



"WE MOVE FOR THE SAKE OF MOVING AND FEELING, AS A MEANS OF ACCESSING HIDDEN, UNFINISHED BEHAVIOR, NEW INFORMATION, AND CREATIVE NEW TERRITORY."

Christine Caldwell

Newsletter March 2026

Not what—but how: How movement and dance expression shape emotions

This newsletter is based on the article *Emotion Regulation through Movement: Unique Sets of Movement Characteristics are Associated with and Enhance Basic Emotions* Tal Shafir Rachelle P. Tsachor and Kathleen B. Welch

Perhaps you have noticed someone standing with their head bowed—and immediately had the feeling that this person might be sad.

Or you may have observed someone who was angry moving forward quickly and forcefully. This interpretation falls short. Speed does not automatically mean anger. A lowered gaze does not necessarily mean sadness.

Movement is more complex. More subtle. More truthful.

In Dance Movement Therapy, we therefore do not look first at what moves – but how it moves.

- Is there heaviness or lightness?
- An uprighting or a sinking?
- Directness or hesitation?
- Free flow or bound tension?

These qualities—described in the Laban/Bartenieff movement system—are like building blocks of inner states.

It is not the outer form that matters, but the inner organization of force, direction, space, and relationship.

In certain combinations, these qualities increase the likelihood that we will experience a particular emotion. But they do not follow a simple if-then logic.

A jump is not joy per se.

But lightness, upward movement, and a free rhythm can create joy in the body if the body is ready to absorb this quality.

A lowered gaze is not automatically sadness.

But sinking, passive weight, and a withdrawal of the body can bring an already existing, perhaps still unconscious sadness into consciousness.

In Dance Movement Therapy, we work with subtle shifts in strength, tempo, direction, and flow—and experience how this changes our inner selves.

In doing so, we mindfully accompany our clients in finding precisely those qualities of movement that are achievable and appropriate for them. Not every quality is accessible at every moment. Change does not happen through pressure, but through coherence.

When a quality is found that can truly be embodied, the inner experience begins to reorder itself; this is emotion regulation.

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*Takeaway:
You cannot directly control your feelings.
But through your movement, you can experience how your
inner experience changes.*

Warm regards from ZOE SCHOOL and welcome to Spring!
Brigitte Züger, Director

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