

Things to Consider

Contact dance improvisation and fusion forms

REASON d'etre dance productions (RDDP) values diversity in types of contact jams in Toronto and around the world. We feel that diversity benefits the community. For example, contact improvisation is being used to explore such topics as relationships, communication, massage, tango-CI-Fusion, intimacy, sexuality, tantra, Kink, BDSM and polyamory. RDDP believes that exploring different contexts and avenues for contact improvisation expands the range of the form. We also believe that these exciting directions do not override the importance of still having events that solely focus on contact improvisation. RDDP believes the "root" form of contact dance improvisation is the base from which all else is born from, and as such maintaining space for its practice has value.

The importance of knowing what you're heading into – informed consent

When each contact improvisation event communicates clearly what its mandate is and what will be involved then each of us attending knows what we are consenting to when we enter the space and can make informed choices. When people come to the RDDP Contact Jams they are entering a space where the "root" form of contact improvisation is practiced with the aim to do so within a consent-based culture.

Different "recipes" for what enables us creatively

RDDP believes each dancer requires varying degrees and types of structure to best reach their creative potential and the exact "recipe" for this can change from person to person and even from day to day depending on their life experience, mood or what is going on in their life. For some, a jam with no or few set guidelines best supports their creativity. These types of jams also allow the art of contact dance improvisation itself to lead the way by providing structure that is inherent in the form itself. For others POC spaces are inspiring and help create a sense of ease not found at other jams. For some, guidelines like the ones in this document may be the best holding container within which to bust-out creatively. We are all different and can find or creates jams that suit us.

Every jam has its own mandate and culture and can support these in its own way

If the RDDP Dance jam guidelines became a prescription for what all of contact dance improvisation should be, then RDDP believes the contact dance community would lack the choice and diversity that we feel benefits creativity. For example a jam wanting to support consent culture could do so by providing informed-consent, guiding principals, or build capacity for consent through workshops or modeling. Jam Guidelines are just one way to "hold" a jam and there are many other ways to do so. Each jam is a unique culture and will require a system to guide its members that fits its specific values and goals.

RDDP invites you to try on this score

RDDP offers that you think of these guidelines as a score. That for an hour-and-a-half, once a week, a group of people gather in Toronto and use these guidelines as a holding container, within which to dance. A score for a specific time and place and group of people. A score the supports the focused practice of contact dance improvisation in a consent-base culture. So, come on in and see if this score suits you. And it might not be for you and that is okay. Go to other jams and events and try out their "score". Find the circumstances that best support your dancing and your creativity.

Online Guidelines

During the pandemic RDDP Jams have moved on-line. We have added guidelines to address Online jamming. These are an adaption of guidelines co-created for Sunday Jam & RDDP for co-produced jams. Please note RDDP Dance Jam guidelines on the following pages still hold true for on-line jamming. Please read through this entire document.

- All participants agree to listen to ourselves and others, respect ourselves and others, and humanize all people in the Zoom room.
- The Jam Host and Jam Co-Host will be present at every Jam. They will be identified by the title in their Zoom name. If you need support during a jam please send a private message to the Jam Host or Jam Co-Host stating your need for a private conversation. A private breakout room will be created.
- We ask that Participants have their camera turned on in the initial check-in/introduction time and in the closing circle. During the dance jam, we ask that Participants keep their camera on if possible. When people's cameras are on there is a greater level of transparency of who is present and witnessing the dances. There allows an increased ability to interact with others. However, we understand people experience Zoom fatigue to different degrees and may need to turn off their camera to manage this and they are welcome to do this as part of self-care during the dance jam. We also recognize that Zoom may turn off your camera automatically if you are experiencing low internet speed. Please know there will always be a certain level of non video participants during the jam.
- All Zoom accounts have access to "Pin Video". This is a Zoom feature where anyone in the Zoom room is able to "Pin" someone else's video to predominantly showcase it.
 - Musician:* You can pin the musician performing without needing to ask as they give standing consent for this as a performing musician.
 - Other Dancers:* To "Pin" the video of another dancer you need to request permission from them. Mutual pinning can be prearranged or done by requesting consent to in the chat-box during the jam. As well time will be taken at the start of each dance jam to organize pinning. If someone does not respond to a request to be pinned take that as a "no"
- Participants have the right to accept or decline the invitation to share a dance, or to have their video "Pinned".
- Some participants enjoy being creative with zoom backgrounds and accessories. For other it is an access issue in that being creative with these features makes zoom dance-jaming tolerable for them. For others, witnessing the use of these zoom-features can be painfully overstimulating. To balance these competing access needs we ask that zoom backgrounds and accessories be used only in the last half of each dance jam. We also encourage those experiencing too much visual stimulation to pin a few dancers not using these features (by agreement) and/or the musician so that the impact of "busy" screens can be reduced.
- Participants can use the chat feature to support what is happening in the Zoom room in addition to invitations to dance or "Pin" Videos.
- Participants need to stay muted during the live music, as there is a slight delay in the stream. The Jam Host may mute you when the live stream is occurring.
- Participants can accept or decline invitations to breakout rooms and are welcome to stay in the main Zoom room.
- Participants can participate muted or unmuted during Social Time. The Jam Host will never mute anyone during Social Time and will instead ask you to mute yourself if you have a lot of background noise in your space.

RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jams Guidelines

Informed Consent: RDDP jams are a place to practice of contact improvisation(CI), a touch-base social dance form. We aim to support a consent-based culture within which to do so. Consent culture is a culture in which asking for and seeking consent is normalized and supported. Consent based culture involves following people's "yes" rather than waiting for someone's "no" in all aspects of dancing including lifting and being lifted and the social scene at the jam. The majority of these guidelines are "best practices", which means that we agree to reach for these with the knowledge that it will not be perfect. A few of these guidelines using the phrase "will not be tolerated" are hard-lines that we ask you not to cross. Like other dance forms or sports, CI involves some risk both physically and emotionally. These guidelines seek to provide a base level of safety with the understanding that a certain amount of risk is inherent in the practice.

Dress

- **No strong perfumes or essential oils** and take regular showers and wear clean clothes.
- **Please limit pet dander on your clothes** in consideration of people with pet allergies.
- **Do not wear jewelry, watches or clothing with buttons**
- **Wear dance clothes that offer a lot of skin coverage and are not slippery** (cotton is great non-slippery fabric)

Types of Touch

- **The focus at the RDDP Dance Jams is to move in relationship with others using type of touch that are fundamental to Contact Improvisation:**
 - 1) **rolling point of contact**
 - 2) **friction sliding**
 - 3) **giving, taking and sharing weight**
 - 4) **using touch to follow and ride momentum**Other forms of touch are welcome and come into play, provided they are consensual (all people involved in the dance are giving an enthusiastic "yes").
- **Explicit sexuality, which can be a wonderful aspect of life and welcome at sexuality themed dance events is not what we are up to at RDDP Dance Jams.** What is "explicit sexuality"? The RDDP is referring to intentionally touching erogenous zones such as breast and genitals to stimulate as you dance. In the context of the RDDP Dance jams these areas might receive unintentional "sweep by" touch as part of the rolling-point-of-contact but the RDDP Dance Jams ask you not to linger, purposefully-touch or stimulate erogenous zones.
- **During your time at the Jam we want you to focus on lifting using principles of following momentum and become less focused on "muscling" partners into lifts.**
- **The RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jams welcome the occurrence of consensual body-work.** This process can be verbal or non-verbal and requires that the person you are offering a massage to sees who you are and give you an enthusiastic "yes".
- **Accidentally grazing someone, giving a proximity warning touch or merging someone into a dance if they seem willing are within the context what occurs at the Jam. Non-consensual pass-by pokes, hugs, kisses, tickles, caresses, massages or pats will not be tolerated.** An example of a non-consensual pass-by touch would be coming up to a person from behind (i.e. they can't see who you are) and tickling their lower back.

Physical, Psychological and Relational Considerations

- **In person RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jams are a screen-free space (no phone/screen time in studio)**
- **If you come to long moment of stillness, are receiving body work or are watching the jam we ask that you tuck your self by the wall so that the space for dancing is maximized.**
- **While we understand that connections and conversations occur in the studio, please take louder, more concentrated socializing into the hallway.**
- **It is best practice to start dance in a manner that the person can see who you are.** Depending on circumstances this might not always be possible as in the case when two couples on the dance floor merge organically into a quartet, but it can be your general aim.
- **Learn how to end a dance and do so whenever you need to.** Hands together and a nod thank-you provides a clear ending.
- **You may say "no thank" to any offer to dance without needing to give explanation**
- **Do not pressure a person into dancing with you.**
- **Moments of teaching are part of what can occur on the dance floor as long it is welcome** (i.e. ask first and only proceed when an enthusiastic "yes" is given).
- **Practice letting go of each dance experience.** No matter how amazing a dance is, see if you can let go of expectations for future dances, or what meaning the dance might have once the dance is over. We offer that relationships that may develop (i.e. you become friends with the person outside of the jam) does so on its own time, free from expectations that a dance may elicit.
- **It is generally not safe to grab or lock another dancer into a position that compromises their mobility** because it limits their choice of movement and their landing gear (feet /hands) may become inaccessible. Having said this, there are partnerships that may explore locks and holds, through a step-by-step process of consent that involves only proceeding when an enthusiastic "yes" is given. Please know that to do this safely requires different combinations of the following: dancers lower themselves to floor level, reduce their speed and amplitude and/or are well know to each other as dance partners.
- **Explorations of different themes such as sensuality, surrendering control, anger, fighting, grief, being contained or locked in, etc. are welcome as long as they are created through a step-by-step verbal or non-verbal consent process that involves only proceeding when an enthusiastic "yes" is given has been communicated.** If you have had an intense dance with someone and you are unsure of how the process of acquiring consent went, it is a good idea to check-in with them verbally.

- **We are all humans and sometimes you may notice yourself becoming sexually aroused during a dance.** We ask that in these circumstances that you do not pursue this arousal. Just notice it and let it pass. We ask that you do not "fan the flames". Sometimes to not "fan the flames" you may need to step out of a dance.
- **If you attend the Jam with a romantic partner, all the boundary guidelines in this document still apply.** Think of the jam as a *score* in which we follow these guidelines as the container in which to dance.
- **We define a newcomer as someone who has attended less than 12 contact dance jams. When a more experienced dancer dances with a newcomer, we ask that they consider:**
 - 1) The newcomer might not know how to end a dance. You can briefly show them how and encourage them to do so at any point.**
 - 2) Keep dances with newcomers relatively short** (not longer than 10 minutes) so that newcomer can dance with other people and acclimatize themselves to jam culture.
 - 3) Dances that explore different themes are welcome at the RDDP Dance Jam if both parties consent.** A newcomer may not understand how to give consent for these explorations because they do not yet understand the form. Therefore, **when a newcomer is acclimatizing themselves to CI culture, we ask that you limit diving into intense themes.**
 - 4) During the time a newcomer is acclimatizing themselves to jam culture, we ask that you refrain from leading newcomers into aerial lifts** because they may not yet have the skill to say "yes" or "no" to such lifts or to "land" aerial lifts successfully. Aerial lifts are defined in this document as lifts in which someone's feet are more than three feet off the ground or are not touching the ground for a significant amount of time.
 - 5) Do not look at a newcomer and think, "what can I get from them?" Please instead think, "What can I do to support this newcomer's entry into our community?"**
- **We offer that you think of the RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jam as a place to dance and not as a place to find a date or sexual partner.** Actively seeking sex partners that might be the norm, welcome and/or enjoyed in other circumstances (such as a bar or singles meet-up) is not what we are up to at the Jam.
- **Using manipulative techniques to influence or take advantage of people at the RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jam is not tolerated.** These techniques include taking advantage of power imbalances, targeting vulnerable people, lying, persisting against someone's boundaries, gas-lighting, a mix of compliments/critique and methods of disorientation designed to establish power over someone, working to isolate someone etc.
- **Use of intoxicants to such an extent that you are not in control of your body movements or social considerations is not tolerated.** Therapeutic use of substances that are medically needed are welcome as long as you can maintain control of your body movements and social considerations.
- **Unwelcome verbal and/or physical aggression or posturing is not tolerated.** Please note there may be partnerships on the dance floor in which dancers, through consensus, decide to explore themes of aggression. This is welcome when these types of dances evolve through a process of consent, building trust and when risk of harm is reduced by using techniques to ensure safety (i.e. attuned "listening", possibly slowing down).

- **Harassment of other participants of the RDDP Contact Dance Improvisation Jam via private email, phone calls or social media is not tolerated.**
- **RDDP strives to protect the right to be free of discrimination, harassment and hate activity, based on race, age, ancestry, citizenship, creed (religion), colour, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, level of literacy, marital status, place of origin, membership in a union or staff association, political affiliation, race, receipt of public assistance, sex, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristics.** If we have any blind-spots in providing this for jam attendees, please let us know at board@reasondetre.com.

Promoting Your Boundaries During Dance Improvisation Jams

- **You have the right to accept or refuse any dance without giving a reason or apology.** If you are not practiced in saying “no”, we suggest you practice frequently until you gain comfort. Please know that no one should ever ask you your reason for saying “no” or try to convince you otherwise.
- **End a dance whenever you want, even if it has only lasted a minute.** Hands together as in prayer. Look at your partner and nod your head and back away. Please know that no one should ever ask you your reason for ending a dance or try to convince you to keep dancing.
- **Learn non-verbal techniques to avoid being lifted in cases when you do not want to be lifted**
The “wet spaghetti noodle” that involves reducing muscle tone, so your body is floppy works well. Move to verbal expression or end the dance whenever you need to.
- **Learn non-verbal techniques that let you be in control of how much weight is borne on to you.**
Refraining from offering “ledges” or nudging someone back onto their own weight work swell. A ledge is created when you offer a body-part that someone can bear weight upon. Move to verbal expression or end the dance whenever you need to.
- **Learn non-verbal techniques that redirect a dance away from close front-to-front contact in case you find yourself involved in a dance in which you want more space.** Putting your arms in front of you like a barrel or pushing someone away to create more space can work. Move to verbal expression or end the dance whenever you need to.
- **Be cautious of anyone promoting themselves as a teacher or mentor by using tactics that undermine your way of seeing the world or undermine your confidence in yourself and/or your dancing.** Example: After dancing with you a person describes that you lack skills in intimacy and that is why you are struggling with contact dance. They offer to teach you intimacy skills outside the jam. You say “no thank” and they try to convince you this is further sign that you need intimacy training. If interactions like this occur please report it to the jam facilitator.
- **Speak with Jam Facilitator to learn how to assert your boundaries, or if you have concerns.** See picture of jam facilitator on table as you enter jam. This lets you know who to go speak to.

RDDP's Professional Conduct Standards for CI Teachers & Community Leaders

REASON d'etre dance productions (RDDP) strives to work with contact dance educators and community leaders who have the intention to reach for these standards of practice:

- 1) **CI educators value and care for students and act in their best interest.**
- 2) **CI educators have a broad knowledge base and understand what they teach.**
- 3) **CI educators are community role models who act honestly.**
- 4) **CI educators engage in learning throughout their teaching career.**
- 5) **CI educators work to create a supportive atmosphere with other CI teachers and the community when possible.**
- 6) **CI educators advertise for, and solicit students, in an honest manner.**
- 7) **CI educators take time to educate themselves about social justice issues such as racism, sexism, neuro- diversity, able-ism, sexual identity, gender identity etc. to better understand the role they place in systemic power imbalance issues that affect their teaching and facilitation.**
- 8) **CI educators understand that the relationship between teacher and student has a power imbalance and act with according responsibility.** When romantic relationships or friendships occur within the teacher/student power imbalance, there is a risk that the person with less power may feel a reduced ability to enforce boundaries. The lines that separate what is okay from what is not okay can become blurry. The student may sometimes find it hard to even figure what feels right for them. Thus, relationships with power imbalances have a greater risk of leading to hurt and even abuse. When the teacher is in a position of position of privilege in society the teacher/student power imbalance can be exasperated. CI educators are asked to be aware of these risks and proceed with caution when engaging with students.
- 9) **When gathering feedback from students, it is best practice to include anonymous feedback methods.** This is recommended because the power imbalance between teacher and student can make it challenging for the student to give honest feedback when asked directly by the teacher.
- 10) **CI educators educate themselves about manipulation techniques such as taking advantage of power imbalances, targeting vulnerable people, lying, persisting against someone's boundaries, gas-lighting, a mix of compliments/critique and methods of disorientation designed to establish power over someone, working to isolate someone etc. so that they can avoid these behaviors and spot those actively engaging in them in the community.**

IDC Process for Boundary issues

Who oversees boundary issues? The Inclusive and Diversity Committee (IDC) oversees boundary issues. The IDC is a volunteer committee whose supports inclusivity in RDDP events. Since boundary issue can exclude people from attending dance jams it is IDC 's job to oversee boundary concerns. IDC organizes process groups to over see boundary issues. Process groups are made up of a mix of IDC Committee members and CI community members. Those involved must not be in close relationship with the person in question and not be directly triggered by the issues at hand.

What might trigger the response protocol?

Witnessing behaviors that contravene the RDDP Dance Jam (RDDP-DJ) guidelines. This could include experiencing or witnessing behaviors such as unwanted manipulative, aggressive, non-consensual sensual touch, or sexual touch. Another example would be experiencing or witnessing acts of racist, sexist, homophobic, ablism, transphobica as well as other "isms".

Initial Phase is Gathering Info and Getting Situated.

IDC situates gather info by talking with people. In this phase sometimes things are worked out simply and/or quickly when satisfactory agreements form about expectations and then a formal *Respecting Boundaries Discussion* may not be needed.

Move to a Formal Respecting Boundaries Discussion.

What is the aim? The Respecting Boundaries Discussion is a process that seeks to educate those who are crossing RDDP-DJ guidelines. The aim is to reduce chance of boundary accidents or violations in the future and to keep the person in question integrated in the RDDP-DJ community.

What is it not? It is not conflict resolution involving two people who are not getting along, nor restorative justice between a victim and perpetrator. While RDDP highly values these processes, it is not within our scope to oversee these activities. Respecting Boundaries Discussion is not about a person in relation to another person but is instead about a person in relation to their behavior, specifically behaviors that are contravening the RDDP-DJ Guidelines.

What is the process?

Step one: Using the RDDP-DJ Boundary Guidelines as a guide, IDC figures out which specific boundaries may have been crossed and then pulls together a team to oversee a discussion.

Step two: The person who crossed boundaries is invited into a discussion which involves:

- pre-notification about steps involved including the level of confidentiality provided and its limits.
- Telling person they can bring support person to meetings
- Telling the person which RDDP-DJ boundaries have been allegedly crossed.
- Creating a plan together that both prioritizes the needs of those that have been hurt, protects the community and supports the person in respecting RDDP-DJ Guidelines going forwards.
- Coming to an agreement about whether discussion will remain confidential or whether an individual, other jams, or the Toronto CI community should be informed of the results. If all agree to share information, then a statement will be written and agreed upon by all in the meeting that will used to communicate the result of the discussion.
- As with all IDC meetings minutes will be taken in which names are not recorded.

Please note there are limits to confidentiality: If there is deemed to be a risk of harm to self or others info may be shared with other jams or professionals without the person involved in the boundary discussion having input.

Banning a member. In cases where RDDP, in counsel with IDC determines, using reasonable judgment, that there is an immediate danger to the community or that the Respecting Boundaries Discussion team is not able to complete the above steps, they may start with or move to a ban.

Appeal. A person banned may appeal ban when a minimum of one year has passed.

Restorative Justice/Conflict Resolution. RDDP understands the above process may prevent repeat violations, but it may not provide healing of past situations. Where parties are willing to enter a restorative justice process, RDDP offers to find experts to oversee such processes.

Communicating with REASON d'etre dance productions

The RDDP Dance Jams are produced by REASON d'etre dance productions (RDDP), a registered charity. RDDP is run by a volunteer board of directors. Kathleen Rea is the founder of the RDDP but she answers to the board. This leaves you several avenues to communicate with RDDP.

They are:

- **Approach a RDDP dance jam facilitator**
(See name and picture at front desk of jam on in the case of Online jamming the person who is the host of the zoom room)
- **Email Kathleen Rea the director of RDDP**
kathleen.rea@reasondetre.com
- **Email RDDP board of directors at board@reasondetre.com.**
See: <http://www.reasondetre.com/mandateBD.html> for current board list.
Emails sent to this address go directly to the board and Kathleen Rea does not receive the email.
- **Email the RDDP's Inclusive and Diversity Committee (IDC) at IDC@reasondetre.com.** See: <http://www.reasondetre.com/mandateIDC.html> for current committee list.

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R-° k)) h is and as such our year-end is public record. We however want to supply the CI community with more detail and an expanded archive than is on the public record. We have therefore have made our financial records since 2014 available with more details than the public record has at:

- <http://www.reasondetre.com/mandateF.html>