

centers of gravity that change as partners lean into, push and shift around one another.

“Contact is like empathetic mirroring, kinesthetic mirroring,” French said. “There’s no lead and no follow, and there’s no right or wrong. It’s just really being open to that connection point. ... There are lots of little techniques we use to help people find natural ways of moving,

Instructor Erica French embraced contact improv dance after a divorce.



“THERE’S THE FUN AND THE GAME OF IT AND THE CHALLENGE OF IT, OF COURSE, BUT THERE’S ALSO THAT FEELING CONNECTED, TOO.”

ERICA FRENCH
INSTRUCTOR

but that’s just scaffolding. It’s framework. Playfulness is getting away from the fear of the unknown and your body doing weird things and just exploring.”

At a recent jam, French put participants into a playful mood by first leading them in an exercise where they were to imagine their heads had a great enough weight to slowly pull them to the floor. The dancers slowly tumbled to the ground, rolled and rose again. Giggling ensued.

Learn more about contact improv classes at Flux Movement lab here: <https://bit.ly/2GBnpCl>.

The next exercise had them bring their heads together, as if magnetically pulled and then repelled. As people warmed up, French invited them to move freely—to “jam”—without instruction. As the jam progressed, the participants’ movements became more exaggerated—the mock magnetic forces between them resulting in intertwined somersaults and dancers spinning circles around a series of ever shifting axes created by their constantly maintained touch.

Watching contact improv, some inexperienced dancers might initially feel intimidated by the flowing, almost contortionist-like movements—but French insists that it’s a dance form that can work for anyone and encourages newbies to attend a jam.

“The first time I really did contact, it took me about three hours to really let go,” she said. “It can be scary, but once you figure it out, it’s very grounding.” □

Dancers create new centers of gravity as the push pull and tumble over one another during a Sunday evening contact improv jam.



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