

Healing through dance and music

But CMT lacks awareness, training facilities

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Focusing on healing the mind through movement of the body, Creative Movement Therapy (CMT) is emerging as an alternative to regular therapy.

Devika Mehta, co-founder of Synchrony, a group involved in CMT, informed The Observer: "In the US, it is called Dance Movement Therapy, and in the UK, it is called Dance Movement Psychotherapy. In India, it is generally referred to as CMT. It is about using your body in motion to bring in a creative process. In most psychotherapy counselling sessions the process is based on verbalization."

There is, however, little awareness about CMT. Few training options are available for dance therapists. Mehta said: "We do not have proper training programs available yet. So what is happening is people are getting to experience only 10% of what CMT has to offer. Gradually, a few people who have been trained abroad are coming back and building more programs. I



Creative Movement Therapy uses dance to treat various mental health issues| Courtesy: Sharmila Mukherjee

have realized it is important to build training programs. The interest is there; we have to provide more options."

Asha Sarella, a dance therapist at the Leela Center for Dance and Movement Therapy in Akshaya Nagar, said: "I got into this field in 2001. I had met a 10-year-old girl called Durga, a special-needs child who refused physiotherapy. She was autistic, had multiple disabilities, delayed speech development and a lot of physical issues. When I started teaching dance, I saw a gradual improvement. Her speech improved, and she showed an overall development. I can't forget how happy her mother was."

"When it comes to special-needs children, it is effective since there is music involved. You are doing something that

is making you happy and at the same time having a positive effect on the body. That is the main difference between this and regular therapy," Sarella added.

Monica Ganguly, a consultant at the Studio for Movement Arts and Therapies in Ulsoor, said: "We run a one-year program to train people in the skill of expression through expressive arts therapy. It includes dance, drama, theatre, and music. There is a need for professionals. It is gaining awareness, but not much. A lot of mental health facilities like NIMHANS are now engaging with alternative forms of therapy in combination to therapy and counselling. But they do not have a separate movement therapy department."

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