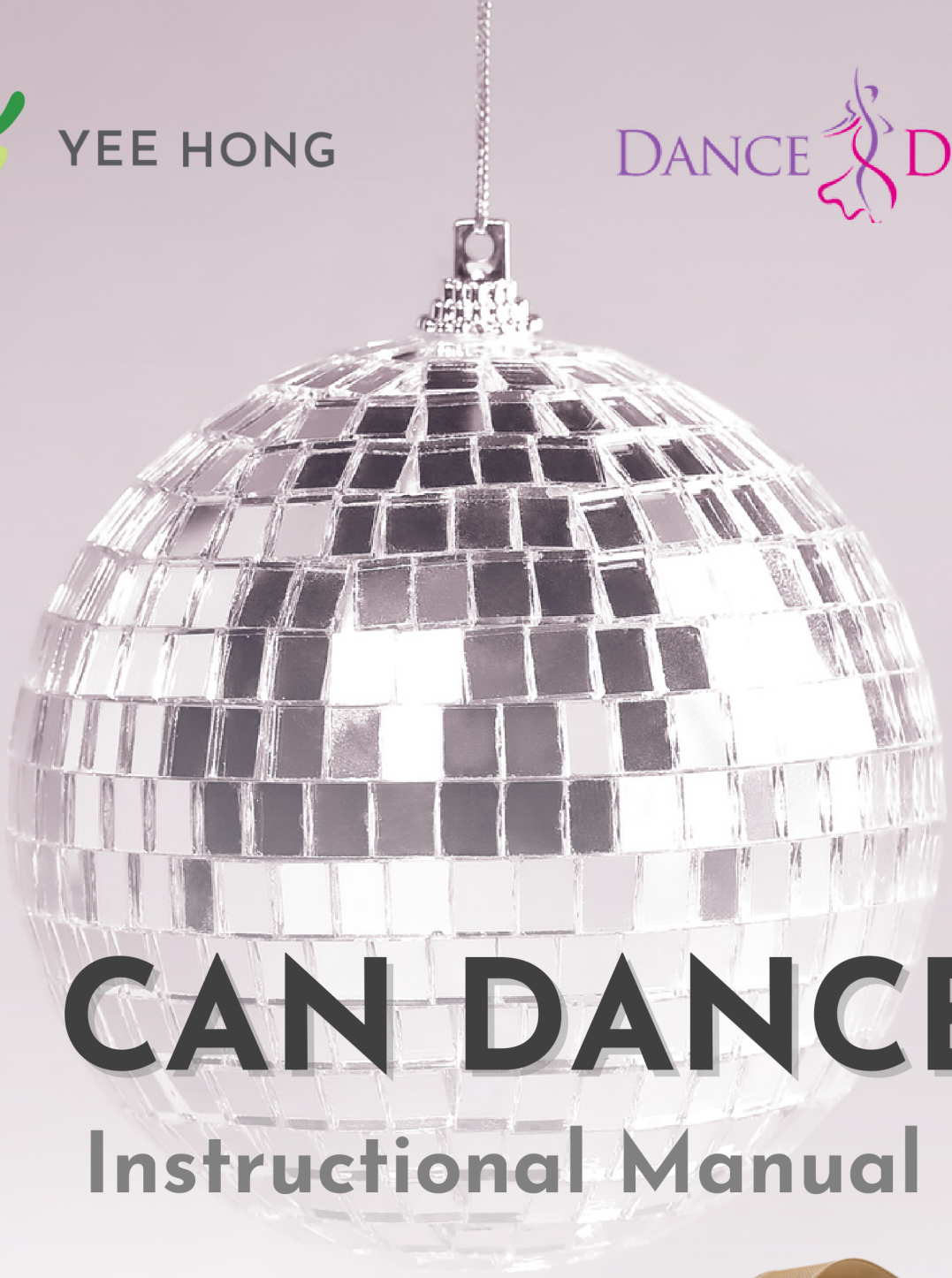
YEE HONG

DANCE DNA



I CAN DANCE

Instructional Manual

With funding from:

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

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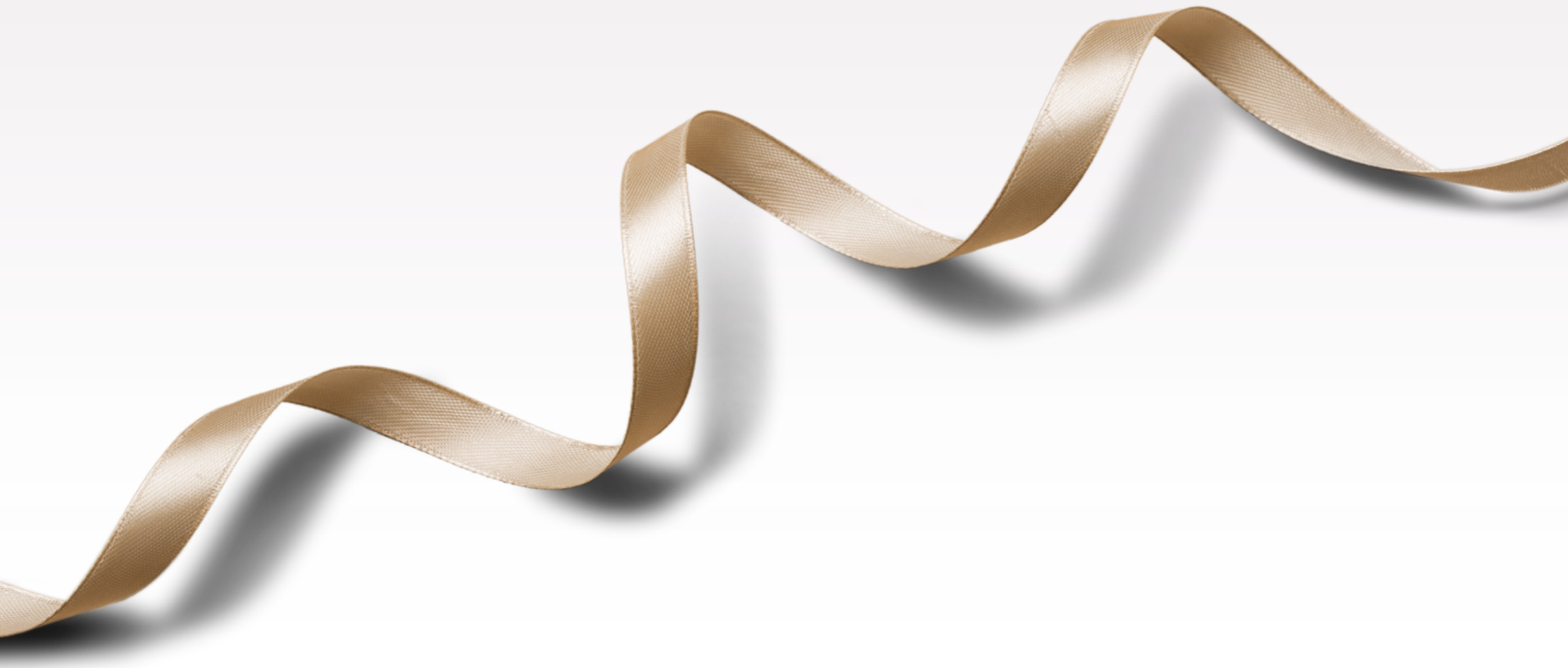

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I Can Dance: Overview

Canada's aging population is rapidly expanding. It is projected that by 2030, one in four Canadians will be aged 65 and older (Statistics Canada, 2014), reflecting an ever-increasing need for resources that support older adults' independent living and healthy aging. Moreover, with Canada's multiculturalism, culturally inclusive services are paramount in ensuring diverse populations are well supported.

I Can Dance is a fitness project pioneered in 2017 through a partnership between the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care (Yee Hong) and Dance DNA Academy (Dance DNA). Through weekly ballroom dance sessions, this group project creates increased opportunities for older adults with varying physical abilities to engage in appropriate and accessible exercise in a safe, controlled, and supportive environment.

Originally established for individuals living with Parkinson's disease (PD), thanks to a grant from Ontario Trillium Foundation from April 2021 to April 2023, I Can Dance expanded to include older adults with other chronic health conditions based on the multitude of observed benefits and positive outcomes for participants. With the grant, I Can Dance expanded to include the following components:

- Weekly dance fitness sessions and dance classes that incorporate different types of dancing according to ability.
- Showcases at the end of the first and second year to document participants' progress, through a dance show as well as an exhibition of photos and videos that capture their dancers' journey. To increase interest in dance fitness, the showcases are interactive, engaging the audience to join in a dance workshop along with the performers.
- Production of instructional videos and manual to support further development of dance projects for seniors living with mobility issues.

I CAN DANCE

Program Overview

PRE-ADMISSION ASSESSMENT → **ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION GATHERED** → **PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS** → **INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS AND MANUAL**

AWARENESS

Assessment of project participants on the areas below:

- Physical condition
- Psychosocial condition

DEVELOPMENT

- Dance curriculum designed based on the health needs of participants
- Regular project meetings among collaborators to evaluate the project's effectiveness and maintenance of project content

IMPACT

- Weekly dance workshops
- Performance and dance showcase
- Annual physical and mental assessment to monitor program impact

KNOWLEDGE

The production of instructional videos and manual:

- To support future development of dance programs for older adults
- To capture successes

What Is Dance?

Dance is a form of art that has been part of human culture for thousands of years. It is an expression of movement and rhythm that reflects emotions, feelings, and cultural traditions. Dance has been used for various purposes throughout history, including religious ceremonies, social gatherings, celebrations, and entertainment. Dance can be performed individually or as part of a group. It encompasses various styles and genres including ballet, jazz, ballroom, tap, and modern. Also, dance is a good way to convey meaning, emotions, and the stories of the dancers.

Dancing and its benefits to older adults

As we age, our bodies go through a natural process of degeneration, and physical activity becomes increasingly important to maintaining our health and quality of life. In recent years, the benefits of dancing for older adults have gained recognition, with numerous studies demonstrating its positive effects on their physical, mental, and social well-being. Below, we will explore the many reasons why we should all promote dancing!

Mental Benefits

Dancing can have a positive effect on mental well-being:

1. Reducing stress and anxiety: Dancing can be a fun and an enjoyable way to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. This form of participation-based physical exercise was also found effective in improving quality of life (Adam, D., Ramli, A., & Shahar, S., 2016).
2. Improving cognitive function: Dancing may have positive effects on cognitive functioning, in particular, global cognitive function and executive function (Hewston, et al., 2021); in other words, attention and the ability to plan and execute. This is particularly important for older adults, as cognitive decline is a common problem associated with aging.
3. Improvements in self-perception: Results from a research study suggest that dancing, especially social partner dancing, is associated with self-perceived positive improvements in social functioning, affect, and self-confidence (Lakes, et al., 2016).

Physical Benefits

Dancing is a low-impact form of exercise that can improve overall physical fitness:

1. Improving cardiovascular health: Dancing involves movement that raises the heart rate, improve aerobic power and prevent the prevalence of cardiovascular health risk (Keogh et al., 2009).
2. Enhancing balance and coordination: Dance interventions are more effective than other forms of physical activity in improving balance and coordination in older adults (Fong Yan et al., 2018). This is especially important for older adults, as falls are a leading cause of injury and disability.
3. Reducing the risk of chronic conditions: Studies have shown that regular physical activity, including dancing, can help manage chronic pain and reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis, and arthritis (Schroeder et al., 2017).
4. Increasing flexibility and mobility: Dancing involves a range of movements that can help to increase lower body muscle endurance, strength and flexibility, balance, agility, and gait. Dancing is also effective to improve older adults' lower body bone-mineral content and muscle power which are helpful to their mobility as well as reduce the risk of fall (Keogh et al., 2009).
5. Pain management: Dancing has been shown to have a positive effect on chronic pain across diverse populations. The process of dancing can bring on the effect of mindfulness, and multiple studies found dancing helped in terms of coping with pain and pain acceptance (Hickman et al., 2022). A duration of 60 to 150 minutes' weekly dance practice is helpful to those with chronic pain (Mangeri et al., 2014).

Social benefits

1. Dancing can strengthen social belonging.
2. Fostering social connections: Dancing is often done in groups, which can provide opportunities for social connections and interaction. Dancing can bring about an improved sense of self-efficacy, resocialization, and belonging (Pessoa, et al., 2019), which would reduce the risk of social isolation and loneliness.
3. Providing a sense of community: Dancing creates a culture of inclusion that embraces both understanding and acceptance among older adults, which in turn might also improve their quality of life (Lima, M. M. S., & Vieira, A. P., 2007).
4. Strengthening relationships: From the observation in our I Can Dance program, partnered dancing is a fun and engaging way to strengthen relationships, especially between family members. Who they are partnered with also has a great impact on the perceived enjoyment and continued participation of people with Parkinson's disease in dancing (Kunkel, et al., 2018).

Why ballroom dancing?

Ballroom dancing is an ideal option for healthy aging, particularly in people with limited social opportunities and declining cognitive performance. Several forms of ballroom dance have already been proven to have great benefits to neurological diseases and chronic health conditions (Wells & Yang, 2021). Overall, ballroom dance programs are an effective form of physical activity for improving overall health and wellness and may be more impactful than other physical activities. But most importantly, those who choose ballroom dancing are more likely to continue to commit to dancing than other physical activities (Mangeri et al., 2014).

Ballroom dancing may serve as an ideal alternative exercise solution for individuals who cannot adhere to traditional exercise programs.

Exercise (including dance fitness) Precautions for Older Adults

Dominic Yeung
Registered Physiotherapist

If you are new to exercise or feel unsure what to do

- First, get medical clearance from your doctor before starting an exercise program, especially if you have a pre-existing condition. Ask if there are any activities you should avoid.
- If you have a pre-existing condition or are in a state of frailty, it would be ideal to consult a physiotherapist or sports medicine doctor. They can assess your body and your needs. Based on their assessment, they will prescribe you a personalized home exercise program and teach you how to do it properly.
- Support your activity levels with the right diet. A nutritionist or dietician can help in this regard.

Self-reminder before each exercise session

- Do not overdo it. Do not push yourself beyond the level of intensity, number of repetitions or duration that is suitable for you.
- Prevent injury and discomfort by warming up and cooling down in each exercise session.
- Start slowly and build up steadily.
- Do not exercise during extreme temperatures.
- Stay hydrated with water or other liquid that contains adequate amount of electrolyte. Avoid replenishing with reverse osmosis water.
- Consider health concerns. Keep in mind how your ongoing health problems affect your workouts. For example, diabetics may need to adjust the timing of medication and meal plans when setting an exercise schedule. Make sure your blood sugar level is adequate. Have a small carbohydrate snack handy as backup if required.
- Listen to your body: Exercise should never hurt or make you feel lousy. Stop exercising immediately and call your doctor if you feel dizzy or short of breath, your heart skips or beats uncomfortably fast, develop chest pain or pressure, break out in a cold sweat, or experience pain. And put your routine on hold if a joint is red, swollen, or tender to the touch—the best way to cope with injuries is to avoid them in the first place. If you regularly experience pain or discomfort after exercising, try exercising for less time but more frequently throughout the day.

Environment

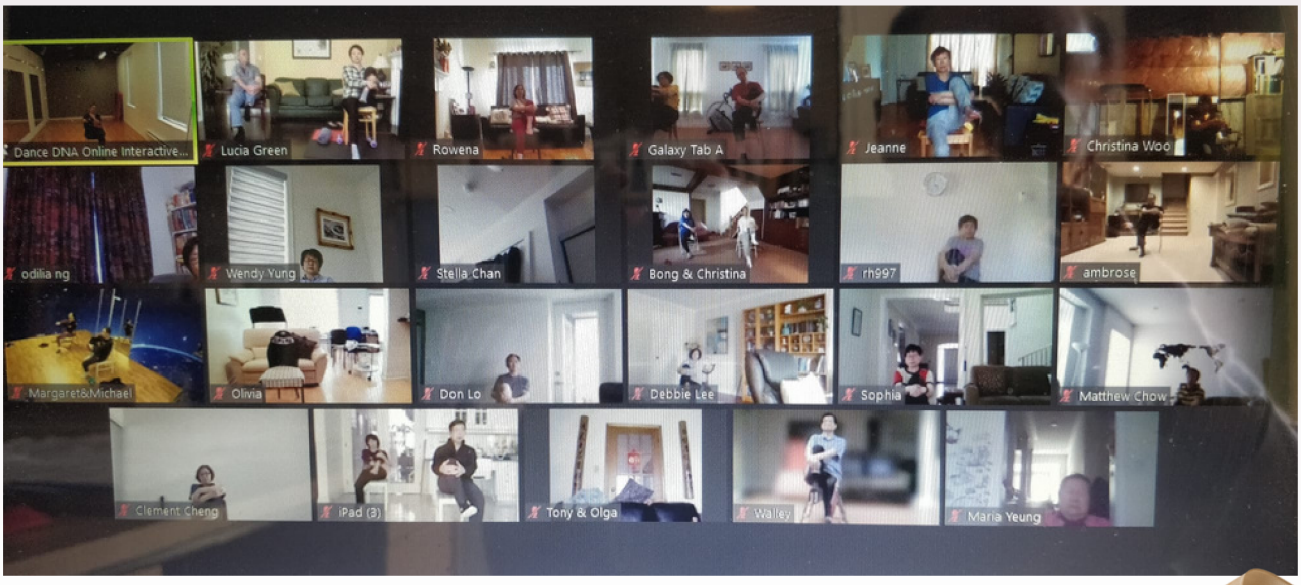
- Choose the proper exercise venue that complements well the type of exercise you want to do. You can potentially do it at home, at the gym, outdoor, in a swimming pool, or other indoor sport facilities.
- Make space and clear clutter on the ground (if relevant).
- If you have poor lower extremities strength or standing balance, prevent fall by having external support fixture ready. You can hold on to wall/stair rails, grab bars, stable furniture, etc.
- Make sure to have proper ground traction while doing exercise in standing. A good option would be to put in place a traction exercise mat.
- Prevent fall by wearing proper footwear and clothing. Do not forego any gait aid that you normally use (cane or walker) if you have no other suitable way of substituting for it while exercising.
- If you do use cardio machines (e.g. treadmill), choose ones with sturdy handrail support and an emergency stop button.

After Exercising

- Keep a log. Writing down your activities or using an app to track your progress not only holds you accountable, but is also a useful reminder of your accomplishments.
- Observe for normal post-workout pain. This kind of pain should gradually fade away within two hours. If it persists, it could be a sign that the exercise was too strenuous. Consider reducing the level of difficulty next time.
- It would be ideal and a good habit to take note of your heart rate and blood pressure before and after each workout session. On days that it is out of the norm, wait till the reading is back to the usual (relatively normal) range before resuming your exercise program.

Technicalities with Exercise

- Stretching exercise, when forcefully done or incorrectly executed, can cause injury. Aim for a sustained but gentle stretch.
- Learn to avoid compensatory movement during stretching that could lead to injury (e.g. while stretching the hamstring, its tightness causes your body to strain your lumbar spine instead).
- Do not strengthen your muscles at the expense of wearing down your joint cartilage (e.g. unknowingly wearing down your knee joints by climbing stairs, hoping that it would strengthen your thigh muscles).
- Balance training in standing comes with a risk of fall. If necessary, have a caregiver or a family member guard and supervise you. If present, he/she should stand on your weaker side.
- Do not hold your breath while strengthening muscles. Use proper breathing technique instead during strenuous movement (i.e. pursed lip breathing).
- Learn to avoid compensatory movement during strengthening exercise that could lead to injury (e.g. mistakenly strengthen the low back muscle while wanting to strengthen the bum muscle).
- Depending on the exercise or sport, you may need to wear protective gear (helmet, knee pad, elbow brace, etc.) to either cope with your existing condition or to prevent the onset of a new injury.



- For aerobic exercise, it is often a goal to gradually increase the difficulty until it reaches a certain level. One measure of this difficulty is using a chart called ‘’rate of perceived exertion’’. It would be useful to learn to discern the physiological signs associated with a given difficulty (e.g. how laborious breathing should be at a certain level), in order to prevent unnecessary straining.
- You can monitor your heart rate and blood pressure while exercising using a portable device (e.g. a watch on your wrist that does those readings).
- Try to avoid doing exercise right after a meal or late at night right before bedtime.
- Try to avoid strengthening and aerobics on the same day. Not all exercise has to be done daily. Depending on the type of exercise, it may be necessary to space out or to have rest day(s) in between.
- Exercise in the form of sport, while recreational, can cause repetitive stress injury if done excessively (e.g. knee injury playing badminton). Pace yourself and play within your tolerance limit.

Don’t Forget to Warm Up Before Dancing

A good warm-up can increase your joint temperature and helps increase your range of motion and flexibility. We warm up to prepare our bodies safely for the dance activity to follow and to avoid injury. Here is an example of the warm-up exercises our participants did before dancing.

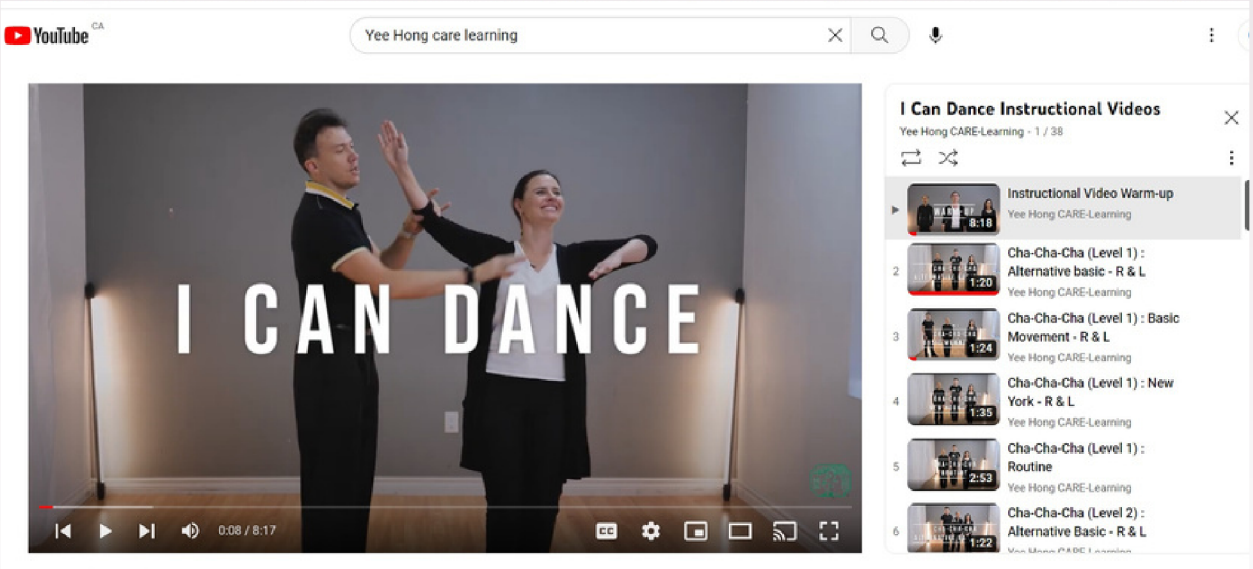
Access the warm-up routine with the following link or QR code:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U44gGbYtzNU&list=PL0VJSIha52gAAYqH10tvAv_c-tQRKpcD4

Introduction to various types of popular dances for older adults

Access the video instructions through the following link or QR code:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U44gGbYtzNU&list=PL0VJSIha52gAAYqH10tvAv_c-tQRKpcD4



Tango

Tango is a partner dance with strong emphasis on close and emotional contact between partners. It is often viewed as a passionate and expressive dance with intense focus and intricate footwork.

Key features of tango include:

1. Close embrace: with the partners chest-to-chest and hips touching. This creates a strong physical connection between the partners, which is key to the communication and expression of the dance.
2. Footwork: with the dancers moving their feet in quick, precise steps. This intricate footwork is often syncopated, meaning that the steps are not always on the beat of the music.
3. Musicality: danced to music with a strong beat and a distinctive rhythm. Good tango dancers are able to interpret the music and express it through their movements.

There are different types of tango, such as Argentine tango, Finnish tango, ballroom tango, amongst others. Although each style has its own unique characteristics, they are all based on the same basic elements of the dance.

Tango has specific benefits for older adults:

- In tango, all movements are done slowly. It improves mobility and balance in older adults and additional populations with balance impairments. It is composed of very simple step elements. Adapted tango involves movement initiation and cessation, multi-directional perturbations, varied speeds and rhythms. Focus on foot placement, whole body coordination, and attention to partner, path of movement… likely support improvements in mobility and balance (Hackney ME & McKee K, 2014).
- Argentine tango is the commonly employed dance form in the treatment of Parkinson's disease. It is effective in improving balance and functional mobility, and may have modest benefits upon cognition and fatigue in Parkinson's disease (Romenets et al., 2015).
- Tango can also have a positive effect on reducing depressive symptoms, as well as decreasing insomnia (Pinniger, Thorsteinsson, Brown, & McKinley, 2013).

Slow Waltz

Slow waltz, also referred to as English or American waltz, is a popular ballroom dance. The beauty of this dance is exemplified by the dancers' smooth flowing movements and graceful turns around the dance floor.

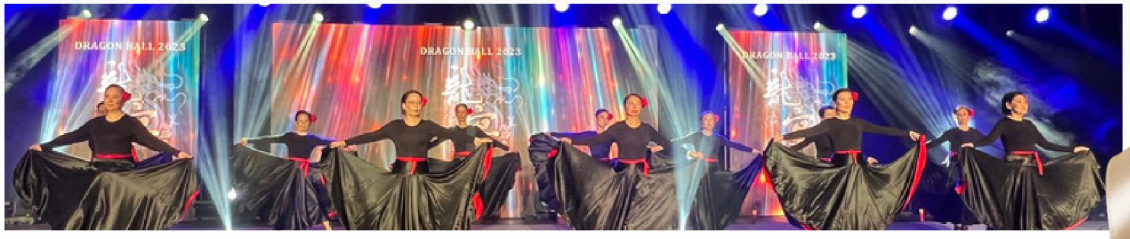
Key features of slow waltz include:

1. Closed partner connection: The dancers hold each other in a closed position, with the man's right hand on the woman's back and his left hand holding her right hand.
2. Gliding steps: The dancers move around the floor in a series of gliding steps, with the leader guiding the partner in a graceful and fluid manner.
3. Rise and fall: Slow waltz involves a rise and fall action as the dancers move around the floor, with the body rising on the first beat of the measure and falling on the second and third beats.
4. Turns and spins: Slow waltz includes a variety of turns and spins, such as the natural turn, reverse turn, and fleckerl, which add to the elegance and fluidity of the dance.

Slow waltz emphasizes grace, poise, and fluidity of movement, and requires a certain level of control and precision from both partners. Its elegant movement has rendered it a popular dance at social occasions and weddings.

Why slow waltz? Its' specific benefits to older adults:

- Improve cognitive functions: Slow waltz incorporates footwork exercises and other dance training techniques that could improve short-term memory and executive functioning (Kosmat, H., & Vranic, A., 2017).
- Improve cardiovascular health: For those with mild to moderate heart failure, waltzing was found to boost heart health and improved breathing (Belardinelli et al., 2008).



Cha-Cha-Cha

Cha-cha-cha is a partner dance with a distinctive beat, characterized by a syncopated rhythm that emphasizes the second and fourth beats of the measure. The dance style is characterized by sharp, staccato movements, as well as fluid hip action and body isolations.

Key features of cha-cha-cha:

1. Timing: Cha-cha-cha is considered a syncopated dance (two steps on one beat).
2. Footwork: It is characterized by quick, light footwork.
3. Hip action: Dancers use their hips to create a distinctive, fluid movement that adds to the energy and excitement of the dance.
4. Body isolations: It also involves a lot of body isolations where dancers move one part of their body while keeping the rest still. This can include twisting, turning, and tilting movements that add to the dance's visual appeal.

Why cha-cha-cha? Its' specific benefits to older adults:

- Prevent falls: Older adults are at a higher risk of falls, and falls could lead to serious injury. The cha-cha-cha can help to improve flexibility, balance, and agility in older adults. By enhancing ankle joint stability, flexibility, and muscle strength, cha-cha-cha has been found to improve older adults' walking balance, standing balance, and body coordination (Li et al., 2022), which can help to prevent falls.
- It is an effective tool for those older adults who do not often engage in physical exercise. A period of cha-cha-cha dance training can be used as an appropriate exercise to improve the executive ability of motor functions (Li et al., 2022).
- Excellent form of dance for older adults living with Parkinson's disease: Freezing of gait is a common symptom of Parkinson's disease – oftentimes, it can severely affect the individual's daily functioning. Simple "cha-cha-cha based" weight-shifting strategies can help in mitigating the risks of gait freezing mid-turn (Kal et al., 2022).

Jive

Jive is a lively and energetic dance. It is often associated with swing music, and is considered a popular dance style in ballroom dancing.

Key features of jive:

1. Fast-paced: It requires a lot of energy and stamina. The tempo of the music is typically between 32 and 44 beats per minute.
2. Upbeat: The music is usually upbeat and lively, with a strong and steady rhythm. It often features a four-beat structure, with a strong emphasis on the first and third beats.
3. Bouncy and springy: Dancers use a lot of quick, sharp kicks and flicks of the feet, as well as energetic jumps and hops.
4. Playful: Known for its playful and fun-loving style; dancers often use exaggerated facial expressions and body movements to convey a sense of joy and energy.

Why jive? Its' specific benefits to older adult:
Performing dances such as jive would require moving the centre of gravity rapidly and frequently while maintaining posture. This may result in improved walking balance and standing balance. Jive is an effective exercise method in enhancing postural stability of older adults (Sohn, J., et al., 2018), reducing the likelihood of falls.

Quickstep

Quickstep is a lively ballroom dance characterized by fast-paced steps and smooth movements, with an emphasis on fluidity and grace. Quickstep is often danced to upbeat swing or jazz music, and it is also considered one of the most energetic and entertaining ballroom dances.

Key features of quickstep:

1. Quickstep is typically danced in a closed position, with the partners standing close together and holding each other in a firm but relaxed embrace.
2. It is a progressive dance, meaning that dancers move continuously around the dance floor in a counter clockwise direction.
3. Quickstep is known for its elegant and smooth movements, which require dancers to maintain a strong posture and hold their bodies in a precise position.
4. The dance is characterized by fast, light steps that involve a combination of hops, skips, and chasses.
5. It also involves a series of turns, twists, and dips, which require dancers to have excellent balance and coordination.

Why quickstep? Its' benefits for older adults:

1. The fast pace of quickstep is a great cardiovascular workout – it requires constant movement of the legs and feet, increasing heart rate and improving fitness.
2. Improved balance and coordination: As the dancer become more familiar with the quickstep, they will improve in their footwork skills, which require a lot of balance and coordination.

Rumba

Rumba is a slow and sensual dance known for its romantic and passionate movements. It has several different styles, including American rumba, international rumba, and Cuban rumba. American rumba and international rumba are often danced in ballroom competitions and are more formal and structured, while Cuban rumba is a more free-form and improvisational style. Rumba is a beautiful and expressive dance.

Key features of rumba:

1. Footwork: It is danced on the balls of the feet, with small steps and a gentle swaying motion.
2. Hip movement: It is characterized by hip movement, with the dancers alternating between swaying their hips from side to side and rocking them forward and back.
3. Romantic gestures: Being a sensual dance, it often includes romantic gestures such as holding hands, gazing into each other's eyes, and caressing each other's bodies.

Why rumba? Its specific benefits to older adults:

1. Rumba is a slow, romantic dance that requires controlled movements and body awareness. The dance requires the upper body to maintain in the correct position, leading to increased strengthening of the abdominal and back muscles (Sohn et al., 2017), which helps to reduce the risk of fall.
2. Rumba is one of the dance forms that has been found to be effective for those living with chronic neurological conditions, with improvements found in gait functions, balance, and quality of life (Wells & Yang, 2021).

Insights and Observations from the I Can Dance Program

Dancing, an effective way of keeping physically active:

We found dancing an effective way of keeping participants physically active due to the following elements:

- Participants joined the dance workshops weekly to meet their buddies and danced to great music selected by our team. Such an experience itself was an engaging and fun way to enable older adults to stay physically active.
- Language did not matter for most of the older participants! Though the dance instructors mostly spoke English, the Project allowed us to arrange volunteers to facilitate the learning needs of participants who spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, and/or English.
- Empowering older adults to join at their comfort level: As the program started during COVID, we needed to ensure that older adults could join from their homes. We also created separate dance workshops for beginners and more advanced dancers, allowing them to join the group that was better suited to their ability. The Project also offered dance fitness sessions aimed at fitness enhancement. All these set-ups have elevated their confidence to know that “I can dance”!
- Family members’ involvement: Ballroom dance is a set of partner dances. We welcomed participants to join our dance workshops with their spouses or other family members. For the caregivers, this alternative way of caregiving also served as a means of stress relief when they participated in the fun-filled process. We also noticed that the participation rate and level of involvement of couple participants were comparatively higher than the solo participants.

Ability appropriate

Prior to their admission into this project, every participant was invited to go through physical and psychosocial assessments conducted by a physiotherapist and a social worker. The assessment results provided high reference value for the development of the dance curriculum. Some traditional dance steps were modified accordingly. The two-year project experience has validated the importance of ability appropriateness for those who have mobility challenges or are physically frail. Modified dance choreography helps maintain the physical fitness of older adults.

Strengths-based approach

Instead of focusing on physical limitations, the Project emphasized the "achievements" of participants. The Project arranged frequent video recording sessions to enable the participants to monitor their own improvements in physical mobility, range of motion, body posture, as well as dance steps. Participants were also invited to perform at dance showcases within the project years. This constant check-in with participants served as a big boost to continue their dance engagement.

Friendship meets movement

I Can Dance offered more than just dance instructions. It offered a space for individuals to meet new people, build up friendships, and develop a sense of belonging. The mutual support and encouragement that participants provided for one another helped to foster a positive environment and enhanced their quality of life.

Testimonials from I Can Dance Participants

"The instructors, volunteers, staff, and group members from I Can Dance are very caring. Every week, I look forward to going to the lesson."

"I benefit from I Can Dance both mentally and physically. Learning dancing for the first time brings me joy; it challenges my brain to learn new things and to remember all the steps. I Can Dance is like a family caring for each other."

"Excellent dance instructors, great fun and very patient, very professional. Administration is excellent, staff and volunteers keep us updated with videos and communicate very well. I am one of the lucky ones who can join the group."

"Good project for physical health."

Testimonials from I Can Dance Participants

“It gave us the confidence that we can still learn a new skill at our age and the opportunity to show the community that we can do it.”

“This is an excellent project, well organized and lots of fun.”

“I look forward to every class and special event of the Project. The instructors are especially talented to create fun in each class and to teach us how to dance. The Project will not be as successful without the volunteers too.”

“I am moved by their dedication and that of the coordinators from Yee Hong plus others from Dance DNA.”

Join Us

I Can

DANCE

PROGRAM

REGISTRATION & ENQUIRIES

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All I Can Dance participants, their family caregivers, and volunteers

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中心開放時間 **Opening Hours**: 星期一至星期五 / Monday to Friday
上午九時至下午五時 / 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
(公眾假期休息) / (Closed on Public holidays)

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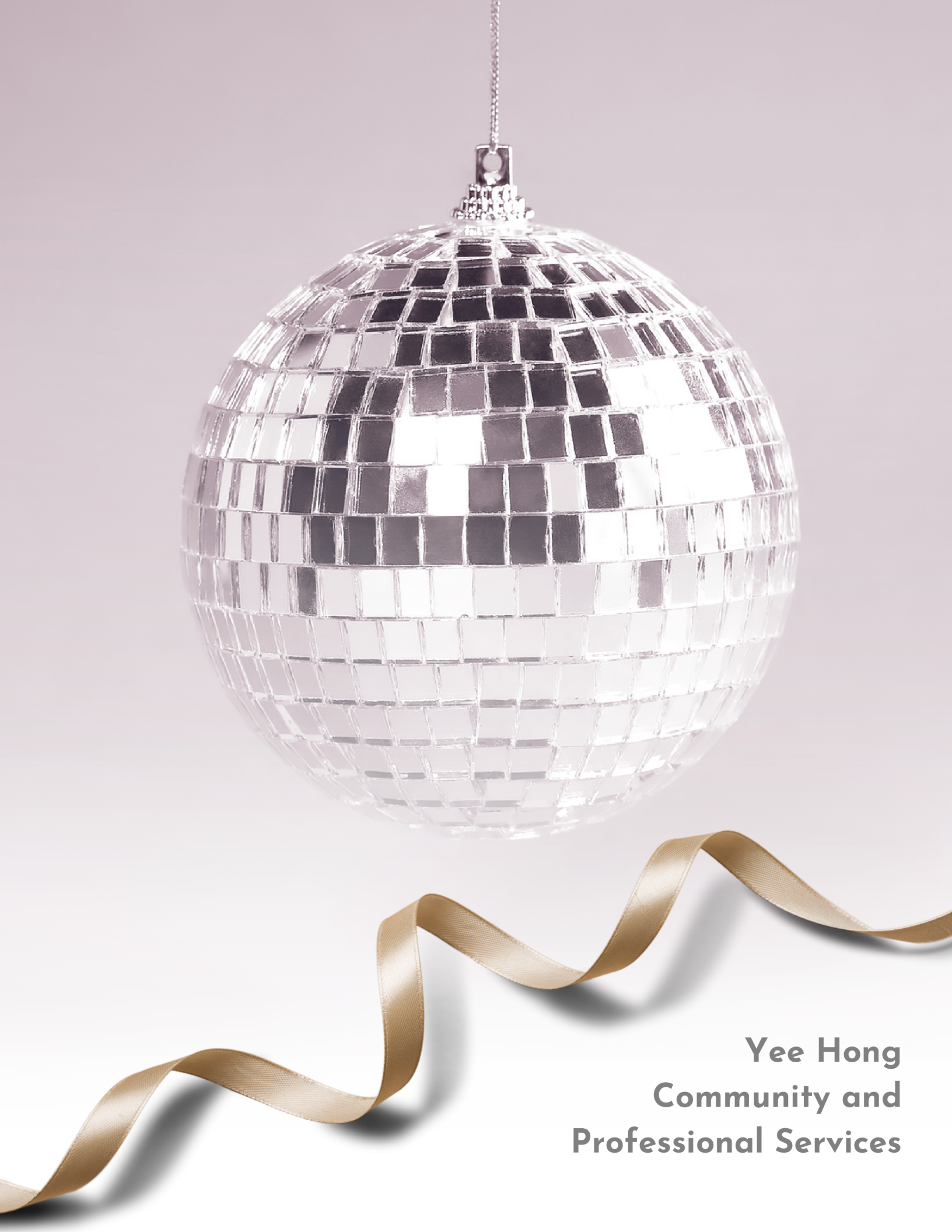

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