills	Participants will learn the negative aspects on dieting and list negative experiences they have had with diets
Modeling/ Observational Learning	Peer instructor will talk about a recent experience where they dealt with body image pressure from a parent.
Reinforcement	Having attended the presentation they will receive a 35% off coupon at any store in the Westfield Mall, to purchase a piece of clothing they feel good and confident in.
Reciprocal Determinism	Give dancers a list of safe* dancing studios to go to.
Expectations/ Barriers	Participants will list the negatives for dieting and reasons not to diet.
Outcome Expectancies	Teach participants positive body image, increased knowledge on the reality of diets, increased confidence in eating in response to internal cues

*Safe-pressure free environment