

Contact Improvisation (CI) Jam Guidelines

Vision Statement

We are dedicated to growing the Contact Improvisation (CI) community in Victoria, BC, by fostering a respectful and intentional space where participants can safely explore CI as a dance form. We aim to cultivate a sense of connection through the delivery of CI jams, education, workshops, and festivals. We strive to nurture a fruitful and vibrant community of CI dancers, celebrating the beauty and diversity this dance form has to offer.

Core Members

The Core Members are a collective of experienced and dedicated dancers, they are responsible for maintaining the space, ensuring participant safety, and addressing any issues during events organized by the collective. They also organize and facilitate the jams, upholding the core values of the practice as community volunteers.

You are encouraged to approach any Core Member with questions, concerns, or if you need help navigating a situation. For serious issues, they can assist with resolving disputes or provide guidance on reporting harm or violations. Information about how to contact the core members is provided at the end of this document.

1. Consent, Communication, and Respect

Respect and consent are the foundation of every interaction in CI. Our practice thrives when dancers are mindful of each other's boundaries and communicate through movement, and verbally when needed, with care and attentiveness.

- **Awareness of Boundaries:** Always be attentive to your partner's comfort level. Observe non-verbal cues such as body tension, facial expressions, or changes in movement quality. If you sense discomfort in yourself or your partner, adjust your approach or gracefully disengage.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** CI relies on a subtle dialogue of movement and touch. Trust your intuition and be sensitive to shifts in energy and engagement. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and give space.
- **Mutual Respect:** Honor your partner's autonomy and choices. Each dancer has the right to set boundaries at any time without explanation. Accept a "no" gracefully and without question.
- **Power Dynamics:** Be mindful of factors like experience level, age, physical strength, or social status that can influence interactions. Experienced dancers help set the context for the space and we ask that they support and empower newcomers, ensuring they feel safe to express their needs.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Celebrate the diversity within our community. Treat everyone with equal respect, regardless of background or identity.
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2. Navigating Sexual Energy in Contact Improvisation

CI involves physical closeness, but the primary focus is always on the dance and connection through shared movement, not on romantic or sexual interaction. It's important to remain aware of any sexual energy that may arise during a dance and to approach it mindfully.

- **Acknowledging Sensations:** Sexual energy may emerge during close physical interactions in CI. While this can be a natural response to closeness, it's crucial to acknowledge it without letting it take over the dance. The focus remains on the exploration of the dance itself, rather than on personal or sexual connection.
 - **Staying Present:** Maintain a sense of awareness during your dance. If you notice any sexual energy in yourself or your partner, acknowledge its presence without feeding into it. The intention in CI is to explore the dynamics of the dance, not to engage in romantic or sexual exchanges.
 - **Shifting Focus:** If you feel that the sexual energy is growing or becoming distracting, shift your focus or change the nature of your dance. This might mean altering the flow, increasing or decreasing physical space, or transitioning to solo dancing. This helps return the focus to the dance itself and keeps the interaction comfortable for both parties.
 - **Stepping Away:** If the energy becomes uncomfortable or overwhelming at any point, it is always okay to step away from the dance. Prioritize your comfort and ensure a smooth disengagement by altering your pace or movements before coming to a stop.
 - **Group Dynamics:** Remember that CI happens in a shared space with other participants and observers. Those around you haven't consented to witness or engage in sexual tension, so it's important to remain mindful of how your energy and interactions affect the broader group. Respect both your partner's boundaries and the communal space.
 - **Setting Boundaries:** Use non-verbal communication—such as changing the quality of your movements or adjusting the physical distance between you and your partner—to set boundaries and guide the interaction. When necessary, verbal communication is encouraged to ensure comfort and clarity. It is always okay to say “no” if needed.
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Sometimes, sexual energy in a dance can feel like a spark—something that catches your attention and stirs a strong reaction. Rather than letting it distract you, think of this energy as raw potential that you can transform into something else. Instead of focusing on the feeling itself, consciously shift it into the creative expression of your dance. Let it fuel your movements in a way that deepens your connection to the dance without letting it take over. By transmuting this energy, you turn what could be a distraction into a source of artistic inspiration and flow, enriching the dance rather than diverting it.

Ultimately, we can train ourselves to keep sexual arousal completely separate from our Contact practice. Until that clarity is established, we commit to transmuting arousal if it comes up, not exploring it in this space.

3. Physical and Emotional Safety

Safety is paramount in CI. Respect for physical and emotional boundaries ensures a supportive environment for all participants.

- **Know Your Limits:** Be honest about your physical capabilities. It's acceptable to decline movements or lifts that make you uncomfortable.
 - **Spatial Awareness:** Be conscious of other dancers to prevent collisions and maintain a harmonious flow within the space.
 - **Gentle Touch:** Avoid grabbing or forcing movements. CI is about responsive and consensual interaction. Offer support rather than control.
 - **Sensorial Exploration:** Focus on enhancing sensory awareness—how movement feels and how touch informs connection—without crossing into sensuality.
 - **Emotional Boundaries:** While CI can be therapeutic, it's important to process personal emotions independently or with professional support outside of the jam. The CI space is not a substitute for therapy.
 - **Staying Engaged:** If you need to rest or pause during the session, consider moving to the edge of the space. This allows others to continue flowing freely without obstruction and maintains the active energy of the dance.
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4. Accountability and Addressing Harm

We are committed to fostering a culture of accountability where everyone feels safe and respected. Accountability ensures that our space remains open, respectful, and welcoming for all participants.

- **Reporting Concerns:** If you experience or witness harm—whether physical, emotional, or energetic—please approach a Core Member. Your concerns will be treated with care, sensitivity, and confidentiality. It's important that all issues are taken seriously and addressed appropriately.
- **Taking Responsibility:** If you are informed that your actions have caused discomfort, listen openly and without defensiveness. Reflect on the feedback and make any necessary adjustments to your behavior. Taking responsibility is essential to maintaining a respectful space for everyone.
- **Encouraging Growth:** Mistakes or misunderstandings can happen, but they also provide an opportunity for growth. Being open to feedback and making changes strengthens the community and fosters a more trusting environment.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Conflicts are natural in any community, but how they are resolved matters. If a conflict arises, refer to the **Dispute Resolution Process** for steps on how these issues are addressed with fairness and respect.

By embracing accountability, openness to growth, and a willingness to adjust, we create a community where everyone can confidently explore movement in a safe and respectful environment.

5. Time, Space, and Community Respect

Respecting the shared space and time is essential for creating a positive experience for everyone.

- **Punctuality:** Arriving on time for the opening circle helps establish group intentions and ensures cohesion. Staying for the closing circle offers reflection and closure, fostering a sense of community.
 - **Minimizing Distractions:**
 - **Conversations:** Keep non-dance conversations off the dance floor to maintain focus and flow.
 - **Sound:** Express yourself naturally but be mindful of volume, ensuring your sounds enhance the space without disrupting others.
 - **Devices:** Silence electronic devices, and avoid using them in the dance area to preserve the immersive environment.
 - **Respect for Space:** Be aware of the space around you. Move mindfully to avoid interfering with other dancers, and respect others' need for personal space. Keep belongings organized and the floor clear to maintain a safe environment.
 - **Inclusivity:** Engage with all dancers, regardless of experience or ability, to create an open, supportive community.
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6. Dress Code

Appropriate attire enhances safety and comfort.

- **Comfortable Clothing:** Wear flexible attire that allows full range of motion. Long sleeves and pants protect the skin during contact and floor work.
 - **Modesty:** Ensure all private areas are fully covered to maintain a non-sexual environment.
 - **No Jewelry:** Remove accessories to prevent injury.
 - **Knee Pads (Optional):** Consider using knee pads for added comfort during floor movements.
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7. Health, Hygiene, and Personal Care

Good personal care contributes to a pleasant experience for all.

- **Stay Home if Unwell:** Protect others by not attending if you're sick or contagious.
 - **Personal Hygiene:** Maintain cleanliness and consider using deodorant. Bring a towel or a change of clothing if you perspire heavily.
 - **Use Scent-Free or Lightly Scented Products:** Choose unscented or lightly fragranced personal care products to accommodate those with sensitivities.
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8. Role of Guest Facilitators

Guest facilitators should understand these guidelines and agree to abide by them. Guest facilitation does not add someone to the Core Group as defined in this document. Where participant-core group interactions are defined in this document, guest facilitators are excluded. It is the responsibility of guest facilitators to proactively identify safety risks in the moment, but core members will address issues after-the-fact as they pertain to dispute resolution and subsequent policy amendment. In the event that a guest facilitator receives a complaint, they should make no public statements and refer it directly to a member of the Core Group.

9. Dispute Resolution Process

Conflicts between parties are dealt with in full confidentiality. We do not take on issues external to the event.

Step 1: Deeper Check-In

- **Listening Ear:** Approach a Core Member to discuss your concern. They will engage in a deeper check-in to understand your needs. Do you require further action, or did you just need to be heard?
- **Determining Next Steps:** The Core Members will discern the next steps depending on the severity of the situation, which may include consulting with other Core Members while maintaining confidentiality.
- **Anonymity Considerations:** If you wish to remain anonymous, we will inform you that there are limitations to resolving the situation fully, as healing often happens when both parties can be heard.

Step 2: Communication with the Involved Party

- **Contacting the Individual:** If further action is requested, the Core Members will communicate with the person involved, either via email or in person.
- **Maintaining Anonymity:** Your identity will be kept confidential if you have requested anonymity.

Step 3: Response and Actions

- **Option A: Positive Reception**
 - If the individual receives the feedback well and reflection makes sense to them, we will observe to ensure positive changes occur.
 - If both parties are willing, we can arrange for a reflective listening session (up to 45 minutes) with a capable third party from the community (a list will be created). If financial reciprocity is required, the two parties involved will handle it. The third party may also offer their service in exchange for jam entry. This is a one-time offer.
- **Option B: Need for Mentorship**
 - If the individual doesn't fully understand the feedback but is open to support, we may offer mentorship or suggest external mentorship. Depending on the severity

of the complaint, they may need to engage in mentorship before returning to the jam.

- **Option C: Unreceptive Response**
 - If the individual does not receive the feedback well, they may be asked to take a temporary pause from attending the jams.

Step 4: Reassessment

- The Core Members will reassess the situation to see if things are resolved or if either person needs more time away from the jam.

Second Complaint

- In the case of a second complaint against the same individual, they will be asked to take time away from the jam until they can take responsibility or agree to mentorship or therapy—such as speaking with someone from a resource list or their own professional support.
- **Purpose of the Pause:** This is not punishment but time and space for self-reflection and seeking outside support to address issues related to boundaries, connection, and behaviors that are unwelcome on the dance floor.
- **Timeline:** The individual will pause attendance until they've had reflection with another person and are able to return with personal responsibility—a minimum of one month.

Third Complaint or Severe External Issues

- If we receive a third complaint, or become aware of something severe happening outside of the jam, our policy is to ask the individual to leave the community permanently or until we can develop more effective resources to help them heal and evolve their dance floor etiquette to a point where they are safe to re-enter.

Contact Information

For questions, concerns, or to report an issue, please contact the Core Members:

Core Members:

- Derek Wong: vcidance@gmail.com 236-508-3003
 - Tony Bashi: tony@tonybashi.com 250-661-5155
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By adhering to these guidelines, we cultivate a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for Contact Improvisation. Together, we support trust, creativity, and genuine connection, enriching everyone's experience in the exploration of movement.

We could have the following agreements at the check in table as a reminder for the main points in the guidelines and as a reminder that we are agreeing to follow the guidelines.

Contact Improvisation Jam Agreements

By entering this space, you agree to the following:

- **Consent First:** Always seek and respect boundaries, both verbal and non-verbal.
- **Move Mindfully:** Stay aware of your body, your partner, and the group.
- **Prioritize Safety:** Know your limits, be gentle, and respect personal space.
- **Prioritize the Dance Form:** If sexual energy arises, gently redirect or disengage to keep the focus on the dance and your exploration of CI.
- **Respect the Space:** Arrive on time, and treat the dance floor as sacred.
- **Minimize Distractions:** Keep conversations off the dance floor (preferably in the hall) and devices silent.
- **Stay Open:** Embrace diversity and engage with a variety of dancers, regardless of experience or ability.
- **Own Your Impact:** Accept feedback, take responsibility, and adjust your actions if needed.
- **Care for Community:** Maintain good mental, emotional and physical hygiene, and please stay home if unwell.
- **Resolve Conflicts Respectfully:** Use Core Members for guidance and resolution when necessary.
- **Understand and Agree:** I understand and agree to follow the jam guidelines.

"We're all just walking each other home." ~ Ram Dass