

AN EXPLORATION OF DANCE IN THE LIVES  
OF CANCER SURVIVORS

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Dance  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

September 2008

“An Exploration of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors,” a thesis prepared by Laura Sue Hiszczynskyj in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in the Department of Dance. This thesis has been approved and accepted by:

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## An Abstract of the Thesis of

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in the Department of Dance                      to be taken                      September 2008

Title: AN EXPLORATION OF DANCE IN THE LIVES OF CANCER SURVIVORS

Approved:

*Dt.* Steven J. Chatfield

The purpose of this study was two-fold: 1) to uncover, describe, compare, and contrast the personal stories and experiences of dance in the lives of the four cancer survivors who volunteered to participate in this research and 2) to determine how and if dance can be a useful tool in gathering data about the experiences of these cancer survivors. Participants were observed in their regular dance practice, kept journals, and completed three verbal interviews and three movement interviews. Participants reported that dance has helped them re-connect with their bodies, overcome feelings of isolation, adapt to life after cancer, express and release emotions, and free their minds of worry. Each participant reported that the process of sharing their stories led to deeper understanding and appreciation of the role of dance in their lives. However, the movement interviews had the most impact in stimulating discoveries about themselves as cancer survivors who dance.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation to my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Steven J. Chatfield for his constant encouragement and support during the process of this research as well as his assistance in the preparation of this manuscript. Special thanks to committee members Jenifer Craig and Christian Cherry for challenging me to work at my potential even through extenuating circumstances. Thank you to my mentor and friend, Alito Alessi for helping me understand more fully the role of dance in my life. To the amazing women who volunteered to participate in this study, I extend my gratitude for their willingness to join me on this journey and for sharing intimate details of their lives. Lastly, I thank my amazing friends and family, without whom the completion of this project would not have been possible.

Dedicated to the memory of my mother,

Elaine “Sherry” Hiszczynskij.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*I got no help from the medical profession in that they chopped a piece out and then said come back in 6 months or 12 months and have your smears or whatever, and that was it. I was still left, and I did not realize it then but I do so now, I was just left to look after myself spiritually and mentally; so they fixed the body yes, and the rest is left to me. (Breaden 1997, 980)*

*--"Joan," a cancer survivor*

When a person with cancer is cured or has entered into remission, his or her life with cancer does not end. The cancer experience does not suddenly vanish; it is woven into the fabric of life-experience. Even when medical tests reveal that the physical body no longer has the disease, the experience of cancer remains in the individual.

Dr. Fitzhugh Mullan introduced the concept of cancer survivorship in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1985 (Aziz 2002). After being diagnosed with cancer himself, Mullan wrote, "Survivorship should be studied as a phenomenon in itself rather than as a byproduct or afterthought of basic research on cancer treatment" (Mullan 1985, 273). Since then, the field of cancer survivorship research has begun to address some of the psychological, social, and physical consequences of surviving cancer. Investigators are also recognizing the value of gathering in-depth personal accounts from survivors themselves.

A person who has suffered from a major illness, such as cancer, is forever changed. According to Edmund Pellegrino, “Body and self are never again quite so comfortably united, for the person who has been ill recognizes that at any time his body or mind may again come into opposition with the self” (Pellegrino 1982, 159-160). Katrina Breaden (1997) describes this phenomenon as “disembodiment.” The women in Breaden’s hermeneutic, phenomenological study, *Cancer and Beyond: the question of survivorship*, experienced a separation between their minds and their bodies after being diagnosed with cancer. The lived body suddenly considered the physical body to be unreliable and suspicious (Breaden 1997). In another article, Max Van Manen (1998) describes an individual’s experiential account following major surgery. The patient experienced his body as an object manipulated by the health care professionals. His body was “simultaneously experienced as alien while undeniably himself” (Van Manen 1998, 2).

How does one learn to trust his or her body after that body has acted as a source of pain, suspicion, and suffering? I found the answer through dancing. As a three-time cancer survivor, I have first-hand experience of the profound effects cancer has on one’s physical, social, emotional, and psychological well-being. As a dancer, I also have direct experience as to how these issues are affected by experiencing dance in the classroom, rehearsal studio, or in performance. I am a dancer. I am a cancer survivor. I consider these things to be an enormous part of my identity, and I do not feel that they can be separated. I exist as both a dancer and a cancer survivor in the world simultaneously.

Like Joan (Breaden 1997), from the opening quote, I also felt that so much was left up to me as I attempted to find normalcy in my life when treatment was completed. Dance was my way of doing just that. I was able to feel a sense of control over my physical body again, diminishing my suspicion of it. I found much comfort through dance; I have wondered if there are others who have found strength, healing, a re-connection to their physical bodies, and acceptance of their compromised health through the art of dance and dancing. All of these things are a part of my personal lived experience of being a dancer who is also a cancer survivor.

Many studies show that fatigue and depression are common afflictions among cancer survivors (Stricker et al. 2004; Holley and Borger 2001; Kim, Hickok, and Morrow 2006). Judith Lynne Hanna (1988) discusses how dancing often reduces symptoms of those disorders. Hanna also writes that dancing may provide individuals with a sense of self-mastery, which often contributes to positive changes in esteem, self-perception, and body image. When dancing is accompanied with imaged expressions of past or current experiences, it sometimes helps the individual to problem solve outside of the dance setting (Hanna 1988). In *Creativity and Spirituality in Nursing*, Mary Rockwood Lane, a nurse, researcher, and artist, points out that “Daily *dancing* could prove an uplifting, attitude-changing, and energizing experience for both patient and nurse” (Lane 2005a).

Lauren Bracey (2004) explored the lived experiences of university dancers. Bracey “was interested in how these individuals experienced this aspect of their educational lives and in whether their collective experiences shared common ground” (Bracey 2004, 8). Although each dancer had a unique story to tell, Bracey found that

interrelated themes emerged, such as meaning, community, and the relationship of artistry with academia (Bracey 2004). Mary Rockwood Lane (2005b) gathered personal accounts of healing through art from patients and artists at Shands Hospital in Florida. Like Bracey, Lane also uncovered common themes from the individual stories. Some themes discussed in Lane's study include darkness, luminosity, transformation, and awakening (Lane 2005b).

Survivorship research has revealed a broad spectrum of experiences. It includes, disembodiment (Breaden 1997), a search for normalcy, loss of control, stress (Nail 2001), loss of self-esteem, and compromised body-image (Leigh 1992). Other studies have shown that dance and/or art can contribute to feelings of normalcy, a sense of control, self-mastery, increased self-esteem and perceived body-image, problem solving, self-expression, catharsis (Hanna 1988), self identity, and illumination (Lane 2005b). What about the experiences of a person who has lived as both a survivor and a dancer?

Do dancers who are also cancer survivors have any shared experiences? Is there potential for new fields to emerge in the dance world as dance professionals who teach classes specifically designed for the cancer survivor? Is there a relationship between dance and cancer survival? What role does dance play in the lives of those who live with cancer? What is their perception of participating in a seemingly normal activity? How do cancer survivors experience the world of dancing?

I set out to seek answers to these questions and to explore the role of dance in the lives of four cancer survivors. I felt strongly that the only way to explore the

personal and unique experiences of survivorship and dancing was to hear the stories directly from the dancers living with cancer.

This paper is the result of these efforts. The following chapter contains a review of literature pertinent to this study and an in-depth description of the methods used for this research. Chapter III is a full account of this study and includes each case study; chapters 4 and 5 focus on the movement project portion of this research.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is two-fold: 1) to uncover, compare, contrast, and describe the personal stories and experiences of dance in the lives of the four cancer survivors who volunteered to participate in this research, and 2) to determine how and if dance can be a useful tool in gathering data about the experiences of these cancer survivors.

### Definitions

Judith Lynne Hanna defines *dance* as

human behavior composed (from the dancer's perspective, which is usually shared by other members of the dancer's culture) of purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements other than ordinary motor activities, the motion (in time, space, and dynamics) having inherent and "aesthetic" value and transformative potential for the dancer and onlooker. (Hanna 1988, 12)

I will use this definition when referring to dance. Whenever a participant considers something as a form of dance, it falls under the umbrella of dance in this study.



The *DanceAbility Method*, developed by Alito Alessi, refers to a method of teaching movement improvisation to all people. This includes beginner dancers, experienced dancers, and people with or without disabilities (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005). “The intention of DanceAbility is to work with all people in the study of dance and movement improvisation, and bring more diversity, equality and self-empowerment into contemporary dance, and by extension, into our greater culture” (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005, 7).

*Dance/Movement Therapy*, as defined by the American Dance Therapy Association, is “the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, cognitive, social and physical integration of the individual” (American Dance Therapy Association, internet). This definition is discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV.

One of the means of gathering information for this study was in what I call a *Movement Interview*. There are three parts to these interviews: 1) a warm-up, 2) movement responses to questions or statements, 3) movement responses to the participants’ own thoughts and words.

According to the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, a *cancer survivor* is a person who is diagnosed with cancer (Dow 2003). This includes, but is not limited to, those who are undergoing treatment for cancer, those who have completed treatment, those who are in remission, and those who have been cured from cancer for several years (Aziz 2002). In his article entitled, *Defining Cancer Survivorship* (2007), Michael Feuerstein states, “It is expected that the details of the definition of cancer survivor will evolve as knowledge in the area increases...” (Feuerstein 2007, 5).

### Assumptions and Bias

While I, as the investigator, sought to look into the lived experiences of others, I cannot separate myself from my own experiences. My own history of dance and cancer most certainly influences my interactions with others. The participants in this study have shared their stories, but it has been my role as the researcher to analyze the stories until essences and themes have revealed themselves to me (Van Manen 1990). My own lived experience could not be ignored in this process.

### Delimitations

Although the participants in this study were all cancer survivors who dance, they have a variety of backgrounds. Their lived experiences are compared and contrasted but each story is independent of the others. The participants include survivors of different types and severities of cancers. They have experienced various forms of treatments for cancer. The participants each also have individual histories of dance; some were dancers prior to their cancer diagnoses and continued afterwards; others did not become dancers until after their diagnosis of cancer.

Throughout the study, participants were asked to keep journals and were given guidelines on how to do this. I was not present during their journal writing and can only assume that they approached the writing according to the guidelines given.

This study uses dance to explore the very personal stories and lived experiences of the participants. Although volunteers felt that participating in this study was therapeutic, I did not actively intend to treat the participants with the practice of dance/

movement therapy. The intention was that the movement interview sessions were to be used as a tool to gather data, not to treat disorders. I used my own experiences, knowledge, and expertise in the field of dance to guide the movement sessions.

### Limitations

Data collected throughout this study included journal entries and conversational interviewing of the participants. These relied on the participants' own accuracy, honesty, and interpretations of the topics discussed and written about. Data were also collected during movement interviews, which required each volunteer to participate in dance improvisation. Two of the participants were very experienced improvisers and had a background in DanceAbility. They were initially much more comfortable with the movement interviews than the participants without an extensive background in dance improvisation.

I collected preliminary information and observed each participant in her standard dance practice; data were then collected in three rounds. Each round consisted of two journal writings, one conversational interview, and one movement interview. Although I intended to use the journal writings to inform each subsequent interview, I did not always get the writings from the participants in time. I also had to skip a movement interview with one of the participants because she had an injury preventing her from being able to dance for a period of time.

### Significance of the Study

Cancer survivorship research has begun to explore the experiences of survivors. Writings on the effects of dance on stress and overall well-being (Hanna 1988) have given us a glimpse into the power of dance. However, the current literature neglects the in-depth personal accounts of cancer survivors who dance. The significance of this proposed study lies in its effort to begin filling this gap.

Why is this important?

This research has the potential to empower dance educators, health care professionals, cancer survivors and their families with knowledge of how dance has played a role in the lives of survivors who participated in this study.

Secondly, using dance as a mode of inquiry has not been well documented. In doing this research, I have witnessed the power of movement and dance to elicit deeper responses from the participants than were gathered merely through conversational interviewing and journaling. A goal of this study is to motivate and inspire other researchers to use dance as a tool in gathering information about lived experiences.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

#### Review of Literature

This research has required an in-depth look into the lived experience of four individuals. I do not claim to make general statements about all cancer survivors who dance but I do believe that it was important to approach this study with a breadth of information gathered from pertinent studies.

The literature reviewed in this chapter addresses the following topics: the nature of survivorship (Breaden 1997), the lived experience of art and healing (Lane 2005), the relationship of dance and stress (Hanna 1988), and the lived experience of university dancers (Bracey 2004). Finally, I explore methodological suggestions on: researching the human science of lived experiences (Van Manen 1990), interviewing (Seidman 1991), and using dance as a mode of inquiry (Ylönen 2003).

#### Cancer Survivorship

As more people are living long after cancer diagnosis, cancer survivorship is a growing area of research. Katrina Breaden was prompted to explore the nature of cancer survivorship when she questioned the definition of the term *survivor* in studies

pertaining to cancer research. “Traditionally, a survivor has been defined as one who has been disease-free for more than 5 years. However, this definition does not take into account the experience nor the process of survival...” (Breaden 1997, 978).

The purpose of Breaden’s study was to look into the cancer survival process, not as something that occurs in stages, but as an experience (Breaden 1997). She sought to uncover the nature and meaning of survivorship by immersing herself into the stories of six cancer survivors.

Breaden’s survey of literature provides an overview of studies about cancer survivorship. Much of the reviewed cancer survivorship research assumes that there are universal needs for those who have lived through a cancer diagnosis, which Breaden argues, is not the case. As a result, Breaden examined individual differences and diversity in the experience of cancer survival (Breaden 1997).

The six volunteers for Breaden’s study were female cancer survivors who had completed active treatment for various types of cancers. Breaden met with each volunteer for the purpose of seeking meaning in the experience of surviving cancer (Breaden 1997). I appreciate that Breaden refrains from using the term “interview” and instead describes these meetings as “conversations.” The term, “interview,” implies a formal question and answer time but Breaden seems to follow a more open approach, allowing for freedom of speech to occur.

The initial conversations were transcribed and these transcriptions were later discussed with the volunteers. This gives the data more credibility because the women had the opportunity to clarify and expand on statements made during the initial

conversations. Recurring themes of the cancer surviving process or experience were eventually uncovered through thematic analysis (Breaden 1997).

The participants' experiences revolved around two central themes: 1) "living in a body," and 2) "living in time" (Breaden 1997). The data collected around the first theme are of particular interest because it relates to *An Exploration of dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors*. Since the body is the medium of dance (Hanna 1988), the experience of living in one's body is an important topic to address. Breaden's concept of "living in a body" includes a transition the women experienced between feeling detached from their bodies to the experience of re-embodiment (Breaden 1997).

The women in Breaden's study experienced some sense of disembodiment. They sensed a separation between their minds and their bodies. For these women, it seemed that their bodies had become "a house of suspicion" (Breaden 1997, 980) and was not to be trusted. Reconnecting the mind and the body was a struggle for these survivors (Breaden 1997).

Although there is much cancer survivorship literature addressing issues of coping with changes to self-identity (Jefford et al. 2008) or body-image issues, the idea that cancer survivors sometimes sense a detached feeling from their bodies is an area that is neglected in much of the survivorship research. I believe that most dancers would agree that the mere practice of dancing involves a strong mind-body connection. This adds to my curiosity of what the cancer survivor's experience of dancing entails.

Breaden's second theme of "living in time" covers the experiences of questioning the future, "changes in time" (Breaden 1997, 982), feeling "lucky to be alive" (Breaden 1997, 982), and the experience of survivorship as a shared journey.

The survivors refer to a journey that began at diagnosis but has no end-point. This journey is concerned with how time is experienced as opposed to “how much” time is experienced (Breaden 1997). For example, the women experienced disorientation with time mainly because their previous ideas of the future had to be put on hold. When they were diagnosed with cancer, they were unsure whether there would be a future (Breaden 1997).

Although Breaden sheds some light on what it may be like to experience cancer, she does not look into how this experience of illness may be affected by some other experience such as art or dance. Mary Rockwood Lane (2005b) explores this particular concept.

### Examining the Experience of Art and Healing

Mary Rockwood Lane (2005b) examined the lived experience of healing through art. The purpose of Lane’s study was to “illuminate the process by which art heals, so nurses might better understand the power of this particular form of intervention” (Lane 2005b, 286). Lane includes music, sculpture, poetry, dance, and many other forms of creative expression when she refers to the word *art*.

Lane describes herself as a “nurse-painter” and is an advocate for the integration of art into nursing practice. She helped implement the Arts in Medicine (AIM) program at the University of Florida. The AIM program allows artists to work with patients. The artists go to the patients in the hospital and create art with the patients. The AIM program was implemented in 1993 with bone marrow transplant (BMT) patients. This program was created with “the goal of reducing morbidity and improving recovery



time, mood, behavior, compliance, and quality of life (QOL) for children and young adults (under 21) during their admission for BMT (and for achieving more cost-effective healthcare delivery)” (Lane 2005b). I believe that this program is valuable for patients while they are in the hospital but I wonder what happens after the individuals are no longer patients and are left to find a sense of normalcy after they have been through the traumatic treatments of cancer.

Data were collected from 63 individuals over the period of 4 years. The individuals were part of the AIM program and included hospitalized patients, artists, family members, and healthcare providers at Shands Hospital (Lane 2005b). Individuals “were selected on the basis of their ability to articulate the experience of art and healing. Each participant had to have had a significant experience in art and healing, as determined by both participant and researcher” (Lane 2005b, 287). Lane does not reveal how these selection requirements were assessed.

Each participant was interviewed and asked the following open-ended questions:

What was your lived experience of art and healing?  
Can you describe in your own words your experience of your art?  
How did you heal yourself with art?  
What did it feel like in your body?  
What was the experience like? (Lane 2005, 287)

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in detail. Analysis included rewriting the stories until essences of art and healing were revealed. The participants voiced that they experienced a “shift of consciousness” (Lane 2005, 288). Though each individual experience was different, themes of healing with art emerged. These themes did not always occur in a linear fashion and sometimes occurred as if they spiraled together. Lane best described the themes in the following words:

Each person went from a place of profound darkness, fear, or illness to a place where they experienced luminosity. The healing experience was described as feeling intensely alive and transformed. Each person described a transcendent way of being where the spirit became awakened, visible, and illuminated. (Lane 2005, 288)

Lane's findings have implications in the nursing field because her research leads to further understanding the relationship of art and healing. Research of this kind has the potential to empower nurses and artists to integrate the arts into patient care. In addition, it illustrates art as a cost-effective tool for self-care and healing. (Lane 2005).

It is widely believed that a serious health issue, such as cancer, would elicit a stress response in an individual (Nail 2001). The experiential accounts of patients from Lane's study reveal art's power to release stress, whether that stress is caused by fear, anger of being sick, interaction with healthcare professionals, or concern with the unknown outcomes of one's diagnosis. Judith Lynne Hanna (1988) looks specifically at the numerous effects of dance on stress.

### The Relationship of Dance and Stress

Although Judith Lynne Hanna (1988) does not specifically address the stress of having cancer, she gives the reader an insightful look into how an individual's experience with stress may be affected through the art of dance in her book, *Dance and Stress* (1988). Hanna thoroughly defines dance as,

human behavior composed (from the dancer's perspective, which is usually shared by other members of the dancer's culture) of purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements other than ordinary motor activities, the motion (in time, space, and dynamics) having inherent and "aesthetic" value and transformative potential for the dancer and onlooker. (Hanna 1988, 12)

I will use this definition when I refer to dance throughout this study.

As a senior research scholar at the University of Maryland, Hanna has gathered extensive research observations and has surveyed much literature about dance. Hanna explains that dance has the power to induce emotional changes, states of ecstasy, and other altered states of consciousness. These changes are often related to the release of stress. According to Hanna, “Dancing develops enhanced well being and higher tolerance levels to stressors” (1988, 19).

Dancing may provide the individual with a sense of self-mastery, which often contributes to positive changes in esteem, self-perception, and body image. When dancing is accompanied with imaged expressions of past or current experiences, it sometimes helps the individual to problem solve outside of the dance setting (Hanna 1988). Hanna also discusses the science behind reducing symptoms of fatigue and depression by dancing (Hanna 1988). Both fatigue and depression are common afflictions of cancer survivors (Holley and Borger 2001; Aziz 2002).

Hanna highlights dance as a “complex physical-cognitive process” (Hanna 1988, 22). Perhaps this is related to the sense of “embodiment” referred to by Katrina Breaden’s (1997) study earlier discussed. Hanna explains that repressed emotions and tensions are often released through this physical-cognitive process, helping the dancer to come to terms with these things through catharsis. Catharsis occurs when dance manifests itself in one of three ways: confrontation with stressors, reduction of muscle tension caused by stress, or as an escape from stress (Hanna 1988).

Although Hanna focuses on the ways in which dance has a positive relationship on stress, she acknowledges that in some cases, dance may induce stress depending on

how the individual perceives the experience of dancing (Hanna 1988). Regardless, Hanna is persuasive in her arguments that one's experience of stress will be affected, in some way, by dancing.

On my journey to explore the experience of dance in the lives of cancer survivors, I have surveyed literature that discusses: the experiences of being a cancer survivor (Breaden 1997), the experience of art and healing (Lane 2005), and the power of dance on stress (Hanna 1988). But what does it mean to be a dancer?

### Examining the Experience of Being a Dancer

In *Voicing connections: an interpretive study of university dancers' experiences*, five university dancers are given the opportunity to have their voices heard (Bracey 2004). The open-ended interviews offer a glimpse into the dancers' lived experiences. Lauren Bracey "was interested in how these individuals experienced this aspect of their educational lives and in whether their collective experiences shared common ground" (Bracey 2004, 8).

Participants in this study needed to meet a number of criteria in order to participate in the study. These criteria allowed the investigator to explore the subjects' in-depth experiences. Information was gathered using a short questionnaire and two open-ended interviews.

The participants were given a list of potential interview questions before the first meeting and were encouraged to "ramble" during the discussions. Bracey neglects to reveal how long the interviewees had the list of questions before the interview took place. I question this technique because it gives subjects an opportunity to rehearse

answers and does not encourage pre-reflective responses, or responses that are immediate, uncensored, and not previously reflected upon. For example, Max Van Manen points out that the emphasis of phenomenological research “is always on the meaning of lived experience” (Van Manen 1984, 55). He suggests that when attempting to access the experiences of others, the investigator might ask the subjects to “Avoid causal explanations or interpretive generalizations” (Van Manen 1984, 55). I believe that this would be difficult to do if the questions are reflected upon prior to an interview.

After the initial interviews, the women in Bracey’s study were observed in their dance classes and issues that seemed to contradict and/or reinforce topics discussed in the first interview were addressed in the follow-up interview (Bracey 2004). The interview discussions led to “a continuous evolutionary process of creating meaning” (Bracey 2004, 10). The stories of the women were compared and contrasted to one another as well as to that of the author. Once the author immersed herself in the interview texts, she was drawn to a few interrelated themes of the experience of being a university dancer, such as meaning, community, and the relationship of artistry with academia (Bracey 2004).

One outcome of Bracey’s study was that the dancers appeared to reach a greater appreciation of their own relationship to dance as they discussed it in the interviews (Bracey 2004). Perhaps they were discovering a deeper sense of purpose. Most of the women expressed that they had never tried to describe their university dance experiences in words. They found that through dance, they often felt able to discover

their own identities and voices (Bracey 2004). I agree with Bracey when she suggests that:

To know our students we must engage in dialog with them in a safe, open environment where their goals and needs are valued. I believe that the voices of our students, once found and heard, can and will effect beneficial change in curricular, pedagogic and artistic arenas alike. (Bracey 2004, 21)

Bracey succeeds at offering a glimpse into the subjective experiences of university dancers. She did this using a “post-positivist methodological framework” (Bracey 2004, 8). Lane and Breaden, investigators discussed previously in this review, chose to follow Max Van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic, phenomenological approach to looking into lived experiences (Lane 2005, Breaden 1997). Both of these approaches fall under the umbrella of qualitative research.

### Methodology

#### Human Science Research

*Researching the Lived Experience* (Van Manen 1990) takes some of the mystery out of human science. The book is an introduction to qualitative, or human, research methodologies in education. Max Van Manen writes,

The difference between natural science and human science resides in what it studies: natural science studies ‘objects of nature,’ ‘things,’ ‘natural events,’ and ‘the way that objects behave.’ Human science, in contrast, studies ‘person,’ or beings that have ‘consciousness’ and that ‘act purposefully’ in and on the world by creating objects of ‘meaning’ that are ‘expressions’ of how human beings exist in the world. (Van Manen 1990, 3-4)

Van Manen clearly explains phenomenology, hermeneutics, and hermeneutic phenomenological research. “Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived

experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the ‘texts’ of life. . .” (Van Manen 1990, 4). In quantitative research, or that of natural science, there is a need to have an exact design and complete methodology in order to find evidence for or against a theory. Conversely, the study of human science requires that the search for rich and in-depth meaning inform the research itself. There is not a predetermined set of procedures that govern the research, however, tradition provides a methodological foundation (Van Manen 1990).

Although Van Manen’s book provides many helpful suggestions on how to execute research into human science, he makes it clear that he is aiming to stimulate creative and insightful research. He is not attempting to prescribe a fixed methodology, but provides a clear framework from which to begin research on lived experiences. Van Manen suggests that this type of research is considered as

a dynamic interplay among six research activities:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (Van Manen 1990, 30-31)

As mentioned in Chapter I of this thesis, the only way to explore the personal and unique stories of survivorship and dancing is to hear the stories directly from the dancers living with cancer. The way to do this is through the lens of human research.

Although Van Manen (1990) does discuss interviewing as a means to collect information for human research, Irving Seidman (1991) goes into the interview process in detail.

## Interviewing

*Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (Seidman, 1991) provides insightful suggestions for phenomenological, in-depth interviewing. Seidman discusses the importance of open-ended questions, which are used to explore the interviewees' responses to those questions. "The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study" (Seidman, 1991, 9).

Seidman encourages the use of Dolbeare and Schuman's three interview design. This design proposes,

The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience with the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (Seidman, 1991, 10-11)

Even though the interviews are to be open-ended, Seidman stresses the importance of keeping each interview focused on its goal. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to keep things on track. Although Seidman gives very clear approaches to interviewing, he acknowledges the imperfect world we live in and provides alternative approaches to the best case scenarios. He states, "It is almost always better to conduct an interview under less than ideal conditions than not to conduct one at all" (Seidman, 1991, 15).

Irving Seidman uses in-depth interviewing to reach an understanding of other people's experiences "and the meaning they make of that experience" (1991, 3).

Seidman argues that we are limited in our ability to understand the meaning of



someone's actions solely by observing those actions. Although I agree with this concept, I wonder if the reverse may be true as well. Aren't we also limited in our ability to understand the meaning of people's actions solely by asking them about those actions without actually observing them?

Although I find Irving Seidman's (1991) book extremely useful as a guide for conducting interviews, I wonder if this type of interviewing is enough to really explore a person's lived experience. I want to explore the experience of dance in the lives of cancer survivors. It seems that it would be important to look at the survivors as they actually experience dance.

#### Dance as a Mode of Inquiry

In *Bodily Flashes of Dancing Women: Dance as a Method of Inquiry*, Maarit Ylönen (2003) describes her own experiences as a researcher investigating the May Pole dance ritual in Nicaragua. In addition to interviewing her research subject, named Evelyn, Ylönen also collects information about the dance ritual by participating in the May Pole dance herself. The article is somewhat difficult to follow as it is translated from another language, but it is clear that dance was a useful tool in Ylönen's research. In using dancing and interviewing as her tools for collecting information, she was able to create "continuous reinterpretations and dialogues between the bodily and the verbal" (Ylönen 2003, 556).

One interesting discovery that Ylönen made was that when she was interviewing Evelyn, Ylönen seemed to be in a position of power. However, when they danced together, Evelyn seemed to have the most power (Ylönen 2003).

There is more literature on dance as a mode of inquiry but it is used primarily in the field of dance/movement therapy. I purposefully omitted reviews of this literature because I am not a therapist of any kind and do not claim that what I am doing is dance/movement therapy. The reviewed literature provided a framework from which I developed the methods of this study.

## CHAPTER III

### AN EXPLORATION OF DANCE IN THE LIVES OF CANCER SURVIVORS

#### Introduction

When a person with cancer is cured or has entered into remission, his or her life with cancer does not end. The cancer experience does not suddenly vanish; it is woven into the fabric of life-experience. Even when medical tests reveal that the physical body no longer has the disease, the experience of cancer remains in the individual.

Dr. Fitzhugh Mullan introduced the concept of cancer survivorship in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1985 (Aziz 2002). After being diagnosed with cancer himself, Mullan wrote, “Survivorship should be studied as a phenomenon in itself rather than as a byproduct or afterthought of basic research on cancer treatment” (Mullan 1985, 273). Since then, the field of cancer survivorship research has begun to address some of the psychological, social, and physical consequences of surviving cancer. Investigators are also recognizing the value of gathering in-depth personal accounts from survivors themselves.

A person who has suffered from a major illness, such as cancer, is forever changed. According to Edmund Pellegrino, “Body and self are never again quite so comfortably united, for the person who has been ill recognizes that at any time his body

or mind may again come into opposition with the self” (Pellegrino 1982, 159-160). Katrina Breaden (1997) describes this phenomenon as “disembodiment.” The women in Breaden’s hermeneutic, phenomenological study, *Cancer and Beyond: the question of survivorship*, experienced a separation between their minds and their bodies after being diagnosed with cancer. The lived body suddenly considered the physical body to be unreliable and suspicious (Breaden 1997). In another article, Max Van Manen (1998) describes an individual’s experiential account following major surgery. The patient experienced his body as an object manipulated by the health care professionals. His body was “simultaneously experienced as alien while undeniably himself” (Van Manen 1998, 2).

How does one learn to trust his or her body after that body has acted as a source of pain, suspicion, and suffering? I found the answer through dancing. As a four-time cancer survivor, I have first-hand experience of the profound effects cancer has on one’s physical, social, emotional, and psychological well-being. As a dancer, I also have direct experience as to how these issues are affected by experiencing dance in the classroom, rehearsal studio, or in performance. I am a dancer. I am a cancer survivor. I consider these things to be an enormous part of my identity, and I do not feel that they can be separated. I exist as both a dancer and a cancer survivor in the world simultaneously.

Like some of the participants in my study, I felt that so much was left up to me as I attempted to find normalcy in my life when treatment was completed. Dance was my way of doing just that. I was able to feel a sense of control over my physical body again, diminishing my suspicion of it. I found much comfort through dance. This led

me, as a researcher, to wonder if there are others who have found strength, healing, a re-connection to their physical bodies, and acceptance of their compromised health through the art of dance and dancing. All of these things are a part of my personal lived experience of being a dancer who is also a cancer survivor.

Many studies show that fatigue and depression are common afflictions among cancer survivors (Stricker et al. 2004; Holley and Borger 2001; Kim, Hickok, and Morrow 2006). Judith Lynne Hanna (1988) discusses how dancing often reduces symptoms of those disorders. Hanna also writes that dancing may provide individuals with a sense of self-mastery, which often contributes to positive changes in esteem, self-perception, and body image. When dancing is accompanied with imaged expressions of past or current experiences, it sometimes helps the individual to problem solve outside of the dance setting (Hanna 1988). In *Creativity and Spirituality in Nursing*, Mary Rockwood Lane, a nurse, researcher, and artist, points out that “Daily *dancing* could prove an uplifting, attitude-changing, and energizing experience for both patient and nurse.” (Lane 2005a)

Lauren Bracey (2004) explored the lived experiences of university dancers. Bracey “was interested in how these individuals experienced this aspect of their educational lives and in whether their collective experiences shared common ground” (Bracey 2004, 8). Although each dancer had a unique story to tell, Bracey found that interrelated themes emerged, such as meaning, community, and the relationship of artistry with academia (Bracey 2004). Mary Rockwood Lane (2005b) gathered personal accounts of healing through art from patients and artists at Shands Hospital in Florida. Like Bracey, Lane also uncovered common themes from the individual stories. Some

themes discussed in Lane's study include darkness, luminosity, transformation, and awakening (Lane 2005b).

Survivorship research has revealed a broad spectrum of experiences. This spectrum includes, disembodiment (Breaden 1997), a search for normalcy, loss of control, stress (Nail 2001), loss of self-esteem, and compromised body-image (Leigh 1992). Separate studies have shown that dance and/or art can contribute to feelings of normalcy, a sense of control, self-mastery, increased self-esteem and perceived body-image, problem solving, catharsis, self-expression (Hanna 1988), illumination, and self identity (Lane 2005b). What about the experiences of a person who has lived as both a survivor and a dancer?

Do dancers who are also cancer survivors have any shared experiences? Is there potential for new fields to emerge in the dance world as dance professionals who teach classes specifically designed for the cancer survivor? Is there a relationship between dance and cancer survival? What role does dance play in the lives of those who live with cancer? What is their perception of participating in a seemingly normal activity? How do cancer survivors experience the world of dancing?

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, to uncover, compare, contrast, and describe the personal stories and experiences of dance in the lives of cancer survivors and secondly, to determine how and if dance can be a useful tool in gathering data about the experiences of cancer survivors. The only way to explore the personal and unique experiences of survivorship and dancing was to hear the stories directly from the dancers living with cancer.

### Procedures

The aim of this case study was to look deeply into the lives of cancer survivors who dance. What is the dance ritual of these survivors? Why do these survivors dance and how does dancing relate to their survival, if at all?

Approval for this project was granted from the University of Oregon's Committee for Human Subjects Research. I approached this descriptive study from a qualitative, human science perspective. In order to accommodate all aspects of this research, I followed the methodology as outlined below.

#### Recruitment of Volunteers

Volunteers were recruited from the Eugene/Portland area. As a resident in this area, I had encountered several cancer survivors who are also dancers, which initially inspired this study. Potential volunteers were contacted, informed of this project and invited to participate.

There were three criteria that the volunteers had to meet in order to be a participant in this study: 1) the volunteers must be cancer survivors, 2) the volunteers must be dancers, and 3) participants must be able to speak, read, write, and understand the English language.

Four women volunteered to participate in this study. It was verified that they met the criteria and they signed the appropriate consent forms. We then began on a journey together to explore dance in the lives of cancer survivors.

## Gathering Information

The volunteers each signed the appropriate consent forms for participation and some preliminary information was gathered. This information included a brief description of what types of dancing each volunteer has participated in, what type of cancer(s) each was diagnosed with and when, what types of treatments each person underwent as a result of her cancer, the volunteer's current health status, and her current dance practices.

### *Observations of Survivors Dancing*

Dance is a non-verbal activity. It is a form of expression and is therefore a viable method in collecting information about a person's experience. In an attempt to further explore dance in the lives of cancer survivors, I believe that it was necessary for me to observe these dancers in their usual dance practices.

When possible, I video recorded these observations. Descriptive notes were taken on what happened during these practices including: how the practice was conducted, how the participant approached the practice, interactions the participant had with others, any visible attitude or energy shifts from the participant during her practice, and descriptions of how the participant moved during the practice. These notes are included in Appendix B.

Each volunteer then participated in journaling, conversational interviews, and movement interviews. These were conducted in three rounds for each participant. Each round is outlined in Table 1.



**Table 1. Gathering Data**

	<b>Journal Topic 1</b>	<b>Journal Topic 2</b>	<b>Conversational Interview</b>	<b>Movement Interview</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	List all of the ways you identify yourself.	What does being a dancer mean to you? What is the role of dance in your life?	The goal of this conversational interview was to understand the role of dance in the lives of the volunteers.	This was informed by the previous modes of data collection.
<b>Round 2</b>	What does being a cancer survivor mean to you? Write about your cancer experience.	Is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you? Explain.	The goal of this conversational interview was to understand what it means for the volunteer to be a cancer survivor	This was informed by the previous modes of data collection.
<b>Round 3</b>	What does / did cancer feel like in your own body? What does dance feel like in your own body?	Did the experience of cancer leave you with any 'scars' (these may include but are not limited to physical scars, etc.)? If so, do you think that your dance experience has helped to heal any of these 'scars' of cancer?	The goal of this conversational interview was two-fold: 1) to discuss whether or not the participant experiences a relationship between cancer survivorship and dancing, 2) to consult with the volunteer on the accuracy of the researcher's analysis of data up to this point.	This was informed by the previous modes of data collection.

### *The Journals*

The volunteers were instructed to set aside at least 20 minutes to write about each journal topic provided by the investigator. There were two journal topics for each round. To encourage unrehearsed and spontaneous responses, the volunteers were instructed to read the journal topic only immediately before they began writing. The journal topics were mostly designed to elicit personal stories of dance in the lives of these cancer survivors, stories of survival in the lives of these dancers, and how these are related.

It must be noted that the mere act of writing places a person into a reflective way of thinking, this puts certain limitations on the descriptions acquired (Van Manen 1990).

To minimize the effect of this natural response to writing, I gave each participant a printed list of Van Manen's "suggestions for producing a lived-experience description" (Van Manen 1990, 64) as listed in Appendix A of this document. The information gathered from each round informed the subsequent journal topics.

Journal topics were informed by information gathered from previous rounds. All journal topics and writings may be found in Appendix C.

### *The Conversational Interviews*

In addition to the journals, information was gathered through face-to-face conversations. These were open-ended, conversational interviews as suggested by Seidman (1991). These discussions between investigator and participant allowed the dialogue to inform and guide the topics to be discussed. Each conversation was approximately one hour in length. These were all video/audio recorded and later transcribed. Some transcriptions of these interviews are included in Appendix D.

The information gathered through the journals and conversational interviews were rewritten, compared, contrasted, questioned, and analyzed (Van Manen 1990; Breaden 1997). Any discoveries of shared experiences, differences, and contradictions were discussed during subsequent conversational interviews.

### *The Movement Interviews*

Following each conversational interview, there was a dance or movement interview. There was one exception to this as one dancer was injured and therefore did not do a movement interview during round one. I met each participant privately in a space conducive to dancing.

I led each participant through a physical warm-up using the DanceAbility Method for warming up the body as a guide (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005). According to the creator of this method,

The Warm-Up helps cultivate the ability to experience your movement, and introduces the idea that attention to sensation is more important than what your movement looks like. . . . Through the Warm-Up, you begin to experience and feel who you are – how your history, emotions, psyche, and spirituality all manifest in your physicality in this moment, and in this community. (Alessi, Zolbrod 2005, 26)

This method of warming up the body for improvisation is designed to help the dancer focus on the following elements: sensation, relation, time, and design.

Sensation refers to how the body feels in that particular moment. I verbally guided the participants to sense the weight of their body, sense the temperature of their body, or to sense what it feels like to do a simple gesture. Relation refers to the dancer's relationship to the space she was in, relationship to me, relationship to anything outside of the dancer's body. Time has to do with dynamics of movement, is the body's movement slow or fast? Constant or varied? Does the movement follow a regular rhythmic pattern? Design not only refers to the shape of the body in its dance but also how the dancer's movements affect the whole design of the space as a whole (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005).

Once the warm-up was completed, I interviewed the participants in much the same way I conducted the conversational interviews, however, the participants were instructed to dance their responses to the interview questions. For example, during one

round of movement interviews I asked the dancers to share their cancer experience through movement. This took place after they had already shared their cancer experiences verbally, during a conversational interview.

Another part of these movement interviews was that I used the participants' own responses from the journal writings and conversational interviews and asked them to respond, in movement, to their own words. I spoke phrases that the dancer spoke during one of our conversational interviews or had written in a journal entry and observed how they responded to their own words through movement. It was my hope that information that was stored in the body would have an opportunity to be communicated through movement. For an extended explanation of the movement interviews, see Chapter IV of this document.

### Analysis

After immersing myself into the stories of dance in the lives of these four cancer survivors, four case study descriptions emerged. I then looked closely at the similarities, the contradictions, and the uniqueness of these stories. Each form of data collection, whether it was the journal entries, the conversational interviews, or the movement interviews, added depth to these women's stories of cancer and dance.

It quickly became apparent that these women were flooded with memories and emotions during the movement interviews. The most valuable information gathered during this study was shared immediately following the movement interviews. I had originally only planned to have the dancers respond, with movement, to my questions, but by the third round, the movement interviews were broken up into segments so we

could discuss what happened before going on to the next part of the interview. For example, after the warm-up, the dancers would often share something about their bodies such as, “I’m feeling stiff today,” or “my back is aching today.” We would talk again after each of the subsequent segments.

## Findings

### Participant Descriptions

Four volunteers participated in this study. Although I did not seek out a particular gender to participate in this study, all four volunteers were women. They came into this study with various histories of both cancer and dancing. Relevant preliminary information is listed in Table 2 on the following page. Pseudonyms are used throughout to ensure privacy.

**Table 2. Participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Claire</b>	<b>Iris K</b>	<b>Monica Rey</b>	<b>Suse</b>
<b>Age at beginning of this study</b>	43	56	46	62
<b>Age when diagnosed with Cancer</b>	19	8 11 reoccurrence	36 39 reoccurrence	50
<b>Type of cancer</b>	Ewing Sarcoma of soft tissue	Osteogenic Sarcoma	Breast Cancer	Breast Cancer
<b>Cancer treatments</b>	Radiation Therapy, Chemotherapy, Surgery to remove tumor	Radiation Therapy, Amputation of leg,	Mastectomy, Chemotherapy, Radiation Therapy	Lumpectomy, axillary node dissection, radiation therapy, chemotherapy
<b>Relevant effects of disease or treatment</b>	Radiation therapy damaged her spinal cord. 13 years after treatment she began to lose the use of her legs. She uses a wheelchair as a result.	Used prosthesis for a while, then began to use crutches, has recently needed to use a wheelchair due to problems with her hip.	Early Menopause, Thyroid Problems	Pushed into Menopause
<b>Dance experience before cancer</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> grade-ballet  started dancing again at age 23 and has done the following: modern, social dancing, improvisation, DanceAbility, Ecstatic Dance	Began dancing in 1990  Authentic Movement, Contact Improvisation, DanceAbility, social dancing	Began dancing in 2004  Latin Dance (salsa, cha cha, etc.), social dancing	Began taking dance classes at age 7 or 8.  As a child: ballet/pointe, tap, gymnastics, social dancing.  As an adult: tap, Hawaiian, African, ballroom, contact improv, Brazilian, hip hop, urban jazz, contra dancing, zydeco

## Uncovering and Describing

*Claire*

Claire was diagnosed with Ewing Sarcoma of soft tissue in 1984. She was eighteen years old and in her first year of college. She was in pain for several months before a doctor finally took her seriously when she could no longer walk on her own. After numerous medical tests, Claire was misdiagnosed a couple of times before it was clear that she had Ewing sarcoma. She underwent massive radiation therapy. She also had chemotherapy and surgery to remove the tumor. Her treatments took place over a period of one year.

Unknown to Claire, the radiation that she had received in 1984 gradually continued to damage her spinal cord over a period of thirteen years. Although Claire was cured of cancer, she began to lose the ability to bear weight on her legs and now uses a wheelchair.

Claire was in ballet for a year as a child and “hated it.” Although she did not care for the formal dance class setting, Claire enjoyed dancing around privately in her room and with her sisters. It was one of the ways she would play as a child. Claire and her friends put together a dance in a high school talent show. Dance was very much a social activity for Claire and in college she frequented dance clubs with her friends.

Claire did not start taking dance classes again until she was 23 years old, five years after her cancer diagnosis. “I just decided [to audition], there was this group . . . and they pretty much took anybody. . . . Their belief system was that anyone could dance.” As a member of this dance company, Claire was required to take dance classes

twice a week. Claire has since explored many genres of dance including modern, country western, tango, contact improvisation, and somatic healing kinds of dance.

Claire's standard dance practice currently includes: contemporary dance, DanceAbility, and other styles of improvisation. She is certified in the DanceAbility Method and sometimes teaches classes. My observation of Claire in her standard dance practice was in a dance improvisation class, which she called "ecstatic dance." Her movements were strongly connected to the accompanying music and generally seemed to be initiated from deep within her torso and sequenced out through her limbs. She remained in her wheelchair the whole time and when I asked her about this, she said that she often chooses to stay in her chair as a practical matter. She is unable get herself back into her chair on her own.

Claire was focused on the instructions given and I could visibly see a change in her movement quality when the instructor would present a new concept to the class. For example, when he said "the ground is no longer beneath you as you are becoming part of the ground -- the ground comes up to your ankle -- your knees -- the ceiling . . ." Claire's movement changed from being very free where she had been executing quick spins in her chair to movement that had a quality of increasing tension and she eventually looked almost robotic.

Claire's journal writings flowed from her stream of consciousness and it was clear that she is a deep thinker, a philosopher of sorts. In this first entry, for example, she writes,

I am a survivor simply fully . . . I am the women who came before me a mixture of flaws and perfection . . . I am anonymous invisible seen and not seen . . . I am



fluid I am evolving I am an amoeba changing shape I am the girl that gets  
mistaken for every other girl I am mischievous

Although Claire's writings revealed much about herself, we would sometimes struggle during the conversational interviews. Claire admittedly has trouble expressing herself verbally but seemed to be very comfortable with the movement interviews. This was confirmed when she wrote that dance "allows me to express myself without words which is very freeing in a world where I often feel that my head will explode if I can't function from my whole self. . . . My body answers questions when I move."

In addition to self-expression, dance serves other purposes for Claire. She enjoys the connection she makes with others and the feelings of community that dancing provides. Claire believes that dance also gives her body a purpose, "it gives my body purpose when it would be so easy to believe what others' see that my body is not purposeful, functional." Dance seems to have provided Claire with a tool to accept her cancer experience and her disability when she writes, "It makes me feel that my body is okay" and later, "Living with a body that maybe you were angry with momentarily and then realized what it could do how it could do regardless of circumstances." Claire recalls that when she was sick she felt numb inside and was unable to do the things she normally enjoyed such as reading. She says, "I think dance brings me more into my body."

Claire has some negative thoughts about the phrase "cancer survivor." She feels like there is a burden placed on a person with that label. When I reminded her that she used the term as a label for herself in her first journal entry she said that it was because that is what others say she is. When she completed treatment she felt pressure from

people who would say that she was a miracle or a survivor because it made her feel like she was supposed to be “this super evolved person” but Claire never felt that way. This brought up feelings of shame for her and she said “afterward I questioned more, like I didn’t have it all figured out.” Feelings of shame came up for Claire also in that she questioned if she somehow caused her cancer and if she tried hard enough, and “did I survive the right way?” Dance provided Claire with a place that she could be free from that. “I just don’t feel shame in dance.”

When Claire began to lose the use of her legs, she was threatened with the idea that she would not be able to dance anymore. “It was actually really sad. The point that I thought it was over, interestingly, was when I was on crutches. So actually the chair gave me more freedom to move than being on crutches.” Claire was not given any occupational therapy during her transition from walking, to crutches, to using a wheelchair and was forced to figure things out on her own. She was forced to adapt to life without the use of her legs on her own. The idea of getting a desk job and not being able to dance just did not feel like an option for Claire. The cancer experience made her decide to take more risks and dancing was one of those risks. Dance was something she decided to just do anyway. Claire believes that she would not be a dancer if she had not had the experience of having cancer.

Claire’s movement interviews revealed a woman who is very comfortable in her body. She was very much a performer in these sessions. She seemed to always take into account where I was observing from and designed her movement accordingly. There was no hesitation between my words and her movement translation. When I

asked her to dance the story of her present, her life as it is now; this was my description of her dance in that moment:

*sits in stillness for a short time  
rolls chair forward and executes a couple of very fast  
energetic spins while doing a back and forth arm gesture  
swings arms back as she bends forward at the waist  
arms reach out sideways like airplane wings then they drop  
jerky arm movements as if arms are ratcheting her torso to an upright position  
hands cross in front of her belly and rest there  
she hits a wheel of her chair in a playful way  
takes her feet off the foot rests and rolls backwards in a high release  
her feet drag on the floor in front of her*

Claire was generally pretty quiet and self-reflective after the movement interviews. She would be so expressive in her movement and would respond to the movement cues without hesitation but seemed inhibited when we had verbal exchanges. She later shared that she felt like there are things that come out of one's body when they move. Things that the person may not even know are present in the first place. She continued to say, "you can work through things physically and there are places in your body where things hide, emotions and things like that . . . you're moving and then it's like one of those kind of 'a-ha' moments or something." Claire believes that movement allows her to look at things differently.

Throughout my interactions with Claire, I noticed that she had a strong desire to do things "right." For example, in one of her journal entries she wrote, "I wonder what other people have written [*sic*] am I doing it wrong." She also wrote about how she always wanted to be the "good patient" and to do what she was "supposed to do." Claire did not want to be a burden to people. We talked about these tendencies and about how there were so many feelings of shame during her cancer experience. There

was just shame in being sick because “we’re taught to be well,” and there was shame in not becoming a “superior being” after surviving cancer after so many people have called you a “miracle.”

However, these feelings of shame and the need to do things correctly seemed to disappear when Claire danced. She was uninhibited and expressive. She admitted that she feels a sense of freedom when she dances that she does not always feel in other parts of her life. In one of our dialogues she said, “I don’t have a lot of worries when I’m dancing . . . and I think it’s just like I don’t really care what people think . . . and that feels safe . . . I don’t feel shame in dance!” Claire expressed that some of that sense of freedom comes from the fact that dance exists only in the moment whereas her writings or quotes from the conversational interviews are more permanent. As a result, she feels more aware of what she puts into the world when she expresses herself in ways other than dance.

Although Claire often felt like the movement interviews were “intense,” she felt like there was value in them for her. She felt like they were positive experiences but had trouble expressing to me why she felt that way except that she believed it is good to keep exploring. When Claire would respond in movement to some of the words she had written she was surprised by some of things that came up for her. She had memories of things during the movement interviews that she could not recall during the conversational interviews. For example, in conversation, I had asked her to share her history of dancing and she struggled with trying to remember what she had done. However, when I asked the same thing during the movement interview she remembered specific warm-up exercises she used to do with a company she danced with.

Claire spoke of her difficulty in thinking about her future. We talked about how cancer has forced us to be in touch with our mortality resulting in challenges when thinking about our lives in the long-term. There is a tendency for Claire to stay focused on the present. However, Claire had a much different response in movement. When I asked her to dance about her life as it is now, in the present, she seemed to struggle with that. “It was kind of hard” she said and admitted that she felt that she was more in her head than in her body at that moment. When I asked Claire to dance about her future, there was a shift in her energy and her movement. She appeared to be having fun and there was a playful quality to her movement. She later said that her doubts about the future did not even enter her mind while she was dancing.

Dance is a place where Claire feels permission to have a “who cares?” sort of attitude. She enjoys surrounding herself with the dance community and “fun” is a big part of her dancing. “If I were to die tomorrow, what would I rather be doing today? Dancing or cleaning, you know?”

### *Iris K*

Iris K recalls feeling tremendous pain in her right leg when she was 8 years old. “I went from roller skating, jumping rope, doing errands for my mother to lying on the couch, afraid to move for fear of the pain.” Iris K was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma that same year. She underwent radiation therapy and surgery to remove a tumor from her right femur. The cancer returned three years later and Iris K had to have her entire right leg and part of her pelvis amputated. She has very little memory of the three years between her cancer diagnoses.

Iris K received one of the first prostheses made for children and stayed in the hospital for three months while it was being built for her. This wooden leg weighed fifteen pounds and bent at the ankle and the knee. Her family never spoke of the fact that she had one leg or of her cancer. "I really don't think anybody talked to me about cancer back then. I'm not even sure I ever really heard the word until I got older. Even when I went to nursing school, I finally put it all together. I'm not even really sure I even knew I had cancer."

Iris K wore a prosthetic leg for fifteen years. It wasn't until 1978 when she began to notice other amputees in public who were not wearing prosthetics, that she even considered removing hers. She had never even thought removing it was a possibility until then and she gradually began to spend more time without the prosthetic. Iris K began to realize how much the prosthetic tied her down; she even said that it was like wearing a "straightjacket" for all of those years. It was very freeing for Iris K to be able to move about in the world without a heavy prosthetic and this was her first step toward discovering the value of movement. She has not worn a prosthetic since 1980.

Iris K admits that she hated her body and feared it for many years. One of the few memories she has of the time before her leg was removed is of falling off her bike. Her mother always believed that the fall caused Iris K's cancer to return. Iris K knows that belief is false but carried a residual sense that she somehow caused it for many years. She wrote, "It makes total sense to me that my life was void of creative movement . . . I had grown up feeling tied up sort of. Like there was something in my body that I didn't want to disturb lest it might go all nutty again."

The fear and mistrust that Iris K felt toward her body led to a long struggle to gain some control over her body. This resulted in some abusive behaviors. She remembers coming home from high school, lying on the floor and smacking her stomach on the floor repeatedly in an attempt to “get rid of any flab or fat” that she had. She would exercise excessively and struggled with severe bulimia for 38 years. Iris K’s concern for her weight began a year after she lost her leg when a doctor limited her to a 1000-calorie diet and warned that if she became heavy she would not be able to walk. She also added that some of her bulimia struggle might have been related to feeling as if she wanted to get rid of bad things, such as cancer, that may have been inside of her.

Iris K’s journey toward dance began when she was participating in an art workshop. The workshop incorporated drumming and painting at the same time, “I started painting . . . and found myself so interested in the way my body felt, how it wanted to be free.” There was a flyer at the workshop about Authentic Movement and she responded.

Iris K realized the power of movement when she was doing Authentic Movement and started to have “visceral” memories. “One in particular was when I got into a ‘cross’ position lying on the floor and was flooded with awareness of being strapped down on an operating table. It was so vivid and the sensation of not being able to move at all was so profound.” As opposed to other forms of exercise that Iris K practiced excessively, Authentic Movement had very little structure to it, “so it was like taking me out of control and then putting me into the place of being a listener. I mean I had never even considered that before.”

Iris K was drawn to dance improvisation and continued to have these profound experiences.

But the first thing that happened that was really profound was I was in this class and I got into what I now know as child's pose in yoga and I was just flooded with tears. I don't even know why. . . . That was my first big, that was pretty early on, that was within the first six months of dancing.

Iris K does not recall having any similar kind of emotional releases prior to that moment in her dance class. These experiences led Iris K on a journey to think about her body differently. She found pleasure in movement, pleasure in learning about her body from her body. She began to feel tenderness toward her body and this lessened her need to control her body in abusive or unhealthy ways.

I think even the beginning of loving my body started with dance. I don't think I ever would have gotten to loving my body. I don't even think I really always love my body, but that was where it all began, that there was even a possibility for that. Even if I am in the worst place in terms of feeling fat or like this part of me is too, it sticks out this way. When I get on the floor and start moving around, I just totally, that stuff is just gone, and I just enjoy myself so much and even the simplest things . . . it just all feels so good. So, it consciously brings me into thinking about my body in a positive way. It's not just that I'm experiencing it [my body] but I'm actually thinking about it that way.

When I observed Iris K in her regular dance practice, she had just recently spent four days in the hospital because of a grapefruit sized hematoma on her hip. Her understanding was that all of the years walking on one leg with the help of crutches are now catching up with her and she now has a build up of synovial fluid. As a result, she was in the process of transitioning from walking with crutches, to using a wheelchair.

Iris K was so anxious to move that she quickly got out of her chair and onto the floor. She began rolling and stretching on the floor while I took time to set up the recording equipment. This dance observation was a self-guided Authentic Movement



based dance improvisation. Throughout Iris K's dance, her movement did not seem affective, but she seemed to be truly listening to her body's desires and impulses to move. There was incredible reaching of her arms and her hands were extremely expressive providing me with images of giving, receiving, and sensing. She would often put the palms of her hands together in what I refer to as a "prayer position." She executed many tactile type movements where she would caress or pat various parts of her body. Iris K was not self-conscious about making movements that are grotesque-like and she often accompanied those with vocalized sounds. She would smack her lips, growl, or make a raspberry sound, and she seemed to enjoy these moments.

Near the end I found that I, as the observer, was moved by Iris K's dance:

*She is moving as if she is carrying a burden scooting around the floor—not trying to escape from this burden, there is a tender quality about this thing she is carrying but it is still a burden—this causes me to shed tears. She appears to absorb this burden as a part of her. Her head is unsupported, just kind of hanging from her neck over her right shoulder. This movement continues for several minutes.*

In discussing this moment later with her, it became clear that the "burden" I referred to was the new development of the hematoma and her having to make the transition into being in a wheelchair. She did not seem sad or angry with this but seemed to talk and to dance about it with a sense of acceptance. It seemed that her dance helped her to adapt to the recent changes in her body.

Iris K is thankful for her body's ability to adapt to these new things. She believes that accepting and adapting are connected to her being a dancer. Dance improvisation often brings the dancer into the present moment and, especially when working in a group, adaptability is a key to making the improvisation work well.

Having cancer affected Iris K socially in several ways. First, she was thrust into the realm of being a person with a disability. She initially felt prejudices toward the disabled, saying, "I didn't want to be a part of that group. I was not supposed to be disabled." She also felt unable to relate to people, especially when she was younger. She felt like her one-leggedness caused there to be an invisible wall between herself and others her age. She finds herself sometimes dissatisfied with the level of thoughtfulness that some people have and believes she has more gratitude for life than others have. Iris K admittedly protects herself in social situations for a fear of rejection and has had a somewhat solitary life. She also has a history of putting herself into negative sexual experiences as a result of hating her body for so many years.

Dance has helped Iris K overcome or deal with many of these social issues. Dancing is something she often does in group settings and she is able to be in physical contact with people. It was dancing and Authentic Movement that allowed for Iris K to get involved with other people who were disabled, something she had never done before. She even performed on tour with Joint Forces Dance Company, a mixed abilities dance company.

Interesting things came out of Iris K's movement interviews. Some of these were physical discoveries for Iris K. For example, when I was guiding her through a movement interview, I had instructed her to feel the weight of her body. She was fascinated that she had never realized how unweighted the right side of her body was compared to her left. She also had a moment when she became fascinated with the area underneath her arms and spent some time initiating movement from her armpits, which was a new way of moving for her.

Iris K also had some strong emotions that accompanied her movement interviews. These validated her thoughts on certain things. She often spoke during our conversational interviews about how she feels so much gratitude for having found dance. When I asked her to respond in movement to the question, “what is the purpose of dance in your life?” The description of her movement at this point was as follows:

*lying on her stomach, arches up, hands are in prayer position, then caress her face, and return to prayer. She lowers her head and caresses her face quickly now and contorts her face—She rolls to her back and slides arms up and down on the floor like she is making a snow angel—starts clapping various rhythms, hitting floor--playful—waves at ceiling, points fingers and circles them around each other*

She later shared that she was crying at this point during her movement. The movement seemed to echo the way she described the purpose of dance to me during our conversational interview. She said that she was so grateful for dance and that she finds so much delight in it. This movement seemed to reflect that.

The most profound discovery during one of Iris K’s movement interviews was when her movement and her emotions during that movement were in contradiction to what she had shared during a conversational interview. When we discussed her history with cancer, she tended to describe her difficulties as being mostly in the past and that she was now very grateful to be alive. However, during the part of the movement interview when I spoke those words, “I am grateful to be alive,” Iris K was doing a very different dance. Her movements were tense as she violently pulled her elbows into her sides very hard and fast, she threw her hands up in the air as if she was trying to toss something away. I asked her about this at the end of the movement interview, she said,

When you were talking about my having cancer, and I never really, I mean I was feeling really mad! Really mad! Then when you said, ‘I’m just grateful to be

alive,' I wasn't really feeling that way today . . . but I definitely wanted to just push everyone away and I just wanted to say 'shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up!' I wanted to just say 'go away!' That was really very powerful.

It was as if her body, her dance, could not be dishonest about how she truly was feeling. She said that she realized those feelings of gratitude are not always a given, and that she sometimes needs to pray for it.

Finally, Iris K always seemed eager to share her experience with me after each movement interview. After the first one, I realized that I needed to schedule more time at the end of these sessions because there seemed to be a need for her to talk afterward. I am thankful for this because Iris K was so uninhibited after the movement interviews. Her emotions were often raw and her thoughts had tremendous depth. At the end of our final movement interview Iris K was tearful and shared the following about the role of dance in her life:

It's helped me to remember my body, to find my body again and to live in it again . . . and in that comes finding my 8-year-old little girl and all the things that went away when that cancer happened, which was a lot. Childhood joys and dreams, and hopes, and all that stuff. . . . So, yeah, it helped me to reconnect with all that stuff but through remembering my body. I mean I had so much therapy but none of it ever did anything like that for me. . . . I mean the mind is essential for helping with things but the true life of a being is in this flesh! That's what I am, a person, a human, you know? I'm a flesh and blood thing! I just can't live out here, which is what I did for all those years. I wasn't even watching this body, I was just living out here, I was ignoring the body.

*Monica Rey*

Monica Rey was first diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 36 years old and had a reoccurrence two and a half years later. Her treatments included a mastectomy, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. These treatments caused damage to her thyroid gland and forced her into early menopause.

During one of our conversations she remembered what it felt like to have numerous medical tests, “you have to lay really still and they are like scrutinizing your body in its entirety and it was like you’re holding your breath for three days because you don’t know what you are going to hear.” Monica Rey also recalls the many side effects of the treatments including being pushed into menopause, losing her hair, gaining weight, and the “writhing pain” in her bones. Monica Rey believes that her dancing and her commitment to fitness helped her body get through the treatments, acknowledging that if you begin with a supple body, it won’t “crisp up . . . scar up” as severely.

Although Monica Rey says she grew up dancing in the 1970s, she did not have any formal training until four years after her second cancer diagnosis. She has always loved dance and even longed for it but did not pursue it formally until her daughter had grown. “I realize that becoming a ‘dancer’ is post providing my daughter the opportunity to dance.” It was important to her that she gave her daughter the opportunity to study dance and Monica Rey felt like she wanted to wait her turn.

Fitness has always been an important part of Monica Rey’s life and in addition to her career as an accountant, she also teaches various fitness classes such as yoga and step aerobics. She currently studies Latin dances and at the beginning of this study was taking a cha cha performance class once a week, social dancing twice a month, and practicing several hours a week on her own. She was even in the process of converting a room in her home into a dance studio for her own practice.

It was very difficult for Monica Rey to list the ways she identifies herself. Her daughter passed away just over a year prior to this study and Monica Rey’s identity of

being a mother is at the forefront for her. During our first conversational interview, Monica Rey said “I identify myself as a mom” and “I’m trying to find another identity.” When I asked if she identifies with the term “cancer survivor,” her response was,

Yeah, I do, along with being an aunt and a mom and a daughter. It’s like one of those, it’s an always. It’s not something that changes. Like I’m an office manager and maybe I’ll be something else one day, but I’ll always be a cancer survivor. That’s just kind of part of the framework. It doesn’t ebb and flow . . . it stays with me.

Monica Rey says that being a dancer is also part of her framework, “it’s part of the mold.”

I observed Monica Rey during her *cha cha performance class*. The things that stood out to me were her focus and her poise. She was extremely detail oriented and listened intently on the instructor’s guidance, immediately applying it to her movement. Even though Monica Rey was visibly enjoying the dancing, she took the class very seriously and was not just interested in learning the choreography but strived to execute it with elegance and grace.

Although Monica Rey is very athletic and fitness oriented, dance provides something extra for her. “Dancing means freedom of soul expression to me. . . . Dance is essential for my survival. Life is harsh.” Even when she was in pain and very sick from cancer treatments she tried to find a way to dance, “I slid out of bed, tapped my toes, and my fingers against my thighs because I couldn’t move my arms from the elbows up. I knew I was going to be OK. . . . I now dance to celebrate life today, and my daughter.” When I asked Monica Rey why she dances, her response was,

I have to move, have to! It’s not an option not to . . . it’s expression. Sometimes we can’t express it verbally or in our daily actions but it’s a personal expression that’s essential and I just, I need it. I try to enjoy

everything and not need anything, but I think there are certain things that are really critical to help you get thru the other things, cause there are so many other things.

Monica Rey's cancer experience is still very raw to her. In her writings about her cancer experience, she returns to that place of fear and recalls feeling numb as she writes in the present tense as if she is experiencing it all over again.

These raw reactions are even deeper during our movement interviews. Monica Rey was new to the idea of dance improvisation. She seemed nervous going into our first movement interview and began with movements that were familiar to her and executed some yoga poses. During the warm-up, Monica Rey stopped to say she felt "stuck" and she admitted that she never realized how much her "mind is the ruler." I encouraged her to continue and that there was no right or wrong and no rules with this type of dancing. I then guided Monica Rey to allow her body to explore movement in ways it may not have every explored before. She then began to free up her movement and even appeared to be playful.

When I asked Monica Rey to share her cancer story in movement, she began with a very poised, almost proud walk and arm gesture but was soon overcome with emotion and tears. She could not continue with her movement response. After a short pause, we continued into the next part of the movement interview in which she gave movement responses to her own words as I said them. During this section, Monica Rey really sank into her dance and responded with full bodied and continuous movements that were not literal gestures but instead graceful little mini dances.

Monica Rey was eager to share her thoughts and discoveries from the movement interviews. "It was wonderful! To begin with, it took me to many places and it felt

really good . . . it is a different way of expressing. It feels kind of invigorating!”

Monica Rey said that she knows she is a strong person but sometimes wishes she were a little softer and that responding to an interview with movement helped her to soften, release, and to open up. This was also reflected in her writing when she wrote that when she dances, “The area around my heart opens up from beating harder and it doesn’t feel so tight in the chest and throat. Dance is a relief for that lump in the throat.”

When we discussed the emotional and tearful moment that occurred during the movement interview, Monica Rey said that the tears were not because she was sad or scared but because there was just so much energy and emotion. “It had to come out somewhere” and she just felt a strong release of energy when she began to share her cancer story in movement. She was surprised by the amount of emotion she felt while doing the movement interview, and realized how much she had been suppressing. She said that some of her ability to release so much was because she was not the one in charge.

I wasn’t the guide. You were the guide. I’m not having to think about what so and so over there is doing [referring to her teaching yoga]. I mean I could just; I was able to be me. That’s what I discovered just now, that I need more time for just me . . .and I really had an epiphany today about that. I didn’t think there was anything [suppressed emotions] down there . . .there are so many unknowns in life and I have to remember that but I realize I am still scared of that.

The movement interviews took Monica Rey to a very private and personal place where her experiences seemed to be “projected onto a screen” and revealed to her in a new way, from a perspective of having already experienced it.



Monica Rey's experience with cancer is something that she believes makes her different from other people. She believes she has a better awareness of "this moment" but that looking into the future is challenging. She also feels that she has a better sensitivity to things and people now, post-cancer. Monica Rey seems to have a sense of pride in being a cancer survivor. She refers to her scars as "badges" but feels a sense of responsibility because of her experience. She believes that she needs to promote breast cancer awareness and does so in the classes that she teaches. This feeling has been validated for her because some of her students have discovered their own cancer by self examinations as a result of Monica Rey's reminders. "It's a responsibility that I don't always want, but I do have it and so that is important."

Monica Rey feels like her dancing and her being a cancer survivor are related in some way on a deep level. "It is where I can say 'things are all right,' it is a relationship that is well cultivated . . . a place of peace and comfort that 'right now' is OK." Monica Rey appreciates that when she dances, she is in "a moment of freedom" and able to be in the moment, she makes an effort to pull those feelings she gets from dancing into everyday tasks. When she dances, she is free of the fear that her cancer experience has caused her to live with. Dance is a place she can feel lively.

Dance is something playful that Monica Rey can partake in and she enjoys challenging herself in dance. When she registered for the performance class, it was not her intention to perform but the class was one of the few classes that were offered during a convenient time slot for her. She said,

so I'm really reaching, but I have enough confidence to take the risk because I don't know what tomorrow holds. . .so why not, you know? I know that I don't have anything to lose. I don't know if confidence is the right word, it's more of

not being afraid to take a chance at something. . . . I'm not going to fail but I do have to try a lot harder. But that's okay because so what? You know?

Monica Rey enjoys the social aspect of going out Latin dancing and she likes that she is able to feel comfortable in that environment.

I absolutely love it as far as community and politeness and kindness and a good mix of people coming together to dance . . . and the fact that there are many ages... I'm finding that very heartwarming and it provides some faith in the community at large that you live with.

*Suse*

As a child, Suse took ballet, tap, gymnastics, social dancing, and ice skating. She was a cheerleader in high school and took courses in tap, African, ballroom, and Brazilian street dancing in college. She has also participated in hip hop, urban jazz, contra dancing, and zydeco. Currently, Suse does ballroom or Latin dance at least once a week, zydeco approximately once a month, urban jazz once a week, and takes a ballroom class once a week plus one practice session.

Suse was diagnosed with stage two breast cancer in 1996, at the age of fifty. Her treatments included a lumpectomy, axillary node dissection, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Suse is not undergoing treatments at the time of this study and is cancer free.

When describing her cancer experience Suse writes,

I felt adrift at sea and had nothing to hold to, I felt the diagnosis was like a free fall that went on for days and months, years. . . . My thoughts, my energy, my emotions, my physical ability, my body, my mind, everything was focused in some way on cancer and what it might mean.

Her work was affected and many things were left unattended. Suse felt like she had lost control of her life and sought out ways to take back some control. She was very active

in her own medical management, trying to obtain the names of every person who would be in the room when she was having surgery, breaking their rules of not bringing anything with her into the room. She even took in a miniature sword from a mixed drink as she was going into battle. Suse made her own rules and gave the medical personnel orders to not talk about her while she was under anesthesia.

Suse felt like she had to figure out life after cancer. "It felt odd to go from lump and then this intense six months of treatment and then it was like, 'ok you're done now.' It's like, 'that's it? Now what do I do?'" She felt damaged and continues to feel different from other people. "I feel like I've been to hell and back and not everybody goes to hell. . . . I knew that other people didn't get it."

Suse admits to being depressed for a couple of years and had feelings of desperation and anger. Socially, Suse felt a desire to surround herself with other "cancer people." She attended cancer support groups and chose to surround herself with others who intimately knew cancer. However, three years after her diagnosis she felt the need to separate herself from that community and said,

I couldn't continue to watch people die, over and over. I just couldn't do it. I had to go on. . . . I almost had to turn my back on people . . . which is weird because the thing that felt like was keeping me alive, the support, the people, the love, the closeness of the wonderful women, now felt like it was dragging me down.

Even though dance had always been a part of Suse's life, she connects differently to it now, post-cancer. Dancing became a bigger priority. As Suse began to return to "a more usual life," she made the conscious decision to dance more and she continues to build her days around her dance schedule. She writes, "The threat of dying, being immobilized, pushed me to be mobile." She continued to write that her

cancer experience, gave her “permission to be more wild and primal and know I am a dancer and that is what I do. Life is just happening, why not be dancing?”

Suse has always felt like a thwarted dancer and believes that if she had more freedom to make her own choices at a younger age, she would have chosen to study dance. Being fit and athletic is important to Suse but weight lifting, jogging, and other forms of exercise meet that need. Dance serves a different purpose for Suse, “fun.”

In talking to Suse, I realized that dance is also a big part of her social interactions. “Dance has become a way of relating to the world, to other people.” She even organized a lesbian ballroom dance club in 2003. The club continues to provide a comfortable environment for women to learn and practice dancing without the expectation that women have to be the followers.

Dance is also a way for Suse to escape from the self-talk regarding tasks that need to be done, and worries that sometimes consume her. When dancing, Suse feels free of worry, and it is one of the few activities that allow her to feel as if she is truly “in the moment. Time becomes less important.”

Eleven years after her cancer diagnosis, Suse continues to have difficulty talking about her cancer experience. Cancer is something that is a part of her “and is now inescapable.” She writes that cancer “feels like something that is a part of me that I can hate.” Cancer reminds her of something that is unknown, something “from which there is no protection.... In my body cancer feels like something I am trying to forget and cannot. Like a sticky substance that you get on you and you cannot get it off completely...” When Suse dances, these feelings about cancer are set aside. “Dance feels like opportunity for openness, space, a reminder to breathe and concentrate on my

body and it feels like getting right with things...I can feel connected to the past in a positive way.” It’s not that she can forget her cancer experience but “the dancing is a good, safe, fairly reliable place” she can go to.

Although Suse recently visited with a friend struggling with cancer, she often declines when people ask for guidance regarding cancer because she knows that it brings her down. She says that people

don’t understand the boundary between who you were in the past and who you are now. And they forget that that is personal, that there is a personal boundary between your personal experience and them. It’s kind of like bringing up rape to a rape victim.

She then said, “in dancing if you’re dancing with someone, they’re not thinking about that. I mean they are just trying to get the moves . . . there is really no space for that.”

I first observed Suse during her Urban Jazz class. She worked hard but did not seem to take herself too seriously. She admits that this class is a stretch for her and this was reflected in her choice to stand towards the back of the room and follow some of the more experienced dancers. She appeared to have fun and smiled when the class began working on turns, acknowledging that these were not her strength. She took the class with a quality of ease in her movement even when she made mistakes. She just went for it and did not seem to worry about her mistakes. It took some time for the movement to get into Suse’s body and she seemed to respond well to having things repeated.

Suse, not having a significant background in dance improvisation, initially responded to the movement interviews with literal gestures of the words and phrases she was responding to. The interesting thing was that I, as the observer, felt like I could

see the moment she dropped into the interview as being more of a meditation. The quality of her movement changed from being familiar, codified, dance movements, or stretches, to being unique and expressive movements.

I found that Suse had a strong need to talk about these movement experiences, even calling me the day after one of them to share some things that came up for her later. She was anxious to tell me about discoveries that she made during these short expressions in movement. “It was just interesting what came into my mind that I was interpreting in my body.”

One thing that was fascinating to me was that a few days before her second movement interview Suse had told me about the importance of her needing to get away from other “cancer people” but after the movement interview in which she was sharing her cancer story in movement she said, “I kept seeing people.... I was surprised at what the first memory was that came up. It wasn’t of my close group, it was those other people that I don’t even know where they are any more.” The people that she had chosen to walk away from were her first memory of her cancer experience when she danced.

Suse said that it was during this second movement interview that she realized how much she had to surrender her body during much of her cancer experience. She realized how much she felt immobilized during that time,

You need to lay down and you have radiation, you sit and you lay and you be still while you are getting chemotherapy, you sit and you lie down when you are having your surgery, and I hadn’t really thought about that. A lot of it is about offering your body, which I hadn’t really considered before.

It was the movement expression of her cancer story that brought on this realization for Suse. She said that the movement interview started out as being more in her head but that her “body memory” began to take over.

In the third movement interview, Suse made a realization about her life as it is now. I had asked her to dance the story of her present life and after doing a dance that was confined to a small area in space she said,

What I realized is that I think of my life right now as really kind of stuck. And I just kind of keep looking. Like I just kind of keep circling, circling and looking, circling but I’m not, I just don’t know which direction to go.

Even as she was telling me this and we were no longer in the movement portion of this interview, she continued to walk in small circles as if her body was informing her of what she was feeling and how to express it.

She said that these movement interviews have been a way for her to process information and she remembered that during the time of her cancer she attended some contact improvisation jams, “I think that was a way of kind of working through some of that body stuff, being in contact with people . . . but every time I meet with you [in these movement interviews] I think there’s this whole area of my life that I don’t explore.”

Suse had a couple of strong emotional responses during these movement interviews. One of these was when I asked her to respond, in movement, her response to the question, has dance helped you cope with your experience of having cancer? She stepped into a wide second position with her palms opened wide, she did a half turn and lifted her arms overhead before bringing them to her face and having to stop because she was crying too hard. “It’s too big, that’s my answer,” she says.

I asked her later if she thought she would have had a similar reaction to that question if we were sitting at a table having one of our conversational interviews. She answered with an emphatic “No!” and continued to say, “It’s completely different, completely different! I mean it’s just so logical to me. I mean I’m dancing and it’s not a word thing.”

One important thing to note is that Suse seemed to be so impressed with the discoveries she made about herself during these movement interviews that she expressed some desire to do more of it.

I think the thing that I feel sad about and maybe I could do something g different about it, is I feel like I’m a deeper person that I’m able to express . . . and this experience makes me think, ‘oh, I’m a pretty interesting person!’ How come I can’t, where can I go where I could explore this more and share this more? How can I share what is happening. . . . I feel like it has affected me, I mean it affects me when it is happening and I do have some memory about it, but I don’t know how to make it go any other place . . . I mean sometimes when I’m dancing I think ‘why am I not doing more with my dancing?’

It was after this final movement interview that Suse called me with a desire to continue discussing her experience of being a part of this research project. She said that the movement interviews were, “like a retreat that makes it difficult to carry over into your day to day life when it is over.” She wanted to know where she could do more of this work and I sadly did not have an answer for her but realized, in that moment, the importance of exploring this topic of study further.

### Comparing and Contrasting

The four women who participated in this study have all experienced dance and cancer in very different ways. However, I was amazed by the many similarities of how



they experience dance in their lives. I tried to determine what the role of dance is in the lives of these four cancer survivors. Table 3 illustrates the findings.

**Table 3. The Role of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors**

<b>The role of dance in the lives of the cancer survivors</b>		<b>Claire</b>	<b>Iris K</b>	<b>Monica Rey</b>	<b>Suse</b>
Recreation	Fun / play	x	x	x	x
Social	Helps me connect with others	x	x	x	x
	Provides a sense of community	x	x	x	x
	Provides physical contact with others		x	x	
Self-identity	expression	x	x	x	x
	Dancing is a part of the person's identity	x	x	x	x
Body perception	Gives body purpose	x			
	Re-engagement of self with body	x	x	x	x
	Feelings of shame are alleviated	x			
	Physical discoveries are made	x	x		x
Problem solve	Information is processed when dancing	x	x	x	x
	Memories come up when dancing / body memory	x	x	x	x
Anxiety	Fears and worries are alleviated when dancing	x	x	x	x
	Dance brings the participant into the present moment	x	x	x	x
	Dance provides comfort		x	x	x
Acceptance / adapting	Learn to appreciate body again	x	x		
	Adapts to changes in body	x	x		

All participants talked on some level about how the experience of having cancer had pulled them out of their physical bodies, a separation of self and physical body. This occurred on various levels. Claire and Monica Rey both talked about feeling numb. Suse felt like she was free falling and adrift at sea and remembered having to surrender her body to the medical professionals. Iris K experienced this profoundly as she tried to escape from the body that she feared and had come to hate.

Dance has helped each of these women integrate their sense of self with their physical bodies. Claire believes that dance brings her more into her body and gives her body purpose. Dance has helped Iris K remember her body and to live in it again. For Monica Rey, dancing is a reminder that her body is okay and Suse feels like dancing helps her to connect to her past in a positive way.

Dance seems to be a place where all of the participants have found a sense of community and social interaction after cancer had pushed into an isolated place. All of the women said that having cancer made them feel different from others. Some of these differences were negative, for example, Suse said that she felt damaged and that she had experienced “hell” and knew others did not understand that. Claire felt isolated from her friends when they would go out dancing without her because they did not believe she was able to join them. Some of these differences were more positive; for example, Iris K and Monica Rey both felt like they had gained sensitivity about the world, they were able to experience a depth to experiences that they thought others might not feel. All of these perceived differences led to various levels of social isolation for these women. However, each one of them spoke about how dance connected them with

others and with the community. Iris K, Monica Rey, and Suse emphasized the power of the physical contact they get with others when they dance with a partner or in groups.

Claire, Monica Rey, and Suse all expressed that dance gives them freedom. For Claire and Suse this freedom is related to their histories with cancer. Claire feels free from worry and shame when she dances and Suse is free from feeling as if people see her as a “cancer person.”

Iris K had not danced until years after being diagnosed with cancer but Claire, Monica Rey, and Suse made dance a bigger priority in their lives after their recovery from cancer. Claire even wonders if she would be dancing at all if she had not had cancer. It was as if cancer gave her permission to make dance a priority. All participants expressed that dance is a place where they are comfortable, safe, and can be playful.

The movement interviews provided each individual with a tool for self-discovery during this process. Claire and Suse both realized that they feel somewhat stuck in their lives as they had difficulty expressing their present lives in movement. Iris K realized that her feelings of gratitude sometimes need to be worked on and they are not always with her as she had thought they were. Monica Rey discovered that she needs to take more time for herself to work through her experience of having had cancer.

Iris K, Monica Rey, and Suse were all in awe of the emotional releases they experienced during the movement interviews. They all shed tears at some point during

their movement responses and seemed surprised by how much their movement released emotions.

### Summary

The experiences of dance in the lives of the four women in this study have been powerful. Although each story is unique, there were many similarities. Dance has been a tool for these women to integrate themselves as whole beings after cancer had caused each of them to have fear toward their bodies. Dancing has provided each of them with a way to express things that have been difficult to express in the language of words. Dance is a priority in the lives of these cancer survivors, and it gives them comfort and a sense of being a part of a community after cancer had pushed each of them into some level of isolation.

Dance / Movement was a valuable tool in gathering information for this study. All of the participants became less inhibited when sharing their experiences when they danced. Each of the volunteers made discoveries during the movement interviews and expressed that these sessions were a learning experience for them.

### Implications

The field of cancer survivorship research is young and gaining momentum as more people are surviving the experience of cancer. The cancer experience is a deeply personal one, which is why cancer survivorship research needs to explore numerous coping strategies and tools that survivors use to help them through life after cancer.

Research has shown the value of cancer support groups, counseling, and even art therapy, which sometimes, but rarely, includes dance. However, I feel that the importance of moving the physical body in a creative and expressive way is often overlooked or diminished in the field of cancer survivorship research. It is my hope that this study will shed some light on the potential benefits dance has in the lives of cancer survivors.

It has also been clear in doing this study that there is much to be gained by using dance as an interviewing tool. The body seems to be able to remember things that the mind forgets. The movement interviews were a tool in helping the volunteers open up about their experiences, they were able to express themselves on a deeper level than they were with the movement element.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOVEMENT PROJECT

#### Introduction

When a researcher seeks information about experiences in the lives of others, it is not uncommon for data to be collected from subjects with the use of interviews or written journals on the topic to be studied. These methods are traditionally accepted as thorough ways to gather information from subjects. Chapter Three discusses the use of these tools as a part of this study.

Dance is not only an art form, it is a form of expression. Through speaking and journaling, each of the participants in this study acknowledged that dance is one way they express themselves. They communicate through dance. In one of her journals Claire wrote that dance “allows me to express myself without words which is very freeing in a world where I often feel that my head will explode if I can’t function from my whole self.”

Lauren Bracey (2004) and Maarit Ylönen (2003) used dance as a mode of inquiry in addition to other data gathering methods. After initial interviews, the women in Bracey’s study were observed in their dance classes and issues that seemed to contradict and/or reinforce topics discussed in the first interview were addressed in the

follow-up interview (Bracey 2004). The interview discussions led to “a continuous evolutionary process of creating meaning” (Bracey 2004, 10).

Ylönen (2003) collected information about the May Pole dance by not only interviewing her subject but also by participating in the dance ritual herself. Her use of dance and interviews as tools for collecting information allowed her to create “continuous reinterpretations and dialogues between the bodily and the verbal” (Ylönen 2003, 556).

*An Exploration of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors* would be incomplete if I did not give the participants an opportunity to express themselves through dancing. The purpose of this movement project was to determine how and if dance can be a useful tool in gathering data about the experiences of the cancer survivors who volunteered for this study. I wanted to explore how much, if any, information could be gathered by having the participants dance. Would the participants’ movement reveal things that the verbal discussions and journaling did not?

In preparing for this study, I believed that gathering data via journals and dialogue exclusively would not have been a true exploration of dance in the lives of the research participants. I wanted to know about dance in their lives. I believed that in addition to discussions and subject journaling, it would be important to observe each participant in the act of dancing. It was my hope that information that was stored in the body would have an opportunity to be communicated through movement.

## Discussion of Dance/Movement Therapy

In the early stages of civilization, dance played a very important role. Many dance rituals took place for the intended purpose of healing the sick. Eventually, theologians began to fear the power of dance, so laws were implemented forcing dance away from ritualistic practice and into the realm of court entertainment (Bernstein 1979). The healing aspects of dance could not be denied and by the late twentieth century the practice of psychotherapy formally embraced dance/movement therapy as a respected practice (Stanton-Jones 1992).

According to the American Dance Therapy Association, “Dance/Movement Therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, cognitive, social and physical integration of the individual” (American Dance Therapy Association, internet). The term “psychotherapeutic” contained in this definition creates some confusion because there is not a widely recognized definition of the term. *Stedman’s Medical Dictionary* defines psychotherapy as the “Treatment of emotional, behavioral, personality, and psychiatric disorders based primarily upon verbal or nonverbal communication and interventions with the patient, in contrast to treatments utilizing chemical and physical measures” (2000, p.1479).

The participants in *An Exploration of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors* expressed that the process of the movement interviews had a therapeutic effect. However, I did not intend to *treat* the participants for a diagnosed *disorder* as dance/movement therapy proposes. Although I do hope that dance/movement therapists are able to use this research to further their own discipline, the methods for this particular study were developed from the world of dance improvisation and



implemented for the purpose of exploring dance as a tool to gather information about dance in the lives of the participants.

### Dance Improvisation

When movement is manifested in a free-flowing manner from emotional or sensual stimuli, the result is dance improvisation. The movement interviews described on the following page are improvisations directed by myself from the perspective of a dance artist, dance educator, choreographer, improviser, DanceAbility expert, and a survivor of cancer.

### Procedures

Dance is a non-verbal activity. It is a form of expression and is therefore a viable method in collecting information about a person's experience. In an attempt to further explore dance in the lives of cancer survivors, I used dance/movement as a form of data collection in two ways. First, I believed that it was necessary for me to observe these dancers in their standard dance practices. Secondly, each volunteer participated in three movement interviews, which were directed dance improvisations.

### Observations of Survivors Dancing

I first observed each participant in her standard dance practice. Descriptive notes were taken on what happened during these practices including: how the practice was conducted, how the participant approached the practice, interactions the participant had with others, any visible attitude or energy shifts from the participant during her

practice, and descriptions of how the participant moved during the practice. The descriptive notes taken during these dance observations are included in Appendix B.

### The Movement Interviews

Three movement interviews were held in conjunction with the three rounds of journaling and conversational interviews described in Chapter III of this document. There was one exception because one dancer was injured and therefore did not do a movement interview during Round 1. I met each participant privately in a space conducive to dancing. Appendix E contains some transcripts with descriptions of the movement interviews.

Each participant was led through a physical warm-up using the DanceAbility Method for warming up the body as a guide. DanceAbility is a method of teaching movement improvisation to all people. This includes beginner dancers, experienced dancers, and people with or without disabilities (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005). According to the creator of this method,

The Warm-Up helps cultivate the ability to experience your movement, and introduces the idea that attention to sensation is more important than what your movement looks like . . . Through the Warm-Up, you begin to experience and feel who you are – how your history, emotions, psyche, and spirituality all manifest in your physicality in this moment, and in this community. (Alessi, Zolbrod 2005, 26)

This method of warming up the body is designed to help the dancer focus on the following elements: sensation, relation, time, and design (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005).

Sensation refers to how the body feels in that particular moment. I verbally guided the participants to sense the weight of their body, sense the temperature of their

body, or to sense what it feels like to do a simple gesture. Relation refers to the dancer's relationship to anything outside of the dancer's body, this is more apparent in group settings in which a sense of community is formed. Time has to do with dynamics of movement, is the body's movement slow or fast? Constant or varied? Does the movement follow regular rhythmic patterns or is it sporadic? Design not only refers to the shape of the body in its dance but also how the dancer's movements affect the whole design of the space as a whole (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005).

This warm-up was modified for each dance to enhance her comfort level. For example, Monica Rey felt "naked" without the use of music but Iris K preferred to warm-up in silence. Although my language followed the DanceAbility model, I made modifications according to each participants' movement vocabulary.

Once the warm-up was completed, the participants were interviewed in much the same way the conversational interviews were conducted as described in Chapter III; however, the participants were instructed to execute dance improvisations of their responses to the interview questions. I used Hanna's idea that when dancing is accompanied with imaged expressions of past or current experiences, it sometimes helps the individual to problem solve outside of the dance setting (Hanna 1988). For example, during one round of movement interviews I asked the dancers to share their cancer experience through movement. This took place after they had already shared their cancer experiences verbally, during a conversational interview.

Throughout the movement interviews, the participants' own responses from previous journal writings and conversational interviews were read aloud and the dancers were asked to respond, with dance improvisation, to these words. I spoke phrases that

the dancer spoke during one of our conversational interviews or wrote in a journal entry. I observed how each dancer responded to her own words through movement.

The observations of survivors dancing and the movement interviews contributed to the study, *An Exploration of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors*, as described in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Analysis of Movement Project

The observations of the volunteers in their regular dance practices, described in Chapter IV, were video recorded whenever possible. In two instances I was not able to video record the observations due to concerns of privacy for other students in the class. The data collected from these observations helped me understand what it is each participant does when she experiences dance in her own practice and oriented me to what kind of dance experience was familiar to the participant. Notes from the dance observations are included in Appendix B.

Each movement interview was videotaped. I reviewed each recording and wrote descriptive accounts of how the subject physically responded to each question, idea, or quote that I used to guide the movement interviews. All verbal exchanges, dialogue, instructions, and interview questions were transcribed. Some transcriptions may be found in Appendix E.

It quickly became apparent that the cancer survivors were flooded with memories and emotions during the movement interviews. The most valuable information gathered during this study was shared immediately following the movement

interviews. As a researcher, I did not anticipate this and had to adjust the movement interviews to incorporate ample time for discussion afterwards. I had originally only planned to have the dancers respond, with movement, to my questions and quotes from previous encounters with them. By the third round of movement interviews the sessions were broken up into segments so we could discuss what happened before going on to the next part of the interview. For example, after the warm-up, the dancers would often share something about their bodies such as, “I’m feeling stiff today” or “my back is aching today”. We would talk again after the movement responses to my questions and again after they responded to their own words as I was speaking them.

#### Case Study Findings

The volunteers participated in various dance practices and had various levels of dance experience. Even though the movement interviews all contained a warm-up, movement responses to questions, and movement responses to the volunteers’ own words, each session was unique. Each case is outlined below and significant findings from the movement interviews are illustrated in Table 4.

**Table 4. Movement Interview Findings**

<b>During the Movement Interviews:</b>	<b>Claire</b>	<b>Iris K</b>	<b>Monica Rey</b>	<b>Suse</b>
Memories came up	x	x	x	x
There was a strong emotional release		x	x	x
Physical discoveries were made and shared	x	x		x
At least one contradiction to what was shared verbally or written was revealed	x	x		x
Personal discoveries (not physical) were made and shared	x	x	x	x
The dancer felt invigorated afterwards		x	x	x
The dancer was able to let go of control	x	x	x	
The dancer shared something about experiencing the past in a new way during the movement interview		x	x	x

My observation of Claire in her standard dance practice was in what she referred to as an “ecstatic dance class.” Ecstatic dance falls under the realm of dance improvisation and is described as “an ancient movement practice that has been revered as a way to meditate, evoke visionary experience, and connect with spirit and nature” (Dancing Botanicals, internet).

Claire focused on the words spoken by the instructor and I could visibly see a change in her movement quality when the instructor would present a new concept to the class. For example, when he said “the ground is no longer beneath you as you are becoming part of the ground -- the ground comes up to your ankle -- your knees -- the ceiling,” Claire’s movement changed from being very free, she had been executing quick spins in her chair, to movement that had a quality of increasing tension and she eventually looked almost robotic.

Claire admittedly has trouble verbally expressing herself but seemed to be very comfortable with the movement interviews. Claire's movement interviews revealed a woman who is very comfortable in her body. She was very much a performer in these sessions. She seemed to always take into account where I was observing from and designed her movement accordingly. There was no hesitation between my words and her movement translation. I asked Claire to dance the story of her present, her life as it is now; this was my description of her dance in that moment:

*sits in stillness for a short time  
rolls chair forward and executes a couple of very fast  
energetic spins while doing a back and forth arm gesture  
swings arms back as she bends forward at the waist  
arms reach out sideways like airplane wings then they drop  
jerky arm movements as if arms are ratcheting her torso to an upright position  
hands cross in front of her belly and rest there  
she hits a wheel of her chair in a playful way  
takes her feet off the foot rests and rolls backwards in a high release  
her feet drag on the floor in front of her*

When Claire would respond, in movement, to some of the words she had written she was surprised by some of things that came up for her. She had memories of things during the movement interviews that she could not recall during the conversational interviews. For example, in conversation, I had asked her to share her history of dancing and she struggled with trying to remember what she had done. However, when I asked the same thing during the movement interview she remembered specific warm-up exercises she used to do with a company she danced with.

Claire spoke of her difficulty in thinking about her future. We talked about how cancer has forced us to be in touch with our mortality and one of the results of that is that it is hard to think about our lives in the long-term. There is a tendency for Claire to



stay focused on the present. However, Claire had a much different response in movement. When I asked her to dance about her life as it is now, in the present, she seemed to struggle with that. “It was kind of hard” she said and admitted that she felt that she was more in her head than in her body at that moment. When I asked Claire to dance about her future, there was a shift in her energy and her movement. She appeared to be having fun and there was a playful quality to her movement. She later said that her doubts about the future did not even enter her mind while she was dancing.

Claire was generally quiet and self-reflective after the movement interviews. She would be so expressive in her movement interviews and would respond to the movement cues without hesitation but seemed inhibited when we had verbal exchanges. Although Claire often felt like the movement interviews were “intense”, she felt like there was value in them for her. She felt like they were positive experiences but had trouble expressing to me why she felt that way except that she believed it is good to keep exploring.

When I observed Iris K in her regular dance practice, she had just recently spent four days in the hospital because of a grapefruit sized hematoma on her hip. Her understanding was that all of the years walking on one leg with the help of crutches are now catching up with her and she now has a build up of synovial fluid. As a result, she was in the process of transitioning from walking with crutches, to using a wheelchair.

Iris K was so anxious to move that she quickly got out of her chair and onto the floor. She began rolling and stretching on the floor while I took time to set up the recording equipment. This dance observation was a self-guided authentic movement based dance improvisation. Throughout Iris K’s dance, her movement did not seem

affective, but she seemed to be truly listening to her body's desires and impulses to move. There was incredible reaching of her arms and her hands were extremely expressive providing me with images of giving, receiving, and sensing. She would often put the palms of her hands together in what I refer to as a "prayer position". She executed a lot of tactile type movements where she would caress or pat various parts of her body. Iris K was not self-conscious about making grotesque-like movements that felt good to her and she often accompanied those movements with vocalized sounds. She would smack her lips, growl, or make a raspberry sound, and she seemed to enjoy these moments.

Near the end I found that I, as the observer, was moved by Iris K's dance:

*She is moving like she is carrying a burden scooting around the floor—not trying to escape from this burden, there is a tender quality about this thing she is carrying but it is still a burden—this causes me to shed tears. She appears to absorb this burden as a part of her. Her head is unsupported, just kind of hanging from her neck over her right shoulder. This movement continues for several minutes.*

In discussing this moment later with her, it became clear that the "burden" I referred to was the new development of the hematoma and her having to make the transition into being in a wheelchair. She did not seem sad or angry with this but seemed to talk and to dance about it with a sense of acceptance. It seemed that her dance helped her to adapt to the recent changes in her body.

Interesting things came out of Iris K's movement interviews. Some of these were physical discoveries for Iris K. For example, I had instructed her to feel the weight of her body. She was fascinated that she had never realized how unweighted the right side of her body was compared to her left. She also had a moment when she

became fascinated with the area underneath her arms and spent some time initiating movement from her armpits, which was a new way of moving for her.

Iris K also had some strong emotions that accompanied her movement interviews. These validated her thoughts on certain things. She often spoke during our conversational interviews about how she feels so much gratitude for having found dance. When I asked her to respond in movement to the question, “what is the purpose of dance in your life?” The description of her movement at this point was as follows:

*lying on her stomach, arches up, hands are in prayer position, then caress her face, and return to prayer. She lowers her head and caresses her face quickly now and contorts her face—She rolls to her back and slides arms up and down on the floor like she is making a snow angel—starts clapping various rhythms, hitting floor--playful—waves at ceiling, points fingers and circles them around each other*

She later shared that she was crying at this point during her movement. The movement seemed to echo the way she described the purpose of dance to me during our conversational interview. She said that she was so grateful for dance and that she finds so much delight in it. This movement seemed to reflect that.

The most profound discovery during one of Iris K’s movement interviews was when her movement and her emotions during that movement were in contradiction to what she had shared during a conversational interview. When we discussed her history with cancer she tended to describe challenges as if they were mostly in the past and that she was now very grateful to be alive. However, during the part of the movement interview when I spoke those words, “I am grateful to be alive”, Iris K was doing a very different dance. Her movements were tense as she violently pulled her elbows into her sides very hard and fast, she also threw her hands up in the air as if she was trying to

toss something away. I asked her about this at the end of the movement interview, she said,

When you were talking about my having cancer, and I never really, I mean I was feeling really mad! Really mad! Then when you said, 'I'm just grateful to be alive,' I wasn't really feeling that way today . . . but I definitely wanted to just push everyone away and I just wanted to say 'shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up! I wanted to just say 'go away'! That was really very powerful.

It was as if her body, her dance, could not be dishonest about how she truly was feeling in that particular moment. She said that she realized those feelings of gratitude are not always a given, and that she sometimes needs to pray for it.

Iris K always seemed anxious to share her experience with me after each movement interview. After the first one, I realized that I needed to schedule more time at the end of these sessions because there seemed to be a need for her to talk afterward. I am thankful for this because Iris K was so uninhibited after the movement interviews. Her emotions were often raw and her thoughts had tremendous depth. At the end of our final movement interview Iris K was tearful and shared the following about the role of dance in her life:

It's helped me to remember my body, to find my body again and to live in it again . . . and in that comes finding my 8-year-old little girl and all the things that went away when that cancer happened, which was a lot. Childhood joys and dreams, and hopes, and all that stuff . . . So, yeah, it helped me to reconnect with all that stuff but through remembering my body. I mean I had so much therapy but none of it ever did anything like that for me . . . I mean the mind is essential for helping with things but the true life of a being is in this flesh! That's what I am, a person, a human, you know? I'm a flesh and blood thing! I just can't live out here, which is what I did for all those years. I wasn't even watching this body, I was just living out here, I was ignoring the body.

My observation of Monica Rey's regular dance practice was during her *cha cha performance class*. All of the students in this class were women and in the particular

class that I observed the women were rehearsing a cha cha routine to be performed at a later date. The things that stood out to me in my observation of Monica Rey were her focus and her poise. She was extremely detail oriented and listened intently on the instructor's guidance, immediately applying it to her movement. Even though Monica Rey was visibly enjoying the dancing, she took the class very seriously and was not just interested in learning the choreography but strived to execute it with elegance and grace.

Monica Rey was new to the idea of directed dance improvisation. She seemed nervous going into our first movement interview and began with movements that were familiar to her and executed some yoga poses. During the warm-up, Monica Rey stopped to say she felt "stuck" and she admitted that she never realized how much her "mind is the ruler". I encouraged her to continue and that there was no right or wrong and no rules with this type of dancing. I then guided Monica Rey to allow her body to explore movement in ways it may not have every explored before. She then began to free up her movement and even appeared to be playful.

When I asked Monica Rey to share her cancer story in movement, she began with a very poised, almost proud walk and arm gesture but was soon overcome with emotion and tears. She could not continue with her movement response. When we later discussed this emotional and tearful moment, Monica Rey said that the tears were not because she was sad or scared but because there was just so much energy and emotion. "It had to come out somewhere" and she just felt a strong release of energy when she began to share her cancer story in movement.

After a short pause we continued into the next part of the movement interview in which she gave movement responses to her own words as I said them. During this section Monica Rey really sank into her dance and responded with full bodied and continuous movements that were not literal gestures but instead graceful little mini dances.

Monica Rey was surprised by the amount of emotion she felt while doing the movement interview and realized how much she had been suppressing. She said that some of her ability to release so much was because she was not the one in charge.

I wasn't the guide. You were the guide. I'm not having to think about what so and so over there is doing [referring to her teaching yoga]. I mean I could just, I was able to be me. That's what I discovered just now, that I need more time for just me . . .and I really had an epiphany today about that. I didn't think there was anything [suppressed emotions] down there . . .there are so many unknowns in life and I have to remember that but I realize I am still scared of that.

Monica Rey also felt that the movement interviews took her to a very private and personal place where her experiences seemed to be "projected onto a screen" and revealed to her in a new way, from as perspective of having already experienced it. She was eager to share her thoughts and discoveries from the movement interviews. "It was wonderful! To begin with, it took me to many places and it felt really good . . . it is a different way of expressing. It feels kind of invigorating!"

Monica Rey said that she knows she is a strong person but sometimes wishes she "were a little softer" and that responding to an interview with movement helped her to soften, release, and to open up. This was also reflected in her writing when she wrote that when she dances, "The area around my heart opens up from beating harder and it

doesn't feel so tight in the chest and throat. Dance is a relief for that lump in the throat.”

I first observed Suse during her Urban Jazz class. She worked hard but did not seem to take herself too seriously. She admits that this class is a stretch for her and this was reflected in her choice to stand towards the back of the room and follow some of the more experienced dancers. She appeared to have fun and smiled when the class began working on turns, acknowledging that these were not her strength. She took the class with a quality of ease in her movement even when she made mistakes. She just went for it and did not seem to worry about her mistakes. It took some time for the movement to get into Suse's body and she seemed to respond well to having things repeated.

Suse, not having a significant background in dance improvisation, initially responded to the movement interview with literal gestures of the words and phrases she was responding to. The interesting thing was that I, as the observer, felt like I could see the moment she dropped into the interview as being more of a meditation. The quality of her movement changed from being familiar, codified, dance movements, or stretches, to being unique and expressive movements. She said that the movement interview started out as being more in her head but that her “body memory” began to take over.

I found that Suse had a strong need to talk about these movement experiences, even calling me the day after one of them to share some things that came up for her later. She was anxious to tell me about discoveries that she made during these short expressions in movement, “it was just interesting what came into my mind that I was interpreting in my body”.

One thing that was fascinating to me was that a few days prior to her second movement interview Suse had told me about the importance of her needing to get away from other “cancer people” but after the movement interview in which she was sharing her cancer story in movement she said, “I kept seeing people.... I was surprised at what the first memory was that came up. It wasn’t of my close group, it was those other people that I don’t even know where they are any more.” These people that she had chosen to walk away from were her first memory of her cancer experience when she danced.

Suse said that it was during the second movement interview that she realized how much she had to surrender her body during much of her cancer experience. She realized how much she felt immobilized during that time,

you need to lay down and you have radiation, you sit and you lay and you be still while you are getting chemotherapy, you sit and you lie down when you are having your surgery, and I hadn’t really thought about that. A lot of it is about offering your body, which I hadn’t really considered before.

It was Suse’s movement expression of her cancer story that brought on this realization for her.

In the third movement interview Suse made a realization about her life as it is now. I had asked her to dance the story of her present life and after doing a dance that was confined to a small area in space she said,

What I realized is that I think of my life right now as really kind of stuck. And I just kind of keep looking. Like I just kind of keep circling, circling and looking, circling but I’m not, I just don’t know which direction to go.



Even as she was telling me this and we were no longer in the movement portion of this interview, she continued to walk in small circles as if her body was informing her of what she was feeling and how to express it.

Suse shared that these movement interviews were a way for her to process information. She remembered attending some contact improvisation jams during the time of her cancer, “I think that was a way of kind of working thru some of that body stuff, being in contact with people . . . but every time I meet with you [in these movement interviews] I think there’s this whole area of my life that I don’t explore.”

Suse had a couple of strong emotional responses during these movement interviews. One of these was when I asked her to respond, in movement, her response to the question, has dance helped you cope with your experience of having cancer? She stepped into a wide second position with her palms opened wide, she did a half turn and lifted her arms overhead before bringing them to her face and having to stop because she was crying too hard. “It’s too big, that’s my answer,” she says.

I asked her later if she thought she would have had a similar reaction to that question if we were sitting at a table having one of our conversational interviews. She answered with an emphatic “No!” and continued to say, “It’s completely different, completely different! I mean it’s just so logical to me. I mean I’m dancing and it’s not a word thing.”

One important thing to note is that Suse seemed to be so impressed with the discoveries she made about herself during these movement interviews that she expressed some desire to do more of it.

I think the thing that I feel sad about and maybe I could do something different about it, is I feel like I'm a deeper person that I'm able to express . . . and this experience makes me think, 'oh, I'm a pretty interesting person!' How come I can't, where can I go where I could explore this more and share this more? How can I share what is happening . . . I feel like it has affected me, I mean it affects me when it is happening and I do have some memory about it, but I don't know how to make it go any other place . . . I mean sometimes when I'm dancing I think 'why am I not doing more with my dancing?'

It was after this final movement interview that Suse called me at home with a desire to continue discussing her experience of being a part of this research project. She said that the movement interviews were, "like a retreat that makes it difficult to carry over into your day to day life when it is over." She wanted to know where she could do more of this work and I sadly did not have an answer for her but realized, in that moment, the importance of exploring this topic of study further.

### Summary

The dance observations and the movement interviews were valuable tools in gathering information for *An Exploration of Dance in the Lives of Cancer Survivors*. All of the participants became less inhibited when sharing their experiences through dance. Each of the volunteers made discoveries during the movement interviews and expressed that the sessions were a learning experience for them.

The movement interviews provided each individual with a tool for self-discovery during this process. They were able to share these discoveries with me verbally, but only after they had received the discoveries from their dance improvisations. Claire and Suse both realized that they feel somewhat stuck in their lives as they had difficulty expressing their present lives in movement. Iris K realized

that her feelings of gratitude sometimes need to be worked on and they are not always with her as she had thought they were. Monica Rey discovered that she needs to take more time for herself to work through her experience of having had cancer.

Iris K, Monica Rey, and Suse were all in awe of the emotional releases they experienced during the movement interviews. They all shed tears at some point during their movement responses and seemed surprised by how much their movement released their emotions. The women acknowledged that these emotional releases were a positive experience.

The goal of this movement project was to determine how and if dance can be a useful tool in gathering data about the experiences of cancer survivors who dance. By observing each participant in her regular dance practice, I immediately developed an intimate relationship with each woman as she was sharing a part of herself with me. My observations allowed me to peek into the dance experiences of each woman.

The movement interviews were directed dance improvisations designed to explore dance in the lives of these cancer survivors. They served as a valuable tool to look deeply into the lives and experiences of these women. It allowed the women to share their stories in a more uncensored, honest, and deep way than the conversational interviews and journal writing did.

### Conclusion and Implications

Once a person is diagnosed with cancer, the experience of cancer continues even after that person is cured. The cancer experience does not vanish and as Suse wrote, “It

feels like something I am trying to forget and cannot. Like a sticky substance that you get on you and you cannot get it off completely.”

The pain that cancer and its treatments cause forced the women in this study to disengage from their bodies. Katrina Breaden described this phenomenon as disembodiment (1997). Even for myself, having cancer at the age of twelve, I remember looking at my body as if it were a rag doll. My body was not a part of me but was an inanimate object to be poked, manipulated, and studied. Dancing has been a tremendous tool for myself and other cancer survivors for re-integrating the self with the physical body. Claire wrote, “I think dancing connected me with a body that was defected, undesirable, ill, weak and made me. . .”

The cancer experience often leads to feelings of being different from others, and a sense of isolation. Dance provided each of the women in this study an opportunity to be comfortable in a community and to relate to people in a physical way, in a playful way, in a positive way.

This project illustrates Hanna’s concept that when dancing is accompanied with imaged expressions of past or current experiences, it sometimes helps the individual to problem solve outside of the dance setting (Hanna 1988). The movement interviews allowed the dancers to move with these imaged expressions and each of the dancers made discoveries about themselves through the process of the movement interviews. Three of the four women felt like they had begun a journey of self-discovery that they hoped would continue.

There was a wealth of information gained that was useful to myself, as a researcher, and to the participants when they danced in the movement interviews.

Monica Rey shared that the movement interviews had personal value and she “learned to communicate a new way.” The movement interviews were “spiritual experiences” for her and she said, “it’s something that I will have etched in my experience forever.”

Each of the four women reported that dance has helped them reconnect with their bodies, overcome feelings of isolation, adapt to life after cancer, express and release emotions, and free their minds of worry. The process of sharing their stories in multiple ways (i.e. journaling, conversing, dancing) led to deeper understanding and appreciation of the role of dance in their lives. However, the movement interviews had the most impact in stimulating discoveries about themselves as cancer survivors who dance.

The use of dance as a mode of inquiry has not been well documented. In doing this research, I have witnessed the power of movement and dance to elicit deeper responses from the participants than were gathered merely through conversational interviewing and journaling. It has also been clear in doing this study that there is much to be gained by using dance as an interviewing tool. The body is able to remember things that the mind forgets. The movement interviews were a tool in helping the volunteers open up about their experiences, they were able to express themselves on a deeper level than they were without the movement element.

It is my hope that this study will motivate other researchers to use dance as a valuable tool in gathering information about one’s lived experience. This research has validated some of my own thoughts and feelings of being a cancer survivor and dancer in the world and I hope it does the same for others and inspires others who experience

cancer to explore dance as an activity. Research of this kind has the potential to empower dance educators, dance therapists, and other health professionals to integrate dance into long term post-patient cancer care. More importantly, cancer survivors and their families will have knowledge of how dance has played a role in the lives of others who have experienced cancer.

## APPENDIX A

## JOURNAL WRITING GUIDELINES

Max Van Manen's Suggestions for Producing a Lived-Experience Description

- (1) You need to describe the experience as you live(d) through it. Avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations. For example, it does not help to state what *caused* your illness, *why* you like swimming so much, or why you feel that children *tend* to like to play outdoors more than indoors (Van Manen 1990, 64).
- (2) Describe the experience from the inside, as it were; almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc (Van Manen 1990, 64).
- (3) Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of experience: describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience (Van Manen 1990, 65).
- (4) Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time (Van Manen 1990, 65).
- (5) Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed), etc (Van Manen 1990, 65).
- (6) Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology (Van Manen 1990, 65).

It is important to realize that is not of great concern whether a certain experience actually happened in exactly that way. We are less concerned with the factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of an account—whether it is true to our living sense of it (Van Manen 1990, 65).

Van Manen, Max. 1990. *Researching Lived Experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York: State University of New York Press.

## APPENDIX B

## OBSERVATIONS OF SURVIVORS DANCING

Observation of Claire in her regular dance practice

Location: a ballroom  
 Duration of class: 2 hours (6:30-8:30pm)  
 Title of class: Momentum: Conscious Movement  
 Type of dance: improvisational  
 Atmosphere: group class, atmospheric music, dim lights

Note: italicized descriptions are of Claire's movement, non-italicized descriptions are of the class structure. There is no video recording of this class. The instructor thought it would be best if I did not video record. He introduced me at the beginning so as to make the others in the class not feel uncomfortable. Claire participated in the class with her wheelchair.

*Breath*  
*Eyes closed*  
*Organic motion in torso*  
*Movement initiated from deep within-very sequenced*  
*Lateral torso movement*  
*Forward bending movement-chest towards thighs*

Body scanning up and down-very anatomical

*Very exploratory*  
*So far she is always facing the same direction in space in her chair*  
*Imagery-she appears focused on the instructor's words—her body responds to his images. He says, "Helium between joints"—she appears to float up*

Instructor: "Bring mind to the floor/ground-as if the floor is magnetic—weight—there is this pull down deep into the ground"

*I find it interesting that although Claire is in a wheelchair, she is visibly grounded at this point.*

There is meditative music playing, atmospheric.

At 6:45pm (15 minutes into the class) Claire moves her chair a short distance. This happened right on cue with a change/shift in the music

*A strong, percussive shift as if she predicted it.*

*Claire moves her chair with her arms but that functional movement is executed as part of her dance—making me first wonder 'how did her chair move?'*

*Spinning pattern of chair is echoed in the use of her torso—full bodied movement even though her legs do not move—*

*Claire has locomoted only about 10 feet in distance at this point.*

Instructor: "the ground is no longer beneath you. . . you are part of the ground . . . The ground comes up to your ankles . . . your knees . . . the ceiling . . ." etc.



*With this image there is visible tension in her movement. She moved to a couple of different places in the room again, at variable speeds.*

*Claire is doing some robotic like movement, then reaches and extends.*

*At this point Claire has isolated herself near a corner of the room but she is facing in towards the center, as if she is an observer although she continues to dance.*

*Claire's movement is extremely responsive to the shifts / dynamics in the music. Sharp, jerky, like popping from hip-hop.*

*Spinning*

*Resistance, lengthening*

*Self-indulgent movement that gives to the space.*

The class is instructed to find come to eventually come back to stillness. They are then asked to find another person to work with.

*Claire was the last one to partner up with someone. She did not seek out a partner but waited for someone to choose her. She was not assertive in finding a partner.*

*I don't know when her eyes opened.*

*She begins moving with her male partner. She does not look at him but definitely sees him.*

Instructor: "don't be concerned with this other person. If they are with you, great. If not, it's their responsibility"

*It does not seem like Claire's partner is working with her although Claire is responding to some of his movement.*

*Fluid!!*

*Claire moves her wheelchair fast but is always in control*

*She moves her torso / body weight to twist the chair back and forth without the help of her arms on the wheels.*

*She is now taking in the whole space. She is not 'flashy' in her movement but my eyes are drawn to her more than to the others in the room.*

Instructor: "include the other person in your visceral experience"—again, Claire seems to be the only one attempting to connect energetically with her partner.

*Reaching / stretching –not like reaching for something but like a body yawn.*

*Claire seems to be floating in her chair. She arches her back while opening up through her chest.*

*Claire's movement is sequenced but not predictable. Spiraling with staccato movements.*

*I don't see the change of directions occurring, they just happen.*

*Claire adjusted herself in the chair coming out of meditation ?? to do this??*

*Claire is the only person in the room that is in a wheelchair.*

The class is now instructed to separate into groups of 3 or 4.

*Claire, again, waited for others to approach her and eventually became part of a trio.*

Instructor: “dance with your group as if you are connected beneath you, like an iceberg.” The group is listening to this at this point and Claire converses softly and smiles with the others in her group (1 male, 1 female) while the directions are given. They then take a beginning form with each other where they are physically connected with one another.

*Claire is the first one to locomote, she maintains some distance between herself and the others but responds to their movement.*

*Stirring motion deep inside of her.*

*Undulations*

*Partners have gone to ground level—they seem to be trying to join Claire on the level of her chair.*

*Partners have now risen again and are now covering her space*

*Pulsing heartbeat*

*Again, Claire is very responsive to the music*

*As the energy increases she executes a few small wheelies*

Her speed of movement increases as she seems to be becoming more comfortable working with the trio.

Seamless transitions, gliding

*It is very easy and calming to observe Claire.*

It's approaching 7:30pm and they are beginning to wind things down. Decreasing in energy. Starting to breakaway from groups of trios and quartets.

*I keep finding myself embodying Claire's movement, I am moving with her.*

*Claire does some asymmetrical movement while sitting in a balanced chair.*

*Where does her movement inhalation end and the exhalation begin?*

*She does a little shimmy in her shoulders and starts to break away from her group*

*Claire moves with curiosity and certainty at the same time.*

*She is weaving between people—close collision is avoided with grace and ease on Claire's part, not on the part of the other.*

*Claire stayed in the center of the room for a while and seemed to energetically invite others to dance with her—they did.*

*Mannequin like movements with head and arms.*

Instructor: Feeling alignment of spine, movement is not skeletal but cellular.

*Stillness*

*Breath*

*End \_eyes closed*

Closing circle to discuss experience. Claire was silent.

Observation of Iris K in her regular dance practice

Location: a dance studio

Time: 12:10-1:10pm

Type of dance: Authentic Movement based session that is self-guided by the participant

Atmosphere: quiet, no music but there is a lot of background noise from the surrounding studios

Notes: Iris K is currently dealing with a severe (grapefruit sized) abscess (synovial fluid build up) on her hip. She is making a transition from walking on her left leg with crutches to being in a wheelchair.

She was so anxious to move—immediately got out of wheelchair and started warming herself up on the floor while I was setting up equipment.

*begins lying on back she is near the entrance of the studio-- not in stillness she jumps right in*

*rolls to lie flat on belly  
incredible reach of arms*

*arms are circling behind her—one could think she was on her back by the way her arms are moving behind her*

*sits up, leans on left elbow then reaches right arm up and bends sideways to touch top of head on the floor, rolls to back  
knee bending then straightening*

*tapping fingers on the floor above her head and foot on the floor with her knee bent*

*eyes are mostly open*

*Rolling several times, moving further into the studio*

*Slithering—snake like movements, using arms to push herself forward through space*

*Big arching back in torso / spine*

*uses arms to push herself into a crawling position, then into a plank position*

*lowers herself down to stomach and uses arms to push herself backwards*

*Spiraling throughout her body traveling backwards*

*rolls onto right side with her back toward me. leg is fully extended and arms are reaching overhead, reaching, reaching, reaching, feeling around for something out of her grasp*

*folds arms and leg in while remaining on right side*

*spirals so shoulders are on floor and knee is resting to the right*

*left arm hovers above the floor and gently, slowly, rotated in the shoulder socket*

*circles wrist around, all focus in on her left arm / hand / wrist*

*Heel of hand presses into her lips--Grabs her own face--claw like hand, tension in hand and face--  
right hand covers left over face*

*very slowly removes hand from face and hands hover above her face for a moment before collapsing  
onto her chest*

*Listening to her body's desire's impulse--not affective movement*

*Open palms*

*Holding pulsing ball of energy, increases and decreases tempo of movement, spurts of movement  
followed by slowness*

*fingers twinkling while hovering above various areas of her body*

*head lifting off the floor and she is now lying on her right side*

*Right hand scratches head while left arm is reaching up, pulling her torso up to where she is resting  
her weight on her right elbow--slow*

*Hands clasping*

*Tension / squeezing*

*Lifting--torso floating up*

*hands to prayer position, moment of stillness, increases arch in back*

*hands open up in an offering type of gesture and she repeats this several times*

*Subtle rocking*

*Moves head and whole body responds / follows*

*reaching arms back behind her with straight elbows, slight arch in back*

*Smacking lips in a fish like way, movement also looks like a fish*

*raspberry sound*

*Growling*

*lights went off*

*Eyes are closed*

*more growling with arms above and behind, very unique, and hard arm movements*

*Caressing herself*

*Patting her body--*

*Smacking butt making rhythmic sounds*

*Patting area of abscess on hip*

*She has been on her stomach for a long time now*

*wipes the floor with her arms in big circular gestures making abrupt sounds with her voice*

*Train chugging sounds as she locomotes--pulling herself forward with her forearms while her  
hands are clasped*

*Has moved towards center of the room—wide open space around her*

*kissing sounds*

*Primal*

*lies flat on her belly, arms resting above her head, then sweeping arms back to foot, as knee bends*

*Caresses foot from behind and begins to move foot in a stirring motion. pull shin close to buttock and onto the floor next to her, this is unique to her one-legged body*

*Very tactile with foot and ankle*

*Grab foot / Release*

*Pull foot / Release*

*interlaces fingers with her toes and rolls around in this position*

*rolls onto back and finds a moment of stillness /rest before reach arms above, reach, reach, fingers wiggle, then arms move with tension out to her sides, tension releases and hands are in an offering position*

*Hands are so expressive—giving / receiving / sensing*

*As if she feels the air they are manipulating*

*half sit up with head coming off the floor while reaching forward with her arms—release down.*

*Fingers move as if playing the piano while her arms are doing a stirring action*

*The torso moves in response to this stirring—appears that movement was initiated at tips of fingers and traveled deep into her body*

*fingers stop wiggling but torso continues*

*arches up weight to elbows and comes to sitting*

*lights go out*

*Finds stillness in a sitting pose, leg folded in, head hanging with chin to chest, right arm up, left hand supporting her weight.*

*extends leg and lowers upper arm, stillness*

*Moving like carrying a burden—not trying to escape from it, there is a tender quality about this thing she is 'carrying' but it is still a burden—this causes me to shed tears. She appears to absorb this burden as a part of her. her head is unsupported, just kind of hanging from her neck over her right shoulder. this continues for several minutes.*

*Reaches with top of head, and hands go to floor supporting her weight. pulling herself forward then into a rocking back and forth action*

*lies back onto right elbow, left hand to rib cage, circular caressing*

*Hands caress torso—circling motion around area of abscess*

*lies back with back arched and crown of head on the floor*

*Eyes are closed*

Laura: continue with your dance, we're going to continue for about 5 minutes, just on your own time.

Iris K: all right

*sideways bending right and left, stroking her thigh*

*back of left hand onto forehead and dances there for a moment before turning over and dragging down her face to rest on her heart. she is lying on her back*

*Came to stillness with left hand on heart—deep breaths—  
elbows reaches out and left arm unfolds, jazz hand side, then softens to rest on the floor with her hand cupped*

End

#### Observation of Monica Rey in her regular dance practice

Location: dance studio

Time of class: 8:30-9:30pm

Title of class: Cha Cha Performance Class

Atmosphere: very welcoming and friendly, the students are all women of various ages and experience. They seem excited to “perform” for me. There are about 10 students.

As the students are gathering there is a very casual and social feeling to this group. Music is playing and Monica Rey begins to review some choreography with other students and some on her own. She stops to have a short conversation with other students, laughs. The class does not actually get started until 8:40, ten minutes late, no one seems to mind.

This class is in a rehearsal format as the goal is to prepare a performance piece. They begin by fixing setting the spacing of the group.

*Monica Rey stands very erect and attentive, seems to be noticing not only her own placement in the space but how it relates to the others.*

*As this spacing process seems to be taking a while, (it is 8:50 and there has not been any dancing yet) Monica Rey stretches in place a little, this is very subtle and not distracting, she is still attentive to the instructor.*

At 8:55 they begin to move. The instructor clarifies some arm positions and some counts. Before they begin to walk through the routine.

*Monica Rey seems to hold back as the steps are reviewed but after a couple of phrases she begins to perform and trust that she does know the material. She incorporates all of the feedback the instructor gives to the class.*

*They are now getting into the beginning position to run the dance from the top. Monica Rey seems excited about this-- she is the first one into position. This is a stop and start run thru as the teacher stops to give instructions. Monica Rey absorbs the feedback--very detail oriented--focused--graceful movements.*

*There are jazz elements in this routine and although Monica Rey seems to be having fun there is a seriousness about her approach. She is aware of her posture, her body placement, the tilt of her head, the shape of her arms—this is in a relaxed way, not tense.—detail oriented—*

*She has an interaction with another student as they bump into each other, laughter.*

*There are sexy moments in the choreography that Monica Rey seems energized by, there is excitement when new sexy choreography is taught—she is very feminine, poised, strong.*

*As the teacher focuses on other students Monica Rey stretches out on her own—aware of the places that need attention and giving it. After stretching she reviews a section of the dance with another student, Monica Rey counts and takes on the leadership role with this student.*

*Before the final run of the dance, Monica Rey asks the teacher a question about footwork and counts—again detail oriented.*

*Last run thru of the dance—she has let go for this one and is really having fun!*

*The class ends on time at 9:30pm.*

#### Observation of Suse in her regular dance practice

Location: a dance studio inside of fitness club

Time of class: 4:30-5:30pm

Title of class: Urban Jazz

Atmosphere: group class, music playing almost the entire time with regular rhythmic pattern

Note: There is no video recording of this class. The instructor thought it would be best if I did not video record.

*Suse visits with others in the class before it begins. She reviews some choreography with another woman and seems to be enjoying herself. She is not taking herself too seriously as she and the other woman giggle at their own mistakes.*

*When the class begins, Suse places herself in a place in the room where she can see the mirror from the front as well as from her right profile. She uses both mirrors as she seems to check out her technique and posture but this is not done in an obsessive way. Suse focuses on the instructor as she demonstrates the movements. Suse has an ease of movement and does not force anything, does not seem to worry much about whether or not it is exact. The expression on Suse's face is that of focus but not stress. She seems aware of the others in the class in a way that she seems to just be acknowledging the sharing of this moment with them. She does not seem self-conscious.*

*As the class progresses Suse continues to not take herself too seriously and looks as if the movement feels good to her. She takes off a lightweight jacket indicating that the warm-up portion of the class has served its purpose well. Suse continues to seem relaxed and comfortable with the movements.*

*The class changes its focus to stretching. Suse is physically flexible and strong for a woman her age. She does hold some tension in her neck particularly when stretching her torso forward. Suse appears*

*to be one of the older women in the class. It is obvious that Suse pays attention to her body's limits as she makes adjustments to some of the stretches that might cause some joint pain for her. She does not give up on the movements but does make appropriate adjustments.*

*Although this class takes place in a gym setting there is a focus on technique that I have not encountered in an aerobics class.*

The warm-up portion of the class has included:

- focus on breath
- plies
- tendus
- degage's
- floor exercises (plies while on back with legs in the air, abduction/adduction of legs, leg lifts executed like grand battements, stretching)
- rolling thru the spine while standing

*The class is given a short break (approx. 2 minutes). Suse continues to stretch during this time in a seated position with her knees bent and feet together. She turns her head from side to side as if she has to work out some kinks.*

*Twenty minutes into the class, Suse appears to be getting physically tired. It becomes more apparent that she holds tension in her shoulders, which she seems to be trying to work out in the midst of the stretches.*

*The class does across the floor patterns, executing grand battements. Suse maintains a solid and upright posture and although there is still tension in her neck/shoulder area, she is able to execute the battements with a quality of ease.*

*The class moved into pirouettes across the floor-- Suse has a slight smile, acknowledging that turning is not her strength. She marks through the combination while waiting her turn and laughs when she brushes a neighbor's hand.*

*The teacher gave the class a traveling combination to work on, again across the floor. Suse seems to really have fun with this and takes on a sassy attitude. She stylizes some of her arm and head movements. These are not directed by the teacher but they are nice additions.*

*Suse again smiles and releases a slight groan when she completes chainne turns across the floor. She indicates that she is dizzy by placing her hands over her face. She has a short (not disruptive) verbal exchange about this with some of the others in the class.*

*Suse seems to go for all of the movements even when her timing gets off, or she is unsure of how to execute a movement technically correct.*

There are 13 students in the class. I would guess that four of them are over 40 years of age.

*The music was stopped for the first time at 5:05pm (35 minutes into the class). This was for the instructor to review some choreography with the students. When others ask for clarification, Suse uses the time as an opportunity to mark through the material as if she is attempting to embody it rather than to remember it.*

*As her group executes the choreographed dance, Suse struts off the space while the rest of the group does the dance a second time through. Again, acknowledging her own limits.*



*Suse dances the choreography with an attitude of confidence even though she does not have a full grasp of the movements. Again, she just seems to go for it and is not intimidated by the skills of the others in the class.*

*Suse walked into the class coughing and has continued to cough a few times during the class.*

Up until this point in the class, all of the choreography has been executed across the floor.

It seems to take time for the movement to sink into Suse's body. She seems to be more comfortable on the left side.

The final combination is obviously something the class has been working on for a few weeks. *Suse seems to remember the dance but details are unclear. She knows the general outline. She stands in the back of the class when executing the combination and she always chooses the 2<sup>nd</sup> group when traveling across the floor.*

*The combination is fast and Suse was not quite able to be full-bodied with the choreography. Suse looks at the clock at 5:25pm. When executing the choreography, Suse follows others and smiles when she makes a mistake. She asks the instructor for clarification of one part of the choreography. She does an endedans pirouette where there is supposed to be an endehors pirouette. The choreography seems to sink in gradually and I can see her comfort level rise as she becomes more grounded with her body.*

The class ended at 5:30 with a cool down. *Suse keeps her eyes on the instructor.*

## APPENDIX C

## PARTICIPANT JOURNALS

Note: All journal entries are included in this appendix. Information such as names of people, groups, or locations, which could potentially put the participants' anonymity at risk, have been removed.

I. Claire

*Round 1 / Topic 1: List all of the ways that you identify yourself.*

I am disabled, I am a cultural activist I am an auntie a daughter a mother to my kitty my girls a mentor a bitch when I need to be I am simple full loving I am a performer dancer I am silly I am soft I am a mountain I am an atom sometimes I'm a tumor or a tomtoe I am a survivor simply fully I am whatever I need to be in the moment I am tired usually I am sick sometimes I'm a motor that keeps going I'm addicted to caffeine I am someone something somehow going to keep writing I am flesh bones blood I am life and death I am a live a human I am a political body whether I want to be in the moment or not I am liquid, permeable sometimes stone sometimes dirt sometimes I feel very red or blue but that is how I feel not who I am I am purple misty sunset shades of blue and red – make purple I am a teacher a student a goofball I am an advocate I am a being I am being being I am just breathe existing I am the women who came before me a mixture of flaws and perfection I am a lesson I am a robot sometimes I am just holding space I am anonymous invisible seen and not seen I am running out of things to say to say I am a chair a table wood stable strong strength I am pourous porous I am female no I am a woman I am middle age I am unconventional strange I am without words w/out a place of connection I am always running out of time I am running out of things to write I am in the circus as I identify as a little freaky and like it I am fluid I am evolving I am an amoeba changing shape I am the girl that gets mistaken for every other girl I am mischeivious

*Round 1 / Topic 2: What does being a dancer mean to you? What is the role of dance in your life? Why?*

What does being a dancer mean to me? It means that movement is organic, natural part of the everyday, part of my everyday. It means happiness and joy intensity and emotion. The role of dance is everything it is performance it is the role of dance in my life is organic it is fun it is joy it allows me to express myself without words which is very freeing in a world where I often feel that my head will explode if I can't function from my whole self. My body answers questions when I move. It It It It It It It makes me feel safe. It makes me feel that my body is okay. Dance gives my body permission to be whatever it is in that moment. It is my path to physicality; It connects me to the visceral, the powerful, the sexual.

Dance makes me feel good. It gives my body purpose. it gives my body purpose when it would be so easy to believe what others' see that my body is not purposeful, functional. Dance is a tunnel a, road a pathway that takes me to anywhere I want to go. It is intentional, dance I can choose to move or not move find stillness, take up a big space or a tiny space.

Being a dancer means being in a creative state. It means It means It means something and everything. It is way to get through each day. The role of dance is important because it it it it it is. The very core of existence is expressed in dance, every movement is beautiful or not and representational or not. Maybe dance just is being. The role of dance in my life gives it purpose. Makes life important. Joyous, meaningful, It gives me pleasure and sometimes pain and energy. It connects me with others in a way that I wouldn't connect otherwise. Sometimes, when I have a dance with someone it is so powerful even if I don't know why. It hits DEEPLY AND I d don't know why or how it just does. Sometimes a

suggestion of a dance a movement leads me to so many thoughts and ideas in my body in my life that it is ecstatic. Sometimes dance gets me to my emotions whether they are painful or happy dark or light intense or calm and it reminds me of living fully. Dance to me is being a dancer is living fully completely. Living Dance is life and fantasy. It is not just what it is dance is peace. But not always corny, it is real. Dance keeps me real in my life. Grounded. Floating attached and unattached. I think my time is up now. But maybe not Maybe I have 2 more minutes. I can't remember. Not sure if I'm dancing when I'm writing thinking too much. Dancing keeps me from thinking too much. Staying in my head although I think I already said that. Dancing helps me relate to all people dancing connects me to the world. Why? Because it does.

*Round 2 / Topic 1: What does being a cancer survivor mean to you? Write about your cancer experience.*

Cancer, I don't think about it that often right now. What does it mean to be a cancer survivor? Don't know It feels like fresh air maybe dark shrubs but that is because my mind is on a different topic. I think of soft pink a cancer survivor is soft pink and brown the tumor is moist so is a cancer survivor moist? This is tiring to think about cancer right now. I want to think about green dirt earth sit not think not feel be totally relaxed and I feel the fresh air maybe a cancer survivor is a light breeze my experience was young [name] reminded me of it the other day or was it [name] when he said that his parents took him to elderly yoga classes when he was seven. He was stretching with octogenarians. I had cancer with the elderly it sounds so bad to say it ---ageist—but it was hard for me since I was young. I didn't want to share my room with the crazy lady who had to be restrained it scared me... embarrassed me and the adult me is ashamed of my reaction. The young me was removed the experience of cancer is removal not only physically of tissue but a removal from life as it once was. I was literally moved to a hospital geographically moved back to my childhood home removed from my friends my friends removed from me no one new how to react to cancer, I was alone I'm not sure why I think it is different now. I survived alone but only one man came to visit me he was 26 so a little old by my standards at the time I was 19. He was a rare diagnosis or he was diagnosed with a rare cancer that only 25 other people had. It is a rare cancer that is what [name] said who is most complicated, who is the rarest, who has the most pain. The nurse. His story was a love story and he married his nurse. I fell in love, had a crush on my neurologist. He had dark hair and a beard and he listened to me, he sat with me, He didn't think I was weird at least I didn't think so. The other doctors did. They would say things like "you're the quiet type aren't you" and to me I felt shame like there was something wrong something else they expected. Besides being the good patient. I like it when I had a room with a window. I remember when the nurses came through shutting all the doors, bang heavy metal doors, I think it meant that someone died and they were taking them through the hallway. At least that is always what I thought. I don't know for sure. It was something eerie, dark and secret. I wish I knew what my cancer experience was. Shame is part of it but shame is also part of my childhood. Ego is part of it. Knowing it all when you embark on the world I think it is survival how could you embark on the world if you didn't have a sense of security even if it was a false sense. My psyche had the experience of a false sense. I don't remember feeling life was all in front of me when it was over. I felt that death and life were both with me. Together. Surviving meant or means surviving and knowing that life cycles and there are no guarantees we are not in control. It is harder to believe in the control of my destiny because I don't have control of tumors growing --- no one knows why my tumor grew—but more and more the environment comes to mind.. My mom thought it was because I played behind [location] way when they were building the new houses. [name] played there too and she died breast and brain cancer in her 20s. I wonder if this is really the meat that I'm supposed to write. I wonder if the meat of my tumor is in this writing. I wonder what other people have written am I doing it wrong. There is judgment in being a survivor. A judgment of not making it completely of legs not working slowly weakening the change is subtle from the young survivor patient that everyone loved to the middle aged women who's body starts changing ... nobody wants to believe the treatment might be both good and bad but aren't most things good and bad? Don't most things have two sides with grey area in between. Where is the grey area anyway. Bad good grey old young change I wonder how many people in the waiting room with me are still alive. Or how many are remembered. The hair loss in another thing such a concrete part of my experience I hate it when my hair falls out. I hate seeing the pieces in my brush I hate it in the winter when my hair is dry and it comes out more and thicker

and it is such a silly reaction. Only a reaction you can write about in secret cause your not supposed to be vain when you have cancer or survive cancer. The nurse told me I was vain I tried to shave my legs when I couldn't feel them and gauged myself. When she saw the scab she said I was vain, that I shouldn't shave my legs vanity. I remember loosing eyebrows pubic hair underarm hair but I don't know why I had hair on my legs, Maybe it was before it fell out before I started chemo I'm not really sure.

*Round 2 / Topic 2: Is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you? Explain.*

I think at one point I would have said yes. I think that I have always secretly been a dancer but didn't fit the mold of what a dancer was traditionally. As a young girl I used to dance all the time I used to dance alone in my bedroom I loved music and I would dance and move secretly so no one could see. I was afraid of being made fun of and once my sister say me through the window and teased me and I cried because to me what I was doing----feeling ----- was beautiful. I'm sure I looked silly but I'm not sure that matters.

Cancer helped me to discover my body. It made me not afraid. It made me say I could do anything because life is too short not too and I don't know how long or didn't know still don't know how long my life will last sooo not doing what I want doesn't make sense to me.

I wrote about dancing but that is not what --how I'm supposed to be journaling. So I have to think when I am tired and my head hurts actually more my ears and nose and throat... cancer I am not sure I do know that cancer made me more aware of my body it made me skinny which in the eyes of the dance world was more acceptable. Not sure where I am going with this not sure what to write I remember being more aware of my body really looking at my body after caner I remember seeing that I was knocked kneed really seeing my body in the mirror my small ankles my strong thighs my knock knees the roundness of my belly and bottom the stretch of my arm they strength in my legs my legs were so strong..... and that was after cancer as a cancer survivor I hiked I backpacked I use my legs my body it felt good I liked getting dirty dust from trails but what does that have to do with dance I'm not sure I remember the dance studio I remember dance class I remember dancing on my feet. But I can' imagine what that would be like know to have feel legs that carry me

Back to topic is there a relationship between being a cancer survivor and a dancer. Yes it is all about my body my body my way my inside my liver my spleen my heart my lungs it is about feeling really feeling my body my toes my knees my core the core of my body the core of who I am that is why I want to do Pilates but I (we) got kicked out of Pilates class nicely cause they couldn't move us to the floor out and into our chairs and wanted me (us) to go to the special class not Pilates that is designed for us and we can stay in our chairs and be with the elderly and yes I'm getting older but I still resist it a little I want to be 60 when I'm 60 not when I'm 43.

I don't want to be a liability. In dance I am not a liability sometimes I am confusion but not a liability. Dance allows for difference in thinking. So where did the relationship go between dance and cancer it is there and I lost my train of thought oh yes in dance dancing moving my body I can .....not it is gone again I have lots the connection it is almost noon but I'm tired like it is 6:00 in the morning or 1:00 at night. Hmmm ..... cancer and dance cancer is life or at least a part of my life surviving is part of my life dance is part of my life so are they connected through me? Or did they become connected because .... I joined new dance company I danced country western cause I felt dance I felt I was good inside I loved to turn to perfect my turns I loved that I caught on quickly I loved to move body move it constantly I didn't get tired I still don't get tired dancing the way I get tired doing other things. Physically, pacing myself, I can dance forever..... long periods of time longer then I can think or work on a paper or have an intellectual discussion it is more natural for me to move if I feel free and I don't always feel free sometimes I feel locked in but being a cancer survivor doesn't make you perfect that is the story of Lucy and why I love it so much cause she was far from perfect. I remember the pressure of being the cancer survivor of being enlightened of supposed to having everything figured out at 20 to be the super cripp or super survivor sometimes I think the term survivor makes other people feel good to know that good comes out of the experience and it does..... but it does because you live more you live more authentically not better you push back the bullshit you dance if you want to dance whether people think it is silly or not you create you

breathe you I I I ..... you use what you have and you don't worry so much about what others think and dance art is like that you do it because it feeds you feeds you core and so yes I think there is a connection between being a cancer survivor living with the experience of cancer is really a better term. Living with a body that maybe you were angry with momentarily and then realized what it could do how it could do regardless of circumstances. What it could be how you could be how I could be how rich life could be how wonderful dance movement my body is the internal to the external core moving to limb a tree moving growing stretching out to its branches blooming...

Dance moving

*Round 3 / Topic 1: What does/did cancer feel like in your own body? What does dance feel like in your own body?*

Cancer felt heavy, numb I remember feeling blank my mind blank as if all my energy was taken up with healing and there was nothing left for anything else. I had trouble reading books and I have always been a reader my mind or eyes couldn't focus. I remember the pain in my arms the tingling the dryness and sores on my tongue which made it difficult to eat, It took me a week to eat a small bag of m&ms and I only remember this cause my mom commented on how she would have eaten them all at once. These are the physical things. I was too proud to use a commode so I saved all my walking energy to go to and from the bathroom each day. I was home alone my father came to feed me lunch and check on me.

I don't remember actually feeling the tumor in my body except through the pain in my back which was pretty much gone after the first radiation round.

The physicality of cancer in my body now is the feeling of scar tissue the different sensations of my skin. I feel tired and not able to write I feel tired and not able to write deeply surface maybe why I'm focusing on the physical since it is surface of just below the surface tissue My skin feelings numb. I trace my finger from one side of my belly to another and the feeling changes what I feel changes I find it interesting. It also happens when I reach around my back. There is a place on my lower back left side that is very painful to the touch if touched the wrong way it makes me jump in pain. I am careful with acupuncture on my back because of these sensations.

Dance feels lovely. Moving how my body wants to move listening feels good the stretch the bend loosing myself or maybe finding myself in movement I think they are the same thing. Forgetting the day connecting to the visceral, I;m still haveiong problems writing and am pausing pausing to think of what to write. I missed dance last week I will miss my class tonight I is sad not terribly sad disappointing that dance can't be the first priority. Last week the bus was a half hour late so I couldn't get to class. This is boring. Sometimes writing can be juicy and insightful or interesting or something..... but not today. It seems to be just plain.

Dance feels like water freedom, fun, aware aware of my body, paying attention, dance can be a fun game a story once I danced the holocaust I had just seen read about the 240,000 disabled people who were gased, the black buses that picked up the children like they were going to summer camp, the examination of bodies the cutting off of parts and putting them in jars for scientific study I danced with fist and no one knew it cause it was just free dance in a class but it made me feel better. Dance is expression or expresses me or depletes me in a good way depletes me of energy that needs to be released good or bad or maybe it is not that black and white. Maybe it is just about sharing whether specifically with someone or just into space sharing space adding my movement to the space the universe It feels good as simple and generic as that sounds. Dance triggers something in me like a not sure what my time is up.

*Round 3 / Topic 2: Did the experience of cancer leave you with any 'scars' (these may include but are not limited to physical scars, social scars, spiritual scars, mental scars, emotional scars, body-image scars, etc.)? If so, do you think that your dance experience has helped to heal any of these 'scars' of cancer?*

Healing is such loaded word like acceptance. Do you really ever get there? I'm not sure. IF you do what is there. Sure there is a medical definition of healing but that is associated with cure, no symptoms. I think if I was healed that I would no longer be human. That I would be an essence of humanness maybe

death is healing. But that would not go over well in the cancer world. I think that different parts of me and my memory have scars the memory in my body. The physical scars a daily reminder every time I look at the top of my left hand. It hurts, it hurts, I said and the nurse said, "It is supposed to hurt". Is it? It seems like everyone is always trying to erase scars, the commercials for creams the little girl who skins her knee and her mom puts on ointment and says you won't have a scar like I do. Her knee with a childhood scar. My sister has a scar on her knee from a rusty nail that she got when they were building the addition to our Electuary school she too was trying to protect my niece from scars. Erasing is what it erases part of life a moment to get rid of scars. Scars are considered ugly, not wanted like wrinkles we don't want to see our history we don't want to see the history of our bodies our lives reflected back in the mirror.

Has dance healed my scars? I'm not sure. If I have joy along with pain does that mean I am healed, whole? Is that what healing is being whole. What are the scars of cancer? Is the physical scars or emotional scars Is it the fear the sadness the 18 and 19 year old girl who shouldn't have had cancer no one should but it seems we all do. At least at some point. But it is the youth and cancer that is so scary cause you don't expect it. No one does. But I'm off topic dance and healing. Healing is making it through each day it is saying it is good enough without always wanting more? No, I don't think that is it. My friend is always talking about healing and wanting it so bad to be healed. Horrific things happen to people and we still dance, wasn't there a song about that, maybe Sting. I may have to look it up. I remember [name] dancing with AIDS dying with AIDS. How does someone who is dying heal? Spiritually. Sometimes I am spiritual. I feel a sense of peace, I feel lucky. I feel this life isn't so bad. Music heals me as dance does the feeling that swells within me when I hear different sounds. It makes me want to dance. To move. Sometimes sad things make me happy. But that isn't about healing and dances either. I think danced healed me I think dancing connected me with a body that was defected, undesirable, ill weak and made me I remember working in a restaurant two summers after cancer. I would come home at night turn on the TV to watch music videos and get on the mini trampoline (those exercise things) and dance to Madonna, Boy George, Cindy Lauper, what was the song about turning right round baby? That one two. My mom used to yell at me cause I would turn it up too loud and she would be trying to sleep. You can still get in trouble after cancer, you can still be rebellious, I had way too much energy to go to sleep after work, after cancer, is that how dance heals cancer. It brings you back into life, into your rhythm, back to annoying your parents? I wonder if my mom was ever secretly happy that I was rebellious. Did it mean I had life in me? I should ask her. And this brings tears to my eyes as I don't like thinking what cancer put my mother through. She had kidney cancer later and kept saying that she didn't have it as bad as me. She stills tells the story of my cancer. I don't know if anyone else in my family does. Recently, my niece's back started to hurt at 13. My sister took her to the doctor for x-rays. She told the doctor what happened to me and the doctor wasn't concerned but took the x-rays anyway. My mom told me this not my sister. But when my niece told me her back was hurting and she was going to the doctor. It was the first thing I thought of. So now I'm really off topic. Healing is healing being off topic? Maybe because this is the last writing I don't want to forget anything. Maybe that's healing or maybe that is not healing and I still have more to say. Are you healed after you no longer have anything else to say? I don't think so. I think it comes back in a spiral you go through things you heal, reach another level, experience cancer the memories of cancer at a different age, dance it again, write it again and then it moves in the spiral until it comes up again.

## II. Iris K

*Round 1 / Topic 1: List all of the ways that you identify yourself.*

I am a woman, a girl inside., a daughter a sister, a nurse. I love dancing and sometimes I do say I am a dancer. I am a gardener, well at least a novice gardener. I'm a swimmer, an avid exerciser...too avid at times. I am a creative person...I love making things, painting, sometimes sculpture. I'm a recovering bulimic, 30 long years of that...still gets me sometimes but I'm way beyond my old bulimia self. Still there, though. I'm a one-legged woman. Lost the right leg, the whole darn thing, pelvis and all, when I was 11 years old. I'm a cancer survivor and a mighty lucky one. I'm a cancer survivor snas chemotherapy. I'm

a woman whose little girl inside has survived cancer and radiation and all the years of living as a one legged woman. I'm a woman who had a pretty tough time of it from my young teens all the way through to my forties. So many social/emotional challenges. I'm a divorced woman, just too much mess inside to allow a marriage to work back then when I was 23. Married about 2 years, together with him about 5 years. A fine divorce but no real good relationships since then. I'm a smart woman, have a master's in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Nursing. I've spent many years working with children, teens, families, adults in mental health settings. Mostly to work out my own mental health challenges. I'm a woman who no longer works as a clinical nurse. I am a woman who works now at a desk job, still in a hospital. I'm a woman who is tired of working in hospitals, tired of working as much as I do... a woman with a plan to make a plan for less work over the next few years. I'm a woman who feels highly responsible to take care of herself. I feel embarrassed when I need anything. I am shy and shamed when needing help and have trouble figuring out if the help I'm needing is allowable. I'm a woman who continues to have many fears around body issues. Many mistrusts about my body's functioning. Fear when I don't feel right and fear about mentioning it to anyone. I'm a woman who feels she must take care of her problems herself. Much of a solitary. Solitary suits me mostly but I do find my coping abilities are stretched in times of body fear. Like now...I'm a woman with some new (the last year) leg issues, big hematomas popping out of my hip out of the blue. I feel all alone with these despite having seen 4 doctors. None of those folks seem to know what the problem is and none really seem to care. Likely because they can't do anything about any of it. Anyway...I'm that woman, sitting here writing about myself. I want to add one other thing here...I'm a woman with a cute little pooch, [name]. Have her 5 years. Maybe the first creature I've ever fully loved and cared for. Really. I'm a woman who has very little experience loving. Although I feel love for all beings and I feel loved by the universe. If I haven't said it yet, I'm a sister to two brothers, and an aunt to 4 young men and one young woman. That's it...20 minutes.

*Round 1 / Topic 2: What does being a dancer mean to you? What is the role of dance in your life? Why?*

I have said a few times "I am a one-legged dancer"—It's not a sentence that's easy to say really — dancing is just life really — all of everything is a dance and to know it that way make me happy and helps me move through this with fun and some semblance of grace. I love moving and I love creatively finding ways to do whatever I have to do or want to do—I haven't been so connected to dance as a form of performance—although making the solos and performing them several years ago did something for me — it got out some things—helped me express some things and share them. I've had fantasies of being discovered as a great 1 legged dancer and recruited to perform all over the world—really, though dance is more about finding my own way around inside and outside myself it helps me stay connected to my body—a body I had treated harshly for many years because I was afraid of her power, her knowledge and really her beauty. I still fear my body's innate wisdom and beauty at times but I believe totally in it. Dance is my way for connecting with that whether it be whilst walking in the grocery store, lying on a table having a body mind centering session—where I feel my entire body—every cell—dancing inside and I take tremendous delight, feel totally rested in the movement I deeply feel and experience inside this external form that is me. Dance is life really—so little of it is "performing"—however—as I move daily through the whatever's of my life I know I am showing and sharing something—and I am doing that via Dance.

Dance is all there is really—since it is a part of or the whole of all that this body does in this particular round of existence. If I would only live here more fully more of the time my life would be the best ever—because I would be fully in sync with my inner life—I am a sac of cells each with its own dance—each contributing to the way this body does its thing in this world each day.

I love dance—writing this is so satisfying my body has just been dancing in the hospital for 4 days—my one leg having made excessive synovial fluid in the hip/pelvis area—the dance of this area one that takes enormous stress each day I give it all my weight and each—step—this part of my body created its own inner dance of fluid—it worked for a bit and then it had to show itself and be interacted with.

I am a dancer because I am alive Life is Dancing—mental, physical, emotional spiritual. I am able to create the score—I can develop and dance the dance—I can improvise (like most of the time) and learn from it and dancing that—to make new improvisations and to create scores for dances of life I choose to "perform" or dance on purpose.

I love this dancing thing—exploring it—living it—reminding myself of it.

*Round 2 / Topic 1: What does being a cancer survivor mean to you? Write about your cancer experience.*

I was a little girl, just 8 yrs old, suddenly out of no where I couldn't stand up or walk without terrible pain in my right leg. I went form roller skating, jumping rope, doing errands for my mother to lying on the couch, afraid to move for fear of the pain. My family was puzzled. Our fam doc called it growing pains, for a month things went on the same. It all started sometime in September 1959 because by November 9 I was in [location] having surgery to remove a tumor from my right femur. It was an osteogenic sarcoma, one of the more common types of cancer in children, however common that is. I was on a peds ward 11/9-11/24/59, had lots of tests like xrays, bone marrow where they put a big flat needle into your sternum while what feels like a ton of people hold down your arms and legs. I remember screaming a lot, something I never did, always the good, obedient girl, not wanting to cause any trouble. I went to surgery, can't remember anything much about the two weeks except knowing that I would eventually have my right leg cut off. That time in November 1959 I met several kids with the same cancer- altho I didn't know the word cancer or what it really was. Two of the other kids were [name]-who had his leg amputated and died a few years later. He was a little older than me and my mother made hospital friends whith his mother. The other kid was [name], too, about 4 yeas old, had the same kind of cancer on her knee. She had her leg amputated and died, too. I left the hospital that time with a big scar, 20 stitches, down the front of my femur and a skinny leg. Had a month of radiation therapy...lying on a metal slab while this big machine scanned over my body. I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, my teacher was [name]. That's all I can remember about that time. I was scared, I guess.

Three years passed, no pain but lots of check-ups, xrays and tests. One day an xray showed something bad and on December 20 they shipped me off to the for tests. I was pretty sure it meant I'd have my leg cut off. Never really expected I'd die, like [name] and [name]. The first week was lots of tests, another bone marrow. The night before the surgery the doc, Dr.[name], came into my room, sat on the bed and handed me a present. A gold charm bracelet with a heart/pearl engraved To [Iris K] from Dr. [name]. Then he told me surgery the next day to amputate my leg. My parents were outside the room, my father pacing and crying. My mother comes in and assures me all will be well and everyone leaves. They'll all be back in the AM and there when I wake up. Next thing I'm in the bed with huge bandages then gradually up in a w/c then crutches, then home. They checked my belly and lungs for cnacer and said they found none. Still I did not know anything about cancer. I did know I had something bad, that cost my parents a lot of money and I felt bad about that. Tried from then on to cost as little as possible. I left the hospital 1/4/63. Everyone hopes I'm cured and turns o ut I am...kind of a miracle since so many kids died from those days.

I didn't know the cancer work or seriousness for many years but did know I was lucky to be alive. For some reason my life was saved. This was more subliminal than conscious and I think it made me feel like I have to do something as a payback. Sometimes I was mad at GOD for saving me. Not that I wanted to die but just didn't want to be "chosen" for this particular thing. In my family this was the coping method, believing I was chosen, I'm special. I've always been outwardly grateful for life and little things, like being able to see the good in even the hardest struggles. Sometimes this is good and other times it just clouded what I was really feeling. It was more of an act covering self pity and anger that others hadn't been burdened with this disease and it's consequences. My surviving cancer is intimately connected to my life as a one legged woman...a very public thing...one that brings me lots of attention. Positive in that being noticed and telling one's story is usually good...more than 15 min of fame it's like constant fame...being inspirational and giving others hope which happens lots just with my being out in the world. The not so positive thing about all the attention is I feel I can never get away from it. I'm always on display and have trouble carving out privacy when I'm out in the world. All in all I am grateful to be alive. I know about struggles and pain and sickness and death. I've always remembered that others died and I lived. Never knowing why or how that happened.



*Round 2 / Topic 2: Is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you? Explain.*

I don't think of the cancer survivor part of my life as being as related to dancing as much as the one-legged part is. Although as I write now I realize those two are inseparable. I began dancing because something inside my deep cells wanted to move around in ways I had not given my self permission before...ways I never even imagined were possible. I started painting at a workshop warehouse and found myself so interested in the way my body felt, how it wanted to be free...I just responded to a flyer and was off and running with Authentic Movement before I even knew it. As I got more and more involved I realized the process of moving my body helped me re-member my past, the pain, sickness, fear and helped me put back together the life that I'd virtually ignored. I would move and suddenly be flooded with memories of childhood pain, of the surgeries, of other emotional hurts I felt as a teenager with one leg. It seems the cancer was such a traumatic experience, it and it's treatment that I'd gotten stuck way back before it ever happened in an emotional way. I had unknowingly put my life on hold, somehow magically thinking all of the things that happened would be reversed some time soon...everyday thinking it would be the next day. Particularly emotionally I know this happened. Somehow I wasn't able to grow up. After I began dancing, meeting other movers and being witnessed, I found myself re-engaging with my body. Like fears of it were slowly leaving and I was getting together with my body in a way I hadn't even known I was missing. Many of the rememberings I had were very visceral. One in particular was when I got into a "cross" position lying on the floor and was flooded with awareness of being strapped down on an operating table. It was so vivid and the sensation of not being able to move at all was so profound. It makes total sense to me that my life was void of creative movement...I had grown up feeling tied up sort of. Like there was something in my body that I didn't want to disturb lest it might go all nutty again. My mother always believed it was a fall I took off my bike in the fall of 1962 that made the cancer recur. Also, with the wooden leg I felt tied in to a big heavy (15lb) piece of wood, one that didn't move easily or smoothly. It sort of clunked and swung itself. I felt very un-graceful, very heavy and stiff in it. Now when I dance I am aware of my body as fluid and graceful. I feel light and long and even beautiful sometimes. I can have fun, be silly and crazy, make movements that seem ugly but feel good. I can find places in my body that have never been explored before. I am not aware of thinking about cancer at these times. I do think having had cancer, I continue to think I have it again when something untoward happens with my leg. I'm happy to say I do not worry that dancing or moving will cause more cancer or stir it up. On the contrary I feel like dancing is the best thing I can do for my body, really. Even now when my leg is giving me new challenges and I'm more afraid than I can remember being in a while about moving in certain ways...I still know moving, dancing is good...it feeds me and it is its own powerful antidote to any cancer that wants to grow in there...or at least it can help me continue to love my body no matter what struggles I face.

*Round 3 / Topic 1: What does/did cancer feel like in your own body? What does dance feel like in your own body?*

I had cancer a long time ago in 1959 and at the time it felt very painful in my right leg. It was so painful that I couldn't walk, I spent hours sitting on the couch. I had been a very active little 8 year old, roller skating, jumping rope, doing errands for my mother and helping with my brothers. The cancer took all of that away. I felt scared and didn't know what was wrong. After the first surgery I had in 1959 when the doctors took the tumor off the femur bone I was pain free but somehow I knew I still had something bad in my body because I was sure I would have to have my leg cut off at some time. This was an odd awareness and maybe just because I was a child and had seen kids with similar pain and tumors have to lose their limbs while I was in the hospital. No one ever mentioned anything about another surgery to me at that time. I just had the sense of that inside my little body. For three years I was followed closely with check ups and x-rays and blood tests. I don't remember enough about those years to say for sure if I thought about cancer or the eventual amputation much. I do know I didn't like all the follow up appointments. I did not have pain during those years. The day in 1962 when I heard I had to go back into

the hospital for follow-up of an x-ray that looked suspicious I knew it would mean losing my leg. No one said that or anything like that although I imagine my parents were expecting that, too at the time. It came as no surprise to me maybe I knew there was still something bad in there and maybe that's why my body so easily adjusted to the change.

Dancing has always felt wonderful in my body. I feel alive and beautiful when I am dancing. I feel free and connected to my body and all the beauty that I am. I have fun inside my body when I'm dancing. There's a feeling of exquisite tenderness that flows through and pauses for some seconds in different areas frequently when I dance. My foot is a place I feel that alot. My body is at it's most expressive, most fluid most happy when I dance and move. I feel delight and complete enjoyment. I like to do silly things, like use my belly as a drum or make odd sounds or funny faces. This could be considered ugliness in some ways but it feels so good to do it I know its really good for my body and my whole being. Lately I've been thinking alot about how my body has been able to almost effortlessly adapt to many changes over the years. The first was the loss of the leg. I was so healthy after that and my body just seemed to do the one-legged thing without much trouble. I adjusted to crutches and then to that big heavy wooden leg without any trouble. I walked for all those years with out crutches, learned to ski, rode a bike. The in my late 20's I went back to the crutches and again it was almost effortless and my body just naturally became stronger and capable walking on the crutches. I recently have had to transition to a wheelchair and it's been the same. I'm in awe at my body's ease at transitioning and the gracefulness and beauty she has brought to each of these ways of moving. My body is a natural dancer and for many years I have been focused mostly on the things I find ugly or distorted, disfigured. My mind has not embraced the natural beauty and grace of my body in the most full way. This awareness is powerful this last few days. Movement of all sorts and dancing, because even when I wasn't dancing with dancers I loved dancing with friends, has been a big part of my life forever. It has always felt good even when I was using it as a way to whip my body into shape, to change things I had no business trying to change. Even when I was ignoring, neglecting, even abusing my body and her amazing abilities she was doing her graceful, lovely thing, carrying me along. It's best when I'm dancing because I really am with her, mind body heart spirit all together, feeling the flow inside, the tenderness the joy the delight.

*Round 3 / Topic 2: Did the experience of cancer leave you with any 'scars' (these may include but are not limited to physical scars, social scars, spiritual scars, mental scars, emotional scars, body-image scars, etc.)? If so, do you think that your dance experience has helped to heal any of these 'scars' of cancer?*

I have scars...two pretty big physical scars, one on my abdomen and one along my right hip area. These seemed more meaningful when I was younger, keeping me from wearing two piece bathing suits and other teen clothes that could be revealing. I guess the biggest physical scar is the missing leg which, again, seemed more grave because of some of the social and emotional scars it caused than the actual physicalness of it. My amazing body has been able to leap over all these hurdles almost effortlessly. My emotional scars are related to my discomfort with the whole idea of medical treatment which is funny since I am a nurse. I really do, though, dislike and dis-trust alot of medical treatment. I don't like taking meds, really don't like needles, never want to go to the doctor, don't usually want to follow any medical recommendations. I really resist any thoughts even of having any surgery or having to be in the hospital. And I guess another part of it is that I spent most of my years working in mental health trying to work through all the emotional issues I had/still have some much of which is related to my one-leggedness and the result of the cancer. One of the longest running issues is bulimia which I've had some recovery from over the last 8 years...it's been a problem for the last 38 years. The bulimia is a scar related to body image issues, fears about my body not working right, therefore it needs me to exert extreme control over it. These started after the surgery when a doctor told me I was getting fat and suggested a 1000 calorie diet (I was 12). He said if I got fat I would not be able to walk. The fear that my body is not to be trusted, will not work right, will surprise me again with a bad problem has been there all along. Even though my rational mind knows the part about the food and eating is irrational there is still this need to control my body which I have seen lessen over the years, definitely related to dancing and feeling more freedom and joy internally and through my body. Many years were spent doing harsh, almost abusive exercise to again keep the flesh in control. Things like slapping my

belly on a hard floor hundreds of times a day, swimming laps for 2-3 miles a day, walking extreme distances. movement for fun and pleasure through dancing and in authentic movement to learn more about my body from my body and to feel the rush of tenderness and excitement inside has helped me with the body control issues alot.

Spiritual scars are mostly about wondering what my purpose is, feeling like I have a debt to repay, for being saved. When I was a child my mother told me I was "chosen". Recently I've realized the sentence was never finished...chosen for what? I've always thought I had to do something spectacular and have resented that and not been able to settle into a simple life of simple pleasures and enjoyment. Because I'm always thinking I'm not doing enough not paying back, not contributing. I've decided recently to finish the sentence with "chosen" to live...to be kind and happy...to play and enjoy each day. Maybe I can quiet my inner voices enough and focus more on that.

Other scars are related to my not feeling able to relate to people always all that well. Feeling like I "know" so much more, or not satisfied with the level of thoughtfulness others exhibit. This was more of a problem when I was younger, having experienced something so profound, seen so many kids die and having to live with the one-legged body with some kind of okayness...it just seemed to put an invisible wall between me and others my age. Maybe not having had an opportunity to grieve when I was young affected me as well. This is double edged because being able to function was a good thing, yet functioning with unresolved grief keeps one separate from others, like you have a secret or some big thing you're carrying. Also, I never had much confidence with boys/men, never felt really confident that any man would really love me. I wasn't confident about my attractiveness, didn't feel attractive or worthy even maybe. And I never felt able to compete with other girls or women in the area of attractiveness. I've always felt ok about being smart, capable but have had alot of fears of rejection and some bad experiences with men who have been unkind and so I've kept myself protected alot in social situations and so have had a kind of solitary life.

Dancing has helped with all of these scars. Since dancing I've felt much much better about my body and even feel beautiful, graceful satisfied with my inner being. It helped me grieve and it's helped me find ways to loosen my control grip and trust my body more. Dancing/moving and considering that all of it is dancing is essential to my being now and it's a miracle and amazing that I found it. I am even coming to love and feel awe at my body and somehow dancing has helped me show myself to others in ways I would never have imagined before. It's like a safe haven, a playground, a research tank, a comfort place...so many things it's become. Even a place for communicating with others...and it's helped me get out of the left brain, rational logical thinking mode and into the more relaxed softer more creative and beautiful right brain.

### III. Monica Rey

*Round 1 / Topic 1: List all of the ways you identify yourself (for example, I am a mother, daughter, professional, etc.).*

I have enjoyed identifying myself as a mother mainly yet as an individual I feel as if the places I have arrived I may not have if I wasn't a mother.

The patience and willingness to sacrifice which doesn't feel as "truly", are attributes that contribute to every situation in life wholly (sp?) that cannot be approached with out have been a mother. Which in turn of course provides a turn of head as I gaze at my mother with more respect and lovingly as no one can truly understand unless one has gone through whatever in life experiencing it for them-selves.

As a mother the natural heart pride is fulfilling and allows one to develop a deeper sense of knowing, as a mother does and isn't ashamed of pride, as I love my daughter "[name]" the most. I Loved being a mom and I feel as if there may not be anything else I will be as good at and for sure I will never have enjoyed anything more. "A chicken, is just another chicken, trying to make an egg."

As I have lost most of what I identify myself as my biggest joy I have been forced to dig to a deeper well of the individual I identify with. Sometimes one finds themselves having to dig deeper or dig a new well of identity, Self.

I am grateful to have found a multi faceted professional path as an office manager of a tax firm I fell safe secure in ways of compliance and regulations. Not that I don't occasionally speed in my car I like a place that provides simple to follow rules. Genuine and sincere, which fits my other profession in the fitness & balances industry which includes yoga instruction, practicing truthfulness. I like a place that is warm and cozy w/ good values

*Round 1 / Topic 2: What does being a dancer mean to you? What is the role of dance in your life? Why?*

Dancing means freedom of soul expression to me! I remember when I saw Oprah [*illegible*] with Quincy Jones at the juke box, I was 34, just had my implants (breast augmentaion) and was in sheer agony as my implants were sub pec (\*thank goodness). I found my lump--.01 cm – yes, that is correct, advantage of having my breast augmentation, it actually saved my life. I know my body (thank goodness!) I couldn't lay down to sleep for over a month but I slid out of bed, tapped my toes, and my fingers against my thighs because I couldn't move my arms from the elbows up. I new I was going to be OK. Bottom line (I am an accountant.) Dance is essential for my survival. Life is harsh.

As I have delved into your question I also realize that “becoming” a dancer is post providing my daughter the opportunity to dance. Whatever she wanted to do was a super easy priority. We never felt without for sacrifice of “stuff” to provide the necessary funds for my daughter [*name*] to Dance. She struggled w/ eloquence as she supported her mother through diagnosis of breast cancer, treatment, another diagnosis of breast cancer, additional treatment and making her 5 years out from 2<sup>nd</sup> diagnosis. She taught me to dance, [*name of daughter*] was my dance teacher, she was 19 and I was 42.

I now dance to celebrate life today, and my daughter. I will treasure the journey until I dance with my daughter in heaven. I know that most likely Cancer will take me there, until then, today my feet hit the ground and life kicked my butt out of bed.

*Round 2 / Topic 1: What does being a 'cancer survivor' mean to you? Write about your cancer experience.*

Often I am still in disbelief that I ever heard those words, That you have Cancer. going to the Oncologist, looking down the hallway the hallway of uncertainty. Making the best decisions for you and your family and not knowing how to make many of those decisions until you walk down the hallway to treatments. Having your briefing, making sure you always have a second pair of ears because you are in this state of of of numbness. Not knowing what you are going to have to endure or what the outcome may be, because, it is Cancer you know. Trying to absorb everything you must do to avoid reactions ie; alcohol, nail polish remover, visene, wine, wine, whine. Alas, one does what the occasion calls for. The first time is the scariest as you haven't experienced it. Setting up the IV as I chose not to have a port. It stings really bad and then they adjust it from there there are a lot of bags hanging from that IV, it is very scary that they all have to go into my body. You are watched very closely, for reactions, sleepy. So grateful for just that much. But what I didn't know is there was more stuff that had to be administered, this huge syringe of red liquid that would need to be done by hand. It took the nurse about 45 minutes to do this. She let me put a towel over the needle. I want the next few days to go by quickly, I am scared.

*Round 2 / Topic 2: Is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you? Explain.*

The relationship between being a dancer and a Cancer survivor is on of the deepest bonds I have with myself. It is where I can say “things are all right”, it is a relationship that is well cultivated as one does to keep any relationship worth while alive and healthy. I feel that it is one of the few places that is fun and free! It is a great place of freedom within to visit while dancing, a place of peace and comfort that “right now” is OK. Dancing is a great way to come together as community. That is the best part, having many parts that contribute to some precious happiness, sometimes random dancing and sometimes structured dancing to uplift the tough life we tread through. I do, do you? How many do? I find it very

hard, really difficult. A dance break is a gift to the mood. I look forward to making more dance break opportunities as I know that the news can be grim anytime you see the doctor. A dance attack a day keeps the doctor away??

*Round 3 / Topic 1: What does/did cancer feel like in your own body? What does dance feel like in your own body?*

A lump in my breast is how Cancer felt to the touch, inside I didn't feel any differently. The treatments are rigorous and the side affects are many....what I felt/feel works for me is I imagine my lungs like white cotton sheets gently blowing in the breeze while they dry on the line outdoors. I use this imagery often as I feel it cleanses my Cancer inside which I can't feel..... But I know it may be hiding somewhere inside.

Dance inside feels like my blood is 7-Up. Carbonated and light, I like the way it makes my muscles feel when I can dance, my head feels light and I never stop smiling which I am not trying to do, just am. The area around my heart opens up from beating harder and it doesn't feel so tight in the chest and throat . Dance is a relief for that lump in the throat.

*Round 3 / Topic 2: Did the experience of cancer leave you with any 'scars' (these may include but are not limited to physical scars, social scars, spiritual scars, mental scars, emotional scars, body-image scars, etc.)? If so, do you think that your dance experience has helped to heal any of these 'scars' of cancer?*

Scars

The unfortunate emotional scar that has been part of the out come of breast Cancer is that you often times have a 'so what' attitude. I try hard not to be jaded but when you have heard that diagnosis and have dealt with the rigors of the treatments peoples 'little dramas' are so, well, little. I try to remain as compassionate as possible but have also given myself permission to politely excuse myself from many situations, conversations etc and move to an environment where I can be a positive person to be around. I truly try to stay out of that 'I have had it harder/worse' person and be an empathic listener, but again drifting away from small issues is not always a bad thing. It is a survival thing.

Physically-strangely-I like how I am, scars and all. Maybe it reminds me that I have made it through a lot, that I am beautiful just as I am because I am here. That is enough. I love me, even a bit battered and wounded, I am better for the wear and tear.

#### IV. Suze

*Round 1 / Topic 1: List all of the ways you identify yourself (for example, I am a mother, daughter, professional, etc.).*

Ways I identify myself. I am an artist. I create artwork. I've been an artist for many years. I create mostly two dimensional work. I am an aging woman. I am a lesbian. I am an exhibition designer. I am a problem-solver at work. I am a friend and a good listener. I am a person who likes visual arts. I am a film buff. I am a musician. I play in a samba band. I am a jogger and a weight lifter. I am a bicycle rider . I love riding bikes and have loved it for years since childhood. I am short. I am blond. I am a breast cancer survivor. I am a music lover which is attached to my love of dancing. I am a ballroom dancer. I am a bird watcher, a lover of being outdoors, a nature lover. I am a lover of sunsets. I am a person who dislikes to wash dishes, clean house. I am a dog lover. I had a Doberman for 13 years and now I am a rat terrier owner. I am an ex-addict. I am a persistent, emotional, vulnerable person. I am a Indiana Hoosier, a college graduate. I am bilingual though I have not used my Spanish in a long time. I am strongwilled

person. I am muscular in some ways, but also I am injured from working in trades that were outside my body limits I am a child of a third generation German / French heritage. I was a hippie, I lived in a commune in [location]. I am a photographer, a teacher, a student on and off. I am the oldest child of three girls. I am an Aunt to my sisters children. I am an aunt to an adopted chinese girl . I am a communicator. I like to talk. I can be a quiet person. I am a reader of fiction. I am an athletic person. I am an art viewer, a second hand shopper, a financial conservative. I am a liberal in my politics. I am an enthusiast hiker, dogwalker, I am a tea lover. I am a cook and grocery buyer. I am a conservative dresser. I love to wear black. I am a shoe buyer, second hand. I am a good listener. I am a good driver. I am an anxious person & do not travel much. I am social person, I am daughter to two living parents. I am a phone talker, a list maker, organizer, I am a messy house keeper. I am a gardener. I am a home limited maintenance repair person. I am injured through work and martial arts, back, hands. I am injured through surgery. I am missing lymph nodes I am a migraine sufferer. I have identified as overweight since childhood. I am a person who loves to stretch my body. I love world beat music & blues.

*Round 1 / Topic 2: What does being a dancer mean to you? What is the role of dance in your life? Why?*

Being a dancer means I give time to dancing. I take lessons and am often looking for classes and ways to be dancing. Because I like to dance socially I look for opportunities to go out dancing. I look in the calendars for danceable music at clubs and other venues. I keep in touch with other dancers in my social group to meet or go with them dancing. It means dancing is important to me and I am often interested in meeting people who like to talk about dancing. I also often will go to movies about dancing or watch dancing as a concert or on television. Because I'm interested in a wide range of types of dancing I might go to a jazz class, dance zydeco, go to a ballroom lesson and practice all in one week. I enjoy going to cultural events that include dancing. These types of dancing such as from another country might not be something I'd want to learn , but I'd want to watch. Being a dancer does not mean I like every kind of dance; but most kinds at least to know about, know that it exists. It also means I keep myself fit in addition to dancing. I do other exercise that supports dancing such as weights or jogging, stretching.

The role of dance in my life is about energy and having fun. Dance can bring joy and a carefree feeling to me if I am really into the dancing. I can feel very free and in the moment, similar to doing artwork. Time becomes less important. Dance has become a way of relating to the world, to other people. It was so important to me that I started a group for lesbians who wanted to do ballroom dancing. That group has continued for five years..Creating the group has made ballroom partner dancing more comfortable for me and for other lesbians. Dancing is a place that now feels comfortable to me in many venues. Sometimes I feel reserved or held back, but more often I feel free to express myself by dancing with others or on my own. At festival and big cultural music events I often like to be in the midst of the dancing throng of people who are all being affected by the music and are dancing. So in addition to lessons and specific dances I like just to dance on my own feeling the music and what feelings and memories the music holds for me. They are quite intertwined for me. Dancing does keep me active and can be an easy way to be moving when I am slightly injured or have a back muscle that bothers me,. It's a way to keep moving and be active when I am less able bodied—It can be a transition through a time when I feeling less than active. I hope that I will be dancing into my old age. This is a dream that dance holds for me, to be moving till I die.

*Round 2 / Topic 1: What does being a 'cancer survivor' mean to you? Write about your cancer experience.*

For me a cancer survivor is some one who lived through a devastating, difficult medical experience. It means having lived through a time when I was living my worst nightmare or what I had thought was my worst nightmare. In the beginning of my experience I was thinking that it was unreal. And I was terrified about cancer, about medical treatment, about dying. I hated the whole thing. I was angry and I was scared. I felt compelled to do "it" right and the diagnosis threw me into a place where I was in world separate or not like my previous life. I was seeped in my concerns and was around people who were seeped

in the same concerns. I felt like life had changed irrevocably. I felt I was a drift at sea and had nothing to hold to, I felt the diagnosis was like a free fall that went on for days and months, years. And at the same time I was very practical. I decided to do whatever it took to live. In that time over maybe three years with diagnosis, treatment and what I would call the aftermath, my companions were other cancer people. The people I had known were still around, but I spent most of my emotional life with other cancer people. I liked them much better. My thoughts, my energy, my emotions, my physical ability, my body, my mind, everything was focused in some way on cancer and what it might mean. My treatment was hellish. I was sick a lot, I became the quintessential cancer person with body changes, hair loss, exhaustion, emotional swings, fatalism. I was sarcastic and very sad. In the aftermath I was extremely depressed for a couple years. My treatment pushed me into menopause which carried with it a whole set of circumstances and issues I felt unprepared to accept. Everything felt different. My work was affected. I was poor. I felt desperate and angry. There were times inside the experience that I felt cared and loved by many people, mostly other women with cancer. I was determined to not die, but did not know if my wish to live would be granted. A lot of things in my life were left unattended.

After maybe three years or more after my diagnosis I began to feel I had to pull myself out of thinking of myself as a cancer person. I eventually stopped going to groups and turned back toward a life I thought I would not ever return to. Things never have been the same. I still 11 years later feel scared. Sometimes when I am organizing or looking for something and go into a closet or a box, I find things that I were part of my life before cancer and I realize how much I had to let go. Sometimes when people ask about my experience I feel I want to not talk about it.

While I was in treatment and recovery I lost most of my work sources and it took me four or five years to start to find other ways to support myself. I feel that the experience used a lot of time in my life that I might have been doing something else.

There were some positive outcomes. I decided to dance more. I had danced as a young child and teenager and young adult, but had let go of it. I started dancing a lot more and today I dance a lot because of my decision. A few years after treatment I bought a van and traveled in [location] a lot. I camped and spent a lot of time on my own. I felt more content during this time than any other time in my life. It was a fantastic time for me, living in the van and just living more in the outdoors. Eventually the more regular life started to seep back into my consciousness and slowly I returned to a more usual life.

*Round 2 / Topic 2: Is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you? Explain.*

Well yes, as I said in Topic 1 my decision to dance more, to dance and be in dancing classes more than I had been doing, came out of the experience of having been through cancer. It was sort of like the thought, "well if I am going to die then what do I want to do?" Dancing and dancing more was one of the choices I made to do differently that has continued. I do not know if I can say much more about the relationship. I do not constantly remember that part of my decision while I am dancing, because I did dance before the cancer time. But I did not think of dancing in the same way. Dancing became more essential, more primal, more a priority for my life. I think I became a dancer in my mind. I had been an artist, but not thought, "I am a dancer". With this happening I did think this. And now as I consider the question I realize how important it has become to be able to move. The threat of dying, being immobilized pushed me to be mobile. I do not openly share this part of my experience with other dancers in any regular way unless someone asks me.

I know some people talk about the gifts from hard experiences. I have difficulty using this phraseology and at times I would say the reconnection to dance was a gift just for me. It was a terrible experience to have to make the reconnection. I have felt cheated in some ways coming to dance again so late in my life. It is certainly better than never to have connected with dance as I do. And it is different than the way I connected with dance before. Now it is more just what I clearly know about myself. This is something I enjoy and will do as long as I can. The music and dancing together are transcendent for me and are just what make me feel good. I would say the experience has become more sensual and sexual just inside myself. I think also I feel more motivated to include others in my experience, maybe more evangelistic about dancing as a way to feel good, build self-esteem, change one's attitude. I am braver in

my dancing and continue to be braver in my dance choices. I have less inhibition although sometimes I feel myself slipping into that inhibited place. And then I might recall, "oh this is my life, it could end, do I want this opportunity to go by?" And so sometimes I will be braver and do things I would not have done before my medical experience, like get up in front of others or dance in a group when others are not as enthusiastic. It has given me permission to be more wild and primal and know I am a dancer and that is what I do. Life is just happening, why not be dancing?

*Round 3 / Topic 1: What does/did cancer feel like in your own body? What does dance feel like in your own body?*

Cancer feels like fear. It feels like something that has attached to me and has grown as a part of me and is now inescapable. It connects emotionally to fears from childhood. I am like the frightening dreams and movies about uncontrollable creatures and diseases that I had as a child. It feels like something I have that is part of me that I can hate. These are very uncomfortable feelings. Cancer feels like creepy feelings from childhood; things that could "get" you and from which there is not protection. Yuck. In my body cancer feels like something I am trying to forget and cannot. Like a sticky substance that you get on you and you cannot get it off completely. Like pitch when you are in the forest. There is just nothing that takes it off.

In my body it feels like a mystery that I cannot decipher, like a question that will never be answered, the why, a life mystery.

In my body dance feels like true movement. Dance feels like opportunity for openness, space, a reminder to breathe and concentrate on my body and it feels like getting right with things. Dance can feel like floating and a safe place that I can have for myself or share. In my body dance feels like something new, interesting, difficult, absorbing. Dance feels like excitement and happiness and all kinds of emotions. Dance feels like transporting and trans-like. I can feel connected to the past in a positive way.

*Round 3 / Topic 2: Did the experience of cancer leave you with any 'scars' (these may include but are not limited to physical scars, social scars, spiritual scars, mental scars, emotional scars, body-image scars, etc.)? If so, do you think that your dance experience has helped to heal any of these 'scars' of cancer?*

Cancer left me with a few physical scars. I do not notice them often, nor do others really notice unless they ask or I show them. I am aware that my breasts are of different sizes and there is a difference in how they look if you examine. Yes I feel scarred by the cancer in all ways that you ask. I feel I am in a group I do not want to be in. As a group we are scarred; those of us who have had cancer. Our souls have been scarred. We have been intimate with a disease that is greatly feared by most everyone in our culture. My emotional scars are that I can return to the scary places and to the fear and feel the whole experience easier than I want. I have feelings every time I hear the word cancer or see ads about cancer centers, or hear conversations about cancer or have friends who are diagnosed. It is like a revisiting with the scars.

My body image did change. I went through menopause and my body changed. My breasts are different and my sexual responses and my vagina changed dramatically. My skin changed, my hair, my nails, my body is different than it was and it happened quickly. Fortunately with menopause I have more of a recollection of the differences and my memory is not pristine. I feel the treatment scared my memory. I lost time and places and people. There are pieces that seem lost forever from before cancer.

My dance experience helps me cope with life and with my experiences that include the cancer time. I do not know that dance heals me. I do not identify with being healed in the sense of returning to where I was before the cancer. I do feel better dancing and dancing and being inside the music or in my body can bring happiness. The endorphins help to bring up my mood. I do not know if I believe I will ever be healed or if dance could heal me. I feel there will always be the memory. The dancing is a good, safe, fairly reliable place I can go for me.



## APPENDIX D

## TRANSCRIPTS OF CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Note: One interview from each participant is included in this appendix. A series of dots (ellipsis) indicates that unclear words, phrases that may risk confidentiality of participants, or a pause in the conversation due to an interruption or the need to turn a tape over in the recording device.

Claire: Conversational Interview from Round 2

*Location: Claire's home (there are a couple of girls present who Claire refers to as 'her daughters' so this was not a completely private conversation and there were a few distractions that are indicated by ellipsis)*

*Duration: about 1 hour*

LAURA: It's been so long since our last time together, so just to revisit some things; The last time we talked, it was more about dancing.

CLAIRE: mmhmm

LAURA: this time it's going to be more about your cancer experience

CLAIRE: ok

LAURA: and if at any point your like 'ok, I don't want to go there' that's fine, you know, we'll just tell me to keep moving on or whatever. So, you can take this as deep as you want, that's entirely up to you.

CLAIRE: all right

LAURA: um so if you could just walk me through your cancer story. Like at what point in your life you were diagnosed and what kind of treatments and things. Just to give me an idea of a timeline and the order of events. I have little pictures of things, little glimpses of stories, this is so I get an idea of what happened when and all of that.

CLAIRE: okay, and if I give you too much detail, just let me know.

LAURA: okay

CLAIRE: um, so I started out having back pain, and I kept going to doctors and it was my first year in college so they kept telling me that I was homesick.

LAURA: so you were what about 18 or so?

CLAIRE: yeah, I was 18

LAURA: really, back pain means you are homesick? (*sarcasm*)

CLAIRE: yeah (*giggle*), or that I was in class so I wasn't used to sitting as much, you know, I got all this stuff

LAURA: yeah

CLAIRE: and it was like 6 months and it was kind of funny, well not funny ha ha, but funny ironic, that I didn't have a car.

LAURA: mmhmm

CLAIRE: and so it got to the point where, like I couldn't walk and it was spring break so I started going to the doctor back in October when I came home at Christmas and Thanksgiving I went here and you know, kept going. No body could like, I don't know if it wasn't big enough at that time because they did have an x-ray.

LAURA: they took an x-ray?

CLAIRE: yes! So I'm not sure, I remember having an x-ray up here and then I was told that I have an extra vertebrae and that's why I was having back pain. And it's like, oh, I should ask I don't even know if that's true or not!

LAURA: you don't know if you have an extra vertebra?

CLAIRE: (*giggle*) yeah, I don't know.... I have no idea...and then it was spring break and I was staying with my friend cause I was in the dorms and I couldn't get up and down the stairs. And so I went to, cause I was really geeky, like I didn't want to miss class (*giggle*) so on the Monday after spring break I um I went to class first cause I didn't want to miss and then my friends actually carried me practically, cause I couldn't walk, to the health center

LAURA: oh my gosh

CLAIRE: I mean that's how silly I was, I mean I could barely walk and I still went to class. I was such a geek (*giggle*)

LAURA: wow, and if they were telling you it's because you were homesick, you were probably like,

CLAIRE: cause too at the school they would do a lot of films and I remember it cause I was walking around campus and people were looking at me funny. Like the people, not funny like, but cause, I was barely able to walk. So they were all like, oh ah, like the directors and the film cameras, it was just weird. It was that film with John Cusack he was like a kick boxer and he falls in love with this woman (*giggle*) and. ... And they played that song, 'in your eyes' by Peter Gabriel in it.

LAURA: (*laugh*) I'll have to go to the video store and check that out

CLAIRE: so they were filming that at the time. But anyway, so they carried me to the health center and I went in there and the doctor, I think there's something really wrong with you, you need to go to the hospital, and I'm like 'well I don't have a car' (*giggle*) so the doctor at the health center put me in his car and drove me to the emergency room!

LAURA: So that was the first time someone had taken you seriously it sounds like.

CLAIRE: yeah, and I had been to the health center before but by the time I couldn't walk they were like, 'okay, something's up!' (*giggle*)

LAURA: oh my gosh. And so, what period of time was that?

CLAIRE: it was like from October to what, spring break is in April or something yeah.

LAURA: wow that's a long time to be in pain!

CLAIRE: mmmm, and I remember I had to be propped up when I came home, like over break, I couldn't lie down, I couldn't sleep lying down. I had to be propped up on pillows. Yeah I couldn't sleep like flat on my bed. So, it was pretty major.

LAURA: it was constant pain?

CLAIRE: it was constant pain, yeah. And it got worse as it, I mean the tumor was getting bigger so it makes sense. So then I got to the hospital and they admitted me, cause obviously there was, and then they figured out there was a tumor. But I think they thought it was leukemia at first. I got diagnosed with different things....so um, and then I was there for like three weeks.

LAURA: in the hospital?

CLAIRE: mmhmm, 3 or 4 weeks in [*location*], so I was still down there. And so my mom flew down and my dad at one point to be with me and then they took me up here to [*hospital*] so I was there for a month and then they transferred me because you know, my parents, blah blah blah, and so they transferred me up to [*hospital*]. And that was interesting because like they were really worried about me flying on the plane, I'd get sick, and so my sister came down to fly with me and my mom drove because she had the car and then my sister got sick on the plane and I didn't (*giggle*)

LAURA: (*giggle*)

CLAIRE: she was like really sick on the plane the whole time which was just like kind of funny and I was just like, it was really interesting because I was considered a, like they rushed me on the plane and it was really kind of interesting you know the whole dynamics of to make sure I was on and I was okay, and like really taking care of me. Like I was the medical, blah blah blah or whatever. And then I got here—is this too detailed?

LAURA: no, no! this is great!

CLAIRE: ok, and my dad picked me up cause my mom was driving home and actually it was funny cause my mom actually stayed in my dorm room

LAURA: oh.

CLAIRE: when I was, yeah she stayed with my roommate!

LAURA: wow! When you were in the hospital?

CLAIRE: (*laugh*) When I was in the hospital, she stayed in the dorm! My poor roommate, she had my mother staying with her for like 3 weeks!

LAURA: oh no! (*giggle*)

CLAIRE: and she cleaned for her though

LAURA: well there you go so it was probably a good thing!

CLAIRE: yeah!

LAURA: wow, ok, so then, when was it that they actually, I mean they still didn't know what you had? You still hadn't been diagnosed?

CLAIRE: I think I got diagnosed with the Ewing Sarcoma I think, first it was leukemia and then a lymphoma down there (implying *[location]*) and that's where I, and I just figured this out last year, or that's what they're saying now, but that's where I got most of my, the really wide radiation.

LAURA: oh

CLAIRE: which is probably where it began damaging my spinal cord, because the tumor was so large, they just blasted me basically (*giggle*)

LAURA: with radiation therapy

CLAIRE: like everywhere,

LAURA: before they even knew exactly what it was

CLAIRE: yeah, before, instead of really focusing in on- because I went back and read my records. And I did a follow up appointment when I was doing my piece on cancer and I kind of went through this process and I learned that um yeah, so that's that, there they could tell the range of radiation was huge, like all over back and my, and a lot all at once like whew, instead of like when I got up here and had my radiation it was very concentrated and just in one spot and not directly on the spine but on the side of the spine and that kind of thing so that was, yeah. And then I was in *[HOSPITAL]* for about 4 weeks and that's when they diagnosed me with cancer, and they figured out the protocol for the chemo.

LAURA: how did they know, that, like the diagnosis? Did they do a biopsy at that time or what?

CLAIRE: oh they did so many, yeah, they did a biopsy in California though too.

LAURA: really?

CLAIRE: uh-huh they did spinal taps, they did, I never saw that movie cause it came out at that time, so I never saw it (*laugh*).

LAURA: yeah, I didn't see it either

CLAIRE: I don't think it had anything to do with spinal taps but I never watched

LAURA: you didn't want to because of the title! I can understand that! I don't blame you!

CLAIRE: (*laugh*) and to be perfectly honest, I don't remember all of the tests that I had.

LAURA: well you were so young too.

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah, it was just constant..... and I was there for like 3 weeks or 4 weeks

LAURA: doing radiation therapy?

CLAIRE: doing the tests, figuring out what was going on and then they made the diagnosis. I had my first chemo there. They started with chemo up here first and then it didn't work so I had like 4 or 5 months of chemo and then it didn't shrink enough so that's when they did the radiation. So I had the ....adriomyocin, and cytoxin I think that was my cocktail or whatever (*giggle*)

LAURA: wow. So, what year are we talking about here?

CLAIRE: it was '84.

LAURA: same year as me. So I'm just trying to think about the technology advances and I know now I've come across people who don't even get sick with chemotherapy anymore because

CLAIRE: right, oh, I got really sick

LAURA: I did too. You know as soon as I hear about somebody going through treatment I relate it to my own experience but they're out shopping and I'm like 'okay' that wasn't my experience.

CLAIRE: yeah, no I was home sick.

LAURA: yeah

CLAIRE: yeah and throwing up

LAURA: so each treatment of chemotherapy, how much time did it take, where you were sick?

CLAIRE: the adriomyocin was the worst, the one that looks like cough syrup. Or it did then but who knows today, but

LAURA: so this wasn't injected, you took this orally?

CLAIRE: no, no, this was injected. Yeah cause I went up there as an outpatient and they did it and then I came home. And then I threw up for about a week

LAURA: yeah, something to look forward to (*sarcastic*)

CLAIRE: the adriomyacin made my hair fall out...the others [drugs] weren't quite as bad. That one was the worst, the other ones, I got sick but it wasn't for as long so, I threw up all over because I would still go places, like I through up in the mall, I went to the Oregon Bach Festival and like I took a plastic thing and I used that

LAURA: so you could go?

CLAIRE: (*laugh*) I'm like throwing up in the lobby and everybody was staring at me.

LAURA: and you're like oh whatever.

CLAIRE: and it got really normal, just to clean it up. You do it you clean it up and move on.

LAURA: exactly

CLAIRE: it just becomes this normal, you know you take these plastic things with you, that's what they give you at the hospital

LAURA: yep, yep and you do what you need to do!

CLAIRE: mmhmm (*laugh*)

...

CLAIRE: and so then, they did that and then they did the radiation and I ended up having that in [location], cause I lived in [location] I didn't live in [location] so we ended up going to the [location] hospital.

LAURA: and that was after the chemo

CLAIRE: and the radiation shrunk it enough. And they said it was the size of a softball when I was first diagnosed and then it shrunk to a tennis ball.

LAURA: uh-huh, and then what?

CLAIRE: and then they removed it. I had surgery

LAURA: so they surgically removed it. So originally it was too big for them to surgically remove and so they had to shrink it down.

CLAIRE: right, yeah. So that they could safely remove it. And they weren't sure when they went in what it was attached to but it was all, it was all confined to one big ball. And they wouldn't let me look at it.

LAURA: really? I would have wanted to.

CLAIRE: I asked them, I go 'can I see it' and they go 'no' they didn't. I wanted to see it.

LAURA: And so from beginning to when you had your surgery, what's the time span of that?

CLAIRE: a year. It was a year because I had my surgery in October. ... yeah, the 8<sup>th</sup> is when I came out, or when I remember coming out, it's not really that clear.

LAURA: and so at that point they said that you were in remission at that point, is that what they said?

CLAIRE: mmhmm. Yeah and then I need any more, they weren't going to do any chemo or anything.

LAURA: no more treatments after that?

CLAIRE: mmhmm, they were just going to watch it.

LAURA: and everything's fine now.

CLAIRE: mmhmm

LAURA: wow

CLAIRE: I didn't have to do it for years or anything. It was just an intense,

LAURA: yeah it was an intense year. That was my experience too.

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: um, uh, so do you think that having had this experience with cancer affects the way you live your everyday life?

CLAIRE: (*long pause*) yes, and no. that was a hard question. That was the second question right, or was it the first? I can't remember.

LAURA: I don't know. Yeah it was something similar. I don't know.

CLAIRE: (*giggle*) yeah, I think I think that sometimes it really does and sometimes it doesn't like go through phases or something where I feel like it does.

LAURA: in what ways?

CLAIRE: um, I think that it's a memory, it's something that's always with me. I wonder, I sometimes wonder if I didn't have the physical disability from cancer if I would think about it as much. You know I'm not sure because I don't have that reference point so I have no idea. If that's like a reminder. Um. I do things differently than I would have done without, um,

LAURA: like?

CLAIRE: like, um I think I take more risks.

LAURA: mmm

CLAIRE: not like negative. I think some of this I wrote about, feeling like you know, you don't know how much time you're going to have so you do things, you know? You don't want to wait or, I don't know if I'm as practical sometimes as I would have been.

LAURA: do you see that as a positive or a negative?

CLAIRE: well, I see it as positive. Yeah. I think it's very freeing, yeah yeah.

LAURA: so just in the choices that you make- you tend to take the riskier one if it feel like that's you know.

CLAIRE: yeah, and I don't think I plan as far in the future. I'm not as future oriented at all.

LAURA: yeah, well that kind of brings me to another thing. You talked, one of the things that seemed to come up in your writing was age, and what you just said popped into my head when I read some of those things about, you know not planning so much for aging, for getting older, you know, does that resonate with you too?

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah,

LAURA: cause that's how I felt

CLAIRE: and now that I am getting older it's kind of weird cause I didn't think I'd, I thought it would get me. You know what I mean, like I didn't think, 'oh by the time I'm 40 I want to be" you know what I mean? I'm out of here!

LAURA: exactly. But it doesn't sound like you had a problem with that.

CLAIRE: no, no,

LAURA: it's like live in the here and now.

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah, yeah, so it's a different-

LAURA: I find myself trying to figure out what I want to be when I grow up because I never thought about it before.

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: because like, I didn't think I was going to be around to grow up.

CLAIRE: And that reminds me, did I tell you about the poetry group I was in once?

LAURA: no!

CLAIRE: and um we were in this group, she was like in her 50s and I was in my 20s and she was like telling how she never shared her poetry with her children because some of it was sexual...

...

LAURA: yeah so back to the poetry group.

CLAIRE: yeah so she's like talking about how she'd keep all of her poetry secret because she didn't feel it was appropriate to share with her kids. Like even though they were adult kids, she didn't want to share, and so she kept it all secret and she wanted them to have it when she died. And then I said yeah, that's what I feel like except I'm saving all of mine for my mother. So, she can have it when I die. And not even thinking that, and she just looked at me and she said, 'but your mother dies before you do' but I didn't have that, like I think my parents are going to live longer than I am. Like everyone around me will live longer than I will. Like I didn't have that sense of, oh I'm going to save this for my mom, like I wouldn't want to show it to her know, but she might want to look at my journals after I'm gone. You know, it was just a weird, yeah, it just didn't even dawn on me. I was thinking, until someone pointed it out to me I didn't think of that, that makes me odd.

LAURA: it's definitely something that has forced us to face our own mortality, I guess. To accept that, I think in a way.

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah,

LAURA: cause your sitting here talking about it, it's not like your you know, it's a sad thing, or

CLAIRE: no, it's just completely normal, it's typical.

LAURA: anything, it's our normal.

CLAIRE: yeah...

LAURA: um, well some of that leads into this next thing about having had this cancer experience, about how it affects your life socially, it at all? Um, do you feel like it does, in terms of how you relate to other people?

CLAIRE: I don't think so much now. I mean, I never told anyone.

LAURA: oh really? You kept this a secret.

CLAIRE: I mean people who knew me at the time knew, but like as time went on I didn't like share it with someone. Like a lot of people didn't know that I have had cancer and like you know, I graduated



from college and then you all disperse or whatever and get a job, and you get new friends. And you know, I would not tell people. Yeah there was no really reason to.

LAURA: but did you always kind of feel like-um-I mean do you feel like it made you different in some way from other people you were around?

CLAIRE: um, yeah, I think so but I don't know how to say how except for some of the things we already talked about like the not thinking-I know I made some decisions around healthcare that made me really nervous to be a survivor and not have health insurance. So that was, even you know most people when they're 25 don't worry about that, you know what I mean? Like I could not work a part time job because I needed to have a full time job that has insurance. Or I can't, I would think, I don't even know if this is true or not but I would think, 'oh if I want to go to the Peace Corps I can't because what if I get cancer if I'm there. Or you know, things like that, I thought that way.

LAURA: but you kept all of that to yourself?

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah, yeah. So in that way I was more cautious-it's interesting the dichotomy I think. This cautiousness but at the same time like taking chances.

LAURA: well it's your reality, I mean-

CLAIRE: mmhmm

LAURA: so like when did- after the surgery you weren't immediately in a wheelchair?

CLAIRE: no. once they removed the pressure, I walked again for 13 years. I was 33 I think when that started.

LAURA: and what was happening, physically?

CLAIRE: what they say -and I don't know if I really, this is the way I explain it-like the radiation stays in you-or the damage of the radiation, like it's a slow damage, right. So, it stayed in my spine and it slowly killed the nerves. So, it was doing all that time, but it took that long for it to manifest in that to me. Cause I- first it was this leg, the foot, you know a dropped foot and then this leg started and I mean it was-

LAURA: so it was very gradual?

CLAIRE: yeah, it took 5 or 6 years before I was in a wheelchair and I couldn't stand at all.

LAURA: did you know why this was happening? I mean were you warned about this or-?

CLAIRE: I remember a little bit, like thinking that it could impact me later, but not really, cause they didn't do that then, they didn't talk about late effects, you - like now I think they do, I think you get like a late effects plan or something, I don't know I've read this online, I don't know. I never got one!

LAURA: I didn't get one!

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: it was in '84 for me too.

CLAIRE: yeah they didn't do that then. So um, (distraction again-question from daughter about cooking dinner) um,

LAURA: in terms of being warned about the late effects, you didn't know and so it just--

CLAIRE: I think I knew when it happened that it had something to do with cancer. I knew it, but I thought that I had the tumor again, is what I thought. So when I went back they were like 'no you don't have a tumor.... So, it took a whole another year to get a diagnosis again. Someone finally made the connection that it had to do with, yeah-

LAURA: that it had to do with something that happened 13 years earlier.

CLAIRE: yeah, that it wasn't that I was, I did something to my back... it's just a pinched nerve or something. They thought I was really paranoid like that, I kept thinking 'oh I have cancer again'. I knew that it was something.

LAURA: you knew something was wrong.

CLAIRE: yeah. I was anxious to know what, but-

LAURA: well where in that were you, did you get your interest in dancing? because I know that you danced a little bit as a kid, you showed me you little recital dance-

CLAIRE: oh yeah (*giggle*)

LAURA: you sang me the song and everything, I have it on video!

CLAIRE: do you really? Oh how funny!

LAURA: and there was that but you didn't pursue that-

CLAIRE: it was in my 20s. that's when I went

LAURA: so it was after you had the surgery but before you were in a wheelchair?

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: ok,

CLAIRE: there was this real small town, they had this [*dance company*].

LAURA: yeah you talked about and you sad that they took anybody

CLAIRE: yeah they did! (*giggle*) so that's when I did my country western dance too.

LAURA: so what was that transition like in terms of like when you realized that you were going to be in a wheelchair that you had found this love for dance-it sounds like you had found that during that time-

CLAIRE: I though it was over.

LAURA: did you? What was that like for you?

CLAIRE: um, it was actually really sad. The point that I thought it was over interestingly was when I was on crutches. So actually, the chair gave me more freedom to move than being on crutches. Cause I can remember going out with my friends, like we went out, there's like that boat that goes up and down Willamette, we went out one night and you could go dancing. and I remember just like being really sad because I just couldn't do it, it just hurt too much...

LAURA: and so how did you, what was the transition to where you are know, still dancing, still creating pieces, I mean how?

CLAIRE: I'm not really sure how all of that happened, I guess I decided 'oh, I'm going to do it anyway' but I don't know how. I mean I started doing [*various forms of improv*]... so I started doing that-

LAURA: but you don't remember making the recognition or becoming aware that 'wait a minute I can still do this'?

CLAIRE: I don't think it was with, I think it was with more than just dance in particular, I think it was with life in general. Like I started seeing these things, like people would tell me that 'well from now on in your life you can only do this' and I was like 'what?!' you know like, and then that consciousness happened like things you know like, well I don't know what I'm going to do, cause I was an outreach worker so I was out on the street, that's the kind of work I had always done. Like a lot of community, outreach HIV, that's how I met these guys (*referring to her 'daughters'*) it was with pregnant women. Um so um, I'm like well 'what am I going to do now?' and they were like 'well you're going to have to have a job where you sit in an office all day.' So I started thinking, well I can't do that, there's just no way, I mean I just can't.

LAURA: yeah, like your personality didn't change!

CLAIRE: yeah, exactly! I can't just, you know, and this is what you have to do, I can't just, you know I mean, just these really like,--and it took a while to figure it out. Like I remember being like-I know it sounds really silly, but I was like 'how am going to do dishes?' you know and I didn't know how to figure that out, you know what I mean?

LAURA: so wasn't there like any occupational therapy?

CLAIRE: I didn't get any of that cause of the way, I wasn't in rehab. I never got rehab because of the way I got sick, or because of the way it happened. You know I wasn't in an accident, so it was a different, and I didn't have MS or something where you could go to an agency where there would be a resource, a CP or whatever, you know what I mean. Not that that would have been any better but I would have gotten, you know what I mean?

LAURA: right, right. You were very much on your own.

CLAIRE: yeah, cause I remember asking well where are the other people like me?

LAURA: exactly!

CLAIRE: and I did that to a therapist once and she goes 'oh I'm sure there are tons of people' like I was trying to be all special and like it wasn't about that. It was about learning about other people like me, like how do I learn, what is this?

LAURA: have you met anybody who has had-

CLAIRE: no. I haven't. I met somebody who had an osteo sarcoma and then that's like... and when I was hospitalized there was another woman, but her sarcoma was like in her pelvic area so it was a little different. And I don't know if it was, most sarcomas are in the bone and mine was the soft tissue.

LAURA: see I had sarcoma of my uterus, um, and uh, I mean it was a very rare thing, and like you, I don't know anyone else who, you know had that-

CLAIRE: oh, interesting.

LAURA: and that's-it's hard to not know anybody else you have to be your own teacher I guess.

CLAIRE: yeah.

...

LAURA: Let's see. Okay I want to talk about your dancing a little bit but then I want to talk about some of the things you wrote in your journal.

CLAIRE: ok

LAURA: um, I was watching the video tape I took from when we were at... the dance studio and one of the things that popped up for me was about whenever I've seen you dance, it seems like your choice is always to stay in the chair, could you talk a little bit about dancing in the chair vs. out of the chair, and what your preference is and why?

CLAIRE: well some of it's very practical. Cause I can't get back into my chair by myself. So, unless someone is going to get me out and put me back in- I can get out by myself but I can't get back in

LAURA: oh, right.

CLAIRE: yeah, so that's, yeah, um, I have done some contact on the floor, not just the *[name]* thing but here. When there are people, but so many times, I dance with people with disabilities that there is no one to, there's nobody who can get you in and out. So, it's like a practical thing. But I don't have that belief, and this is just my opinion, like in DanceAbility like sometimes one thing that bugged me about that training was like, sometimes when people would-and I don't think it came from *[name]* even, it might have a little bit- but from the other people in the group, like 'oh, it's so much better when you're on the floor'-

LAURA: like you felt like there was a judgment thing?

CLAIRE: yeah, like, like 'it's so much better you should be on the floor' and like it's better not to be in the chair. I don't really like that. I think it's like different and I think that it's good to be on the floor sometimes and it's good to be in your chair but they think that it's so much better to be on your, like it kind of gives the chair like a negative or something to me. Like somehow it's- what I like on the floor is that I use my body differently, so it's different...and so that's the value of being on the floor.

LAURA: right, so it's just a different way of moving

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah, yeah, and I like it. And um I'm pretty strong... We're working on this piece called 'cobalt' and we're like actually cobalts, so we're goblins, which is the German word for goblin. And so this 23 year old guy-he's great- and we're like on the floor together and like, I was just as strong as him. He was like 'oh I'm feeling your strength!' cause we were pulling and we had like equal, yeah, I was like 'I'm an old woman but I've got some muscle! I could be your mother!' (*big laugh*)

LAURA: (*laugh*) that's funny. Um, so, and this may be related to being in the chair, when I watch people dance or move, I don't make a conscious effort to do it, but sometimes I imagine what that would feel like on my body. And one thing that you did a lot of, was that you would go backwards in your chair and you would go at lightening speed and then spin, and I was, in some ways that would bring up fear for me but obviously, you didn't feel fearful at all. And I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about that action.

CLAIRE: It's really fun!!

LAURA: like to go backwards?

CLAIRE: yeah (*giggle*) cause the momentum of going backwards, if you go fast enough the spin, you aren't spinning, it's-the momentum spins you. So it's like a carnival ride I guess. I don't know, but it's fun! Yeah! And it's a better turn than, I mean the turn is nicer than when you go forward. Yeah, I mean the momentum isn't the same-yeah so it's really, really fun. You just go and then you're like whew! I don't know-

LAURA: do you know when the turn is going to happen?

CLAIRE: I can feel it yeah, I mean I can't plan it um where every time...

LAURA: but the going backwards too, I mean you never ran into anything, you always, and you never even turned around to look. I mean in the video you were just going for it and it's not like, there was just this awareness, this spatial awareness or something.

CLAIRE: I think I have a pretty good, like how far my chair like I don't run into things unless I'm really tired.

LAURA: is that something that took time to get?

CLAIRE: yeah, and this is a nice chair, I mean compared to the chair I started out with, this is a much better chair. It's less bulky and less. I don't understand how I even used my other chair, and why would they give someone, well they do cause it's cheap-it's a health insurance issue-but why would they give someone a chair that's twice as hard to use when you are first starting out? You know, it's bulky, it's heavy, it's twice the weight of this, the arms and everything's on it-cause I have all of my upper body stuff so I don't need all of that. So uh yeah, so part of it was, yeah,

LAURA: how long were you in that chair?

CLAIRE: oh like almost 5 years, like 4 years. Cause they only let you buy a new one every 5 years that's like the insurance, 5 to 7 years.

LAURA: so in your journal, this week's you know the most recent ones, I'm just going to pull out some things and see if you can talk more about it. One of the things you wrote was 'the experience of cancer was not is removal not only physically of tissue but a removal from life as it once was' can you talk about that a little bit?

CLAIRE: I feel like my life, like there is a before and after. Like it's very um like the diagnosis before that things were very different than after the cancer- and when I was diagnosed and in the wheelchair it's very, I don't know how to explain my, it's something that I feel. I feel it. And like an example is that I was down in California for something that's were I used to live and I would say 'oh it's been so long since I've been here and you know, blah blah, and it feels so different and blah blah blah' and they would say 'well how long?' and I was like 'oh it was like 8 years ago' and she was like 'that's not very long'. But to me because like the transition from walking to not walking it felt like a lifetime, like it felt like 30 years or something, like, I felt really different afterward. Like my whole growing of childhood was very different, like it was this other life, this other person. For some reason it felt that way.

LAURA: so are those like reference point for your life?

CLAIRE: yeah, definitely, yeah.

LAURA: something else you wrote was, 'no one knew how to react to cancer' um, how did it affect you socially?

CLAIRE: that's something, like, the dance story, like I went home, it was in the middle of my treatment and my high school friends and...and I was back home

LAURA: yeah I think you mentioned them

CLAIRE: yeah, and went dancing without me. And I was ticked, and my friends told me 'well we didn't think you could go because you were on crutches" and I'm like 'but I wanted to go!'...

LAURA: and so they didn't even give you the option.

CLAIRE: no, huh-uh, they didn't ask me to go at all. And they all went.

LAURA: how do you feel about that now. Like when you think about that, like,

CLAIRE: oh it's like awful. And that friend apologized to me later because both of her parents died of cancer, so that was kind of an interesting, yeah,

LAURA: wow, that is interesting. It's one of those things like you know, to put yourself in their shoes, I'm like will I can kind of understand it but to make that choice for you is not-

CLAIRE: yeah, I mean I totally understand it, like you're 19 and you don't know what to do with that stuff, you know. Yeah. From that perspective yeah, but from my emotional perspective

LAURA: from your own perspective it was totally different,

CLAIRE: yeah right, yeah, so there's always two sides. So, it's not like they were terrible people. It was just, they had no idea.

LAURA: people didn't know how to react to it.

CLAIRE: older people, will I think the older you get the better you are because you have more, [life experiences] and I was probably the first person they knew [in a wheelchair]

LAURA: my experience like that was that I was 12 and I think that other kids thought that I was contagious, I mean my hair was falling out, I mean like, and that whole kind of, like I knew people cared but they didn't want to get too close, you know? It's just other people's reaction.

CLAIRE: uh-huh.

LAURA: you said something, you referred to something about 'the race', do you know, can you talk about that a little bit.

CLAIRE: yeah, like who has it the worst? I think it happens in disability too with... and stuff, yeah, like it's comparing stories, like who's worse and I had it... I think it's warped but I think it's true.

LAURA: it makes sense to me and I knew exactly what you meant when you wrote it, I just wanted to hear,

CLAIRE: I don't how else to,

LAURA: I've never heard it referred to in that way but I've experienced that. Um,

CLAIRE: like and 'how rare is your cancer' like 'oh yours is more rare, and like, how long did you go through it and how many times did you have it, and it's like this, yeah, I'm like even a minute of it is all bad.

LAURA: and then the long-term effects, which you really experienced, is that included that?

CLAIRE: does it count? (*sarcastic*)

LAURA: yeah, do you get extra point for that?

CLAIRE: yeah and I think that's something she held on to, like in terms of her identity,

LAURA: this Lucy?

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah in terms of,

LAURA: is that the same Lucy you referred to in your journal?

CLAIRE: yeah, probably, yeah. Cause she had Ewing sarcoma and she was one of the first people I ever knew who had the same thing as I had. Yeah, and she said hers was in her jaw so it was a totally different, but that identification, cause I remember looking at the book of the month club and looking at this interesting book cover and then reading, Ewing Sarcoma, and I can remember that making that connection

LAURA: wow, there's something comforting in that for you?

CLAIRE: yeah, it's kind of sick isn't it?

LAURA: well, no, it would be for me too. It's not that you are glad someone else has it, you're glad you're not the only one.

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: there's a difference I think

CLAIRE: I think so too!

LAURA: we hope anyway! You wrote that shame was a part of your cancer experience, the feeling of shame came up. What was that about?

CLAIRE: somehow I caused it.

LAURA: somehow what?

CLAIRE: I caused it.

LAURA: oh

CLAIRE: what did I do, how did it, yeah.

LAURA: a lot of people have said that.

CLAIRE: interestingly, and I don't feel that way now, but at the time I did. And even probably for a few years later...

LAURA: do you feel like you maybe searched for a reason?

CLAIRE: I think so yeah, I was in a study.

LAURA: search for an explanation for it?

CLAIRE: there was a study out at Stanford to figure out what were the common elements of my type of cancer-

LAURA: that you were in? you were part of this study?

CLAIRE: yeah, and it wasn't like a major study, it was like a small sample. And um, the result was that they were all like smaller farming communities or smaller, like a group of rural areas so they were thinking that it was from the environment.

LAURA: whoa. In one of your journals, you wrote, 'I don't remember feeling life was all in front of me when it was over. I felt that death and life were both with me. Together.' Is that related to the whole, like we were just talking about how it was natural for you to think that your mom would outlive you?

CLAIRE: mmhmm yeah, yeah, yeah, and I didn't have that, like afterward I always felt like I was supposed be different after it happened, like I was supposed to be this super evolved person. Like you come out of this, and that's kind of like the type of person who, boy I'm a lot stronger, and like that did not happen to me. (*giggle*) afterward I was like more, like I questioned more. Like I didn't have it all figured out. I didn't have that like survivor, like I don't know how to say it, to me it's like the 'super crip' thing, so-

LAURA: is it kind of, like the whole idea of 'ok this thing didn't kill me so I must be meant to do something big' is it like that?

CLAIRE: but people put that on you! Yeah! Uh like I got that, people would call me a miracle and like how that would put pressure- like I'm only 20 years old and your calling me a miracle and I don't even know what I want to do-like that you know what I mean, it's a weird like thing.

LAURA: almost a burden.

CLAIRE: yeah, yeah.

LAURA: um, you wrote that 'there is judgment in being a survivor' which goes hand in hand with what we just talked about.

CLAIRE: yeah.

LAURA: and then, you talked a little bit about vanity, right, the leg-shaving thing.

CLAIRE: yeah!

LAURA: Um, I'm so glad you shared that story and it made me think about, and I don't know if this resonates with you at all, like does that type of thing have something to do with like wanting to control something about your body-like obviously you had no control over the cancer, I mean does that, like oh this is something that I can control-how you look, like the whole vanity thing- does that mean anything to you?



CLAIRE: yeah and I was really um, I looked awful, cause when I went for my chemo I broke out, I had red stuff all over my face and all over here, and one time this little kid came up to me in the mall and said ‘mom it’s a monster!’”

LAURA: oh my God!

CLAIRE: this little kid, and I understand, I mean I had no eyebrows and you look freaky, some of that stuff makes you look-yeah

LAURA: right especially to a little kid who has never seen that before.

CLAIRE: exactly, yeah that’s not

LAURA: but it still affects you to be the one on the receiving end of that.

CLAIRE: and so maybe. And I don’t know that I was ever really that ugly but I remember feeling that, it’s icky, you just have all of this crusty stuff all over your face, and your body feels icky anyway, just the tingling and the numbness and even though it doesn’t look, if you’re sick, you look sick. I guess so much not anymore more then with chemo, you did, or I did, I shouldn’t say- and I was really yellow, jaundiced, yeah...Did I answer your question?

LAURA: yeah kind of, I mean I’ve just always been kind of curious about, I find myself obsessing over things only because I can have control over it a little bit, I think so many time I haven’t had control over what’s happened to my body I was just kind of curious if you ever felt that.

CLAIRE: hmmm

LAURA: that’s pretty much all I had written down unless there is anything else you want to share or –

CLAIRE: not off the top of my head...

LAURA: and I have to say that the writing, the journaling that you do is just, you go so deep so fast when you write!

CLAIRE: yeah, I feel a little vulnerable when I do it, to be perfectly honest.

LAURA: well when I read it there are times when I see a little bit of self judgment like you write ‘I don’t know if I’m doing this right’ but from my point of view it’s like wow I feel like I’m right there with you when I’m reading it. So I understand the vulnerability cause it fills me up with emotion when I’m reading it. So, I imagine that you are going to a deep place. So thank you for that.

CLAIRE: yeah. It will be interesting to see like your project, like how people are different.

### Iris K: Conversational Interview from Round 2

*Location: a private study room in the library*

*Duration: 1 hour*

LAURA: all right, so, and I know so much time has passed but the first part of this, I’m going to address some of the things from when I verbally guided you through the movement interview and I was using your own words from you journal, um, to have to respond to in movement. This was way back in October. And so, if you have nothing to say, that’s fine, since it was so long ago, but I’m trying to be a

little general. And so, in that observation, I noticed that you spent a lot of time with your hands covering your face, or your eyes, or your ears. There was a lot, this type of stuff. And I have also noticed that in other times in observing you dance, you know I've seen you dance several times. So, that seems to be a common movement theme for you, and I'm wondering if you could talk about that a little bit?

IRIS K: mmm, [she took a moment to cover her face, eyes, ears here] I think it's a going inside thing, and possibly a little bit of a hiding. And it's also I think a, sort of a self-touching thing. Which is something that I can do more of at different times in dancing. It's that kind of thing. And at different times in different kinds of movement my hands feel very energized or powerful so it might have something to do with that.

LAURA: transferring the energy from your hands?

IRIS K: just bringing the energy in to the head. And my head has notoriously taken me out of my body. So maybe it's sort of a way to try to calm my head down, settle it down, keep it from moving so fast. Give it a little therapeutic touch.

LAURA: and in that same session, one of things that I said and you responded to, 'what is the purpose of dance in my life' and your hands went immediately into this prayer gesture, which was also a recurring theme for you. Um, does that mean something for you? What is that gesture to you?

IRIS K: oh it's definitely about thank-gratefulness, and thank, thank, thanking. You know [tears shed here] thankful for the opportunity to move. And I think it's kind of a universal prayer, you know I don't think it's connected to any religion in particular but I think it's a universal prayer kind of movement. It seems like that to me anyway.

LAURA: gratefulness. One of the other things I said, I was quoting from your journal was, 'I am a dancer' and when I did that you sat up and you had your arms outstretched like this and I guess I was questioning, is that a sense of pride of being a dancer, is that a sense of receiving? And I know this was such a while ago, but if you were to do this gesture, what is that?

IRIS K: it's an opening.

LAURA: a giving or a receiving opening?

IRIS K: yeah, I think it's probably both. I mean when I do that right now I feel sort of a sense of joy. Um a sense of connection with the universe. And remembering that everything is really a dance, just even the slightest little movement through our lives everyday. I forget that but in those moments, I remember it.

LAURA: this is another recurring theme in your movement that I noticed in watching those videotapes. You tend to have very strong moments of this folding in, even sometimes in your face where you scrunch it up, and it alternates with the exact opposite, with this unfolding and outstretched action. Can you tell me what that feels like to you when you do that and does that mean something? Does that resonate somewhere?

IRIS K: what does it feel like? I like that feeling of the opposites, all in and then all out. It's like a coming in and then a giving out. I'm thinking about naval radiation which is a body mind centering thing, which I don't think I was thinking at all about that at the time but when I do it with kind of a consciousness I think of that and that's sort of one of the very primary movements of the fetus. And it's like the center is where everything comes from and there is connection to something greater in the center, initially it's the mother, but she has to have a center that's connected to something too.

LAURA: this will be easier because this is about the journal that you just wrote this week. First of all you put 'w slash c' is that wheelchair?

IRIS K: oh yeah, w slash c

LAURA: so you wrote that being a one-legged woman brings you lots of attention, some positive, like you can provide inspiration and hope, some negative, like you are always on display. How does dance fit into that when, particularly in performance, when you are actively putting yourself on display? Because you wrote about display as being a negative.

IRIS K: oh, well I think it's my own desire too, that it's not that I am just forced to. Like in my everyday life, and I make a choice to do that, and I think it's one of the parts of dance that is the most difficult for me, not because I don't like to be on display because I'm kind of used to it, but because I don't always know if I'm putting something on display that is actually interesting because, you know, I'm not a choreographer. *[laugh]*

LAURA: so is there this inner monologue, kind of a censoring thing that happens when you are performing? That doesn't happen when you are in the studio by yourself?

IRIS K: yeah. I think so, especially if I am doing choreography that I think I can't do that well.

LAURA:; like someone else's choreography?

IRIS K: yes, yes, yes. I mean I'm much better if I am just improving, doing improvisation because then I'm not thinking so much about that and I know the whole group is more thinking about what's the bigger picture and whatever is going to happen is what you have. But you don't find that kind of thing much in performance. So being put on display, through dance it's a more positive thing because I decided to do it. Yeah.

LAURA: um, a thing, at least this is how I saw it, and you can correct me if this is not what you meant but in you journaling there was a little bit of a theme of guilt that came up. Like you mentioned your cancer causing your parents a lot of money, and you mentioned your survival as opposed other kids that didn't from the same disease, and you mentioned, I got the feeling of you blamed yourself from falling off the bike.

IRIS K: mmhmm

LAURA: I'm just wondering if you can talk a little bit about that and overcoming it, or if you have, or that guilt feeling.

IRIS K: yeah, I think there is a huge feeling of guilt on some level, that it was even my fault that I got the cancer. And that I cost my parents all that money. And I mean I know that's not true, I'm totally sure that's true, but inside of me I feel like it might be. And I feel like I need to prove something to the world. I mean a friend of mine is telling me that I should right a memoir, which is probably an ok idea. I mean I've had a very interesting life and I've done a lot of different things and I've had a lot of struggles and blah, blah, blah,. but then I feel obligated like "I should do that." That it's my responsibility to do that and I think that thing about surviving,, I feel like I could never get mad at people for looking at me or anything like that because I felt like it was my responsibility to teach them about this, not to get mad at them for who they were.

LAURA: is that a burden to you?

IRIS K: well, I think it never felt like that early on, but as soon as I realized I was doing it, then I went through a period where it was, and I still wonder about it. It doesn't really feel like a burden to me but I

know that for other people it's much more important for them to get mad at people who either look at them or don't provide opportunities for them or something and I still don't really feel that way. I still feel like it's more important to just be nice to people and to help people understand more, and that I'm the one who should be more inconvenienced than anybody else. I've gotten a little better at that over my life, so yeah.

LAURA: so you just said that you feel like you need to prove something to the world, and something else you wrote in your journal was, when you were writing about surviving, that it made you feel like you have to do something as a payback. What is it that you feel like you have to prove, or payback, or owe?

IRIS K: well I never feel like I'm meeting up to my full potential. Like I don't even know what it is but I'm supposed to be doing something that's noticeable in the world. Now that might just be some sort of a narcissist egotism or something. It might have nothing to do at all with having had cancer but I think it is related to a certain extent to that. I feel like it has something to do with feeling like I need to payback the world for saving my life!

LAURA: I'm smiling because I can definitely relate to that feeling and that big question. And it almost sounds like you are searching for what that is, you are continuing to search.

IRIS K: right! I don't know. And it's almost like nothing could ever be, even if I find it, it won't be the right thing because all of the things I've found, still it's never the right thing. I mean there's still something else that I'm missing. You know, it's like that kind of a search. Like it's never good enough or the right thing or whatever. I mean obviously over the years I've gotten better at that. As you get older, you just realize that you've got to let go of these crazy notions! (*giggle*)

LAURA: right. Sometimes the head and the heart are disconnected. You know it in your head but your heart is not responding to that knowledge.

IRIS K: nothing in the universe is forcing me to do anything.

LAURA: right!

IRIS K: I could just lay around for the rest of my life and it would be okay --but I wouldn't feel okay about it. I mean I feel like it's my responsibility to be out in the world as much as possible. That somehow that's part of my life's purpose—to be out in the world to show people that it's okay, that people can survive and go on and no matter what challenges you can still keep on going.

LAURA: in the 2<sup>nd</sup> topic of this past week in the journal which was 'is there a relationship between being a dancer and being a cancer survivor for you. One of the things that you wrote was, "I began dancing because something inside my deep cells wanted to move around in ways I had not given myself permission before." again to me, that seems like you were searching for something, and don't let me put words in your mouth, but somehow dance was an answer. but I'm curious as to what was the question? You wrote about taking a painting class, and was that not enough, was there still something---?

IRIS K: well, I had a 40-year history of bulimia. Bad bulimia, you know I mean like 30 or 40 or 50 times a day. And I did that from the age of 17 until I was 47 so pretty much 30 solid years and I mean in the last 10 years I've had on and off little bouts with it, I mean like once a day or something a couple of times a week but nothing like I did before. So one of my journeys was always to find a way to end that and to stop it. And so the question I think was, I mean at the time when I discovered or found dance, I was really in a bad down place, feeling like I didn't know what I was doing and I was depressed and struggling and I felt spiritually totally not there. And that's when I got into the painting thing and from there, it led me on to dance. And it didn't become a solution to the bulimia but it definitely put me on the journey that I think eventually allowed me to give it up. It started me on that journey because part of the bulimia for sure was just a total desire to get rid of anything that I felt inside myself. Any experience I

had, any feeling I had, any fear I had, anything, I mean just like any addiction it just sort of takes you into 'la la land' um and uh so—

LAURA: um

IRIS K: and maybe you know I felt like it was a way of getting rid of any extra cancer that might be in there. I mean I don't really know, I didn't start it right around the cancer time.

LAURA: what is the time frame of that?

IRIS K: well, after I lost my leg, I got this wooden leg, and our family doctor told me I had gotten too fat and that was after being really skinny. And I really wasn't that fat so he said that I wasn't going to be able to walk anymore if I got chubbier and so he put me on a 1000-calorie diet. So, that was when I was 12. and so, from then I was pretty much in the anorexia thing. You know I went on the 1000-calorie diet and I ate less and less and I didn't have my period for years and so it did start right around the time of the cancer deal. You know the eating disorder, the bad stuff.

LAURA: mmhmm. And then when did the dance come into that?

IRIS K: oh the dance didn't come in until I was in my late thirties. Yeah so, that was quite a while after that. But I mean I still hadn't done any significant exploring of my body by that time.

LAURA: because of fear?

IRIS K: fear, and because I was on the wooden leg until my early thirties and really put me this straightjacket kind of thing almost, you know it was almost impossible to feel my body. And then when I took it off I did begin I think—I went to Martha's vineyard for a year and I didn't where my leg for the first time in my whole life and then when I came back I wore it a while and then after I got a job, I took it off and then I never wore it anymore. And then that sort of began my big journey that finally led me to find dance.

LAURA: just kind of this gradual—permission—the word permission keeps coming up to me—this gradual permission of giving yourself more and more freedom to move and to feel.

IRIS K: yep! Yep. That is exactly it. Yeah

LAURA: um. All of this is so related to what you just said but I'm going to go ahead and say it to see if it pulls anything else out for you.

IRIS K: sure, mmhmm.

LAURA: you wrote about feeling stuck like you could not grow up, and that dance helped you to re-engage with your body. Um what had been disengaged in the first place?

IRIS K: Well I think just even feeling any of my body! FEELING any of it. Being willing to uh, even allow any emotions to go through it at all. Even after I stopped wearing the leg, it wasn't until I had the first real dance experience that I had like a flooding of memories from my childhood and from the cancer time. And so yeah, what was stuck was just everything in me, and I think it was just fear. There was just so much fear inside my body, of feeling anything. Because I didn't have any opportunities, you know right when I got the cancer, to do any grieving at all. It was none of that until I got into my thirties. And so, that stuff got unstuck.

LAURA: what is something that was kind of ignored when you were a child, by your family?

IRIS K: very much so!

LAURA: like the elephant in the room.

IRIS K: very much so! Oh so totally so!! I went home from the hospital, well first of all, the fact that I can't remember anything between ages 8 and 11, something huge happened to me and my family when I was 8 and to think that there was nothing in between that, you know, anyway that's one thing. And then when I went home from the hospital with my one leg I remember it was January 4<sup>th</sup> and I went home and I sat on the couch and my two brothers were there, well my three brothers were there, and nobody said one thing about my one leg, not even anything, and nobody EVER said anything about my having one leg, I mean really it was just, and then they could not wait until I got that wooden leg cause then I had 2 legs. And then that just totally, I don't know, it meant that they didn't have to deal with it anymore or something I guess. And yeah, there was nothing ever addressed about, I didn't even know the word 'cancer'. And there was no expectation that there would be anything sad about it because I was alive, you know.

LAURA: right. Very interesting, all of the dynamics, you know?

IRIS K: mmhmm

LAURA: you wrote, 'I'm happy to say I do not worry that dancing or moving will cause more cancer or stir it up' can you talk a little bit about that because it implies that at one time you did.

IRIS K: well you know I think the thing about the bicycle, you know falling off the bicycle and making my leg bad and that was the cause of the cancer the second time. I mean I don't think that was really true but it's still something I remember my mother saying and believing and I don't know if she's said it recently or not but, uh, so I don't think about the conscious of that but when asked the question about my cancer, I do think that there has been something under there that doesn't know why that happened, still believes that it was something I must have done and how can I keep it from happening again? And since it is in the body then it must have something to do with moving around somehow, or something I eat which I think may be the bulimia connection. I'm not sure if those are direct things but I think that somewhere in the cells, there's that kind of a fear still. And it takes a real conscious effort to try to stay out of that place. Even though, you know I've been cancer free for thousands of years, really, so I don't have anything to be afraid of but I think it's just something that's in there.

LAURA: experience

IRIS K: mmhmm

LAURA: well that's interesting to me that you talk about the cells a lot. And you talk about it when it comes to movement, when you are writing about your 'cells wanted to move' you like feeling every cell in your body dance, these are things I remember you say and it just came up for me that cells, I mean, that's what cancer attacks.

IRIS K: that's right

LAURA: and uh, can you talk a little bit about that? I mean have you made that connection for yourself before?

IRIS K: um well, yeah, I know cancer attacks cells and I think one of my focuses in moving the body thing is just like envisioning healthy cells in my body, as healthy as I can possibly envision and one of the visions I had about my cancer years ago, and I still think that this could be true, is that there was so much mess in my being from my family history and it was just a bunch of, emotionally there was a lot of bad stuff in my family and that somehow that some of it had been passed down to me and that the cancer was

actually a way of taking some of that and consolidating that into one place and getting rid of it, all in one big lump. And it left me with some residuals but it was able to clear out enough that I could actually function in the world. But I would rather clean out my cells in a different way than that if I had the opportunity.

LAURA: right (*giggle*)

IRIS K: so I imagine the healthy cells. And I don't think it's like that stuff you know those people who do a lot of cancer therapy years ago, and they would say 'oh imagine all of your cells healthy' I don't really think [that was it] more just like there's these joyous scrubby bubble cells in there that are just trying to clean everything up and make as much room as possible for them to bounce around in there.

LAURA: and does dance help you find that?

IRIS K: Dance definitely helps me find that. Yeah, because I feel spacious, I feel like there's room, I feel um, I just feel inside of myself, and so that's a good thing.

LAURA: your next sentence after that, stirring the cancer up, was 'on the contrary, I feel like cancer is the best thing I can do for my body' How? Why?

IRIS K: well because it's random movement, it's not movement that is for any particular purpose, I mean the kind that I like to do, improvisational movement like that. Because it stirs up things inside of me that, either I'm trying hard not to notice or that are stuck and it helps unstick places that would be good for me to visit. Oh and because it feels fun and playful and so uh, and because it gets me in relationships with other people.

LAURA: you wrote how 'dance can help you to love your body' which is so interesting that we are coming to my final 3 questions and we started talking about how much you hated your body. So, tell me a little bit about dances relationship to loving your body

IRIS K: well, um, it's a big relationship, I think first of all I just, even the beginning of loving my body started with dance. I don't think I ever would have gotten to loving my body and I don't even think I really always love my body but that was where it all began. That there was even a possibility for that. Even if I am in the worst place in terms of feeling fat or like this part of me is too, it sticks out this way, when I get on the floor and start moving around, I just totally, that stuff is just gone and I just enjoy myself so much and even the simplest things like touching hands with somebody or rolling on the floor, or even like doing this it's all so, it just all feels so good. So it, uh, yeah, it consciously brings me into thinking about my body in a positive way, it's not just that I'm experiencing it [my body] but I'm actually thinking about it that way. And it helps that other people say positive things about it, that's helpful.

LAURA: yeah, that reinforcement. Um, in many ways this is an obvious question. Does being a cancer survivor affect how you experience your everyday living?

IRIS K: for me, and I think I wrote it in there, it's so connected up with my one-leggedness, for me. So yes, it does. Because there's never any forgetting that I had cancer. You know? I mean I'm always aware of that and any time anybody asks me about my leg. I mean it's actually been a little bit of a challenge over the years when kids ask, which they always do, because cancer is not something that kids, first of all, a lot of them don't even know about it, and then if they do, it's usually something pretty scary to think about. And then to think that I could have gotten cancer at age 8 and lost my leg, I mean that's very scary to kids. So it's uh, kind of a challenge to talk to kids about that but yeah, I mean it's definitely related, and my life has been affected tremendously by the fact that I have one leg.

LAURA: what about that affecting your social life?

IRIS K: oh tremendously! Even though I think there's so much to this whole thing of, if you think you can have something you can probably have it and the more you think you can't have then you probably aren't going to have it.

...

IRIS K: so it's sort of one of those things where things happen to you and we don't have a lot of control over most things and we just need to sort of figure out a way to manage them when they happen. I think that I've always had a lot of gratitude, even though I think that for many many years it was kind of false but not totally false. I think it was always sort of there and it had gotten stronger since I've been able to connect with more of the negative aspects of my emotional being (*little giggle*). And um, I just think in a lot of ways I have a lot more ability to deal with, you know, things just don't seem to, most things don't really seem to bother that much. I just don't, um, I can't stand small talk and stuff, it just like annoys me, people get so annoyed about these little tiny things that just don't matter that much (*laugh*).

LAURA: yep

IRIS K: so I mean some people with disabilities annoy me that way just like, people get really mad. I don't know, there are a lot of things just about anger that you know, maybe I'm not in touch with a lot of mine but I don't think it's the way to live in life and to have a good one. Not to be going around and expressing you anger all of the time (*laugh*).

LAURA: right (*giggle*)

IRIS K: like being entitled to things going your way all of the time. Yeah, but I think a lot the things that are a result of having something happen...a lot of things like, the ways that I am because of having had cancer. I think they're good, I think most of them are pretty good. You know?

LAURA: right, yeah. The ability to deal with small stuff?

IRIS K: yeah,

LAURA: Do you feel like you have more gratitude than some people?

IRIS K: I think so, yes. I mean I think I feel grateful just for being alive, really. Even though for years I thought, 'well why the heck did you choose me for this horrible role?!' (*laugh*)

LAURA: I think that's a very common response to being diagnosed with something like that!

IRIS K: yeah you see things more, like uh, more than just the surface level. It's kind of like a depth to uh---to experiences. And I think the other thing is that it really has given me sense, which I guess is pretty much true, is that ultimately we are all pretty much alone in the world. And each of us has our own struggles and they are not all things that anybody else can do anything about. We have to find our own way of managing. I mean people can help, but, and not everybody understands those deep cellular level experiences.

LAURA: mmhmm, yeah,

IRIS K: that's why it's good to be part of a research project like this! (*laugh*)

LAURA: (*laugh*) absolutely, well, you know, that's part of my point in doing this is to make, to give a voice to it. I mean obviously, I think there is something to it or I wouldn't be doing it. but I know how much I experienced it and it's that curiosity of 'am I the only one that has felt this way?' I don't even know that I can say what it is that I felt but I'll talk to some other people about it, and it's been so



amazing to hear and see things and be like light bulbs and bells going off and being like, 'yeah' and 'yeah' and maybe that's what I've been experiencing.

IRIS K: and that's why I think art and dance and that kind of thing is a good outlet for this because you don't have to have words necessarily for it, or even writing you know, because it's a different kind of words, and you just get to somehow- even if you know that it's not really about that. You know, if you trust the body it does what it needs to do

LAURA: yeah. Is there anything that you want to share at this time?

IRIS K: oh, you know, I was just thinking this and I've probably said this before about different things but moving and being moved ever since I started dancing I've had that feeling of being moved inside. and I feel that like when I start tearing up and stuff, I feel that things are moving in me and so that's a huge connection to dance I think. I'm being moved by something greater than myself. Like if I see a kid in a store and something just touches me in that, you know, I feel something inside my body that's good.

LAURA: there's so much strength in that. Especially in here, and now to me where I have heard your history where for so long you didn't allow that-

IRIS K: I didn't have any of that!

LAURA: and to know that you can sit here and talk about it and tear up, that's huge!

IRIS K: mmhmm, it's tremendous. I mean the dance has been tremendous, tremendous in my life! Tremendous! And I didn't even know that I was looking for that.

LAURA: was it immediate when you started dancing? I mean obviously it's all a journey but like you said you had that moment when you were lying down *{referencing journal writing}*

IRIS K: yeah that was way into it. But the first thing that happened that was really profound was I was in this class and I got into what I now know as child's pose in yoga and I was just flooded with tears. I don't even know why. When I found out it was 'child's pose' then I figured well, maybe there, that might be the connection (*giggle*). That was my first big, that was pretty early on, that was within the first six months of dancing.

LAURA: wow! And that was a new experience for you? Being flooded with emotion like that?

IRIS K: Oh! Totally, totally! I mean I just hadn't had [that], I mean I think I cried for 10 minutes or something that day. I was in a workshop thing.

LAURA: were you scared of that? Or was it more of, was it something you were afraid of that had happened, or-

IRIS K: well the good thing about that was that before that I had gone to this kind of wild and crazy art workshop place where it was in a big factory warehouse. And the woman had this idea that the way to get into making art to just do whatever you wanted with all sorts of materials, including things like you know, putting up a huge piece of paper on the wall, getting whatever paint you wanted and just going at it if you wanted to do that. Or you know building with kids' blocks or other kinds of recyclable stuff, or making clay or something. And I had been going there for a couple of months and that's where the movement thing started coming in from that. Because I was doing that and then I go into drumming with somebody and then the drumming took us into, we were painting and drumming at the same time and then the drumming took me into wanting to move. And what had happened during that few months going up was that I started having these big kind of God experiences were, I mean I wasn't even thinking about it. I had made a sculpture of hands open like this with a little man sitting in them and I made a monk and

I mean I wasn't thinking at all about that, I mean it wasn't in my conscious brain. But I made these things. And then one day I had made this big painting. I started seeing the face of Jesus in everything I was making and uh, one day I had this experience where I was making this painting and all of a sudden I felt like God was saying, 'it's okay [Iris K], lay back, lay back into my hands, everything is going to be okay'. So that was sort of like the beginning and that was very much a community kind of group of people. and there were a lot of people there who weren't afraid of people talking about that kind of stuff, you know, that that was happening to me.

LAURA: was it a group a community of disabled people?

IRIS K: no. of artists. Just people who were in this workshop thing doing art. And the woman who started it and led it and eventually didn't work out because she wasn't a good money manager and you never could keep that kind of thing going. It was just too wasteful really in some ways. But she was totally convinced that art and spirituality were like partners, so she loved that I was having all of these big things happen! (*giggle*)

LAURA: mmhmm! Sure! Absolutely!

IRIS K: so by the time I got to the dance, I was sort of already beginning to have some of that letting go stuff and then the dance just like-whew! It just really started flowing out of me. So, that was great. Yeah and who knows how you get on these journeys?!

LAURA: Right!

IRIS K: I was working nights at this hospital where I had been working for a long time in psych, and I told this young girl who worked with me, a young woman, that I was feeling like I wanted to play with clay and she told me about this place that her aunt knew about and that's how I got there, I mean, and then, so, you know, all of that stuff just happens.

LAURA: we get pointed in different directions. Wow. Thank you so much. It's just amazing.

IRIS K: thank you too, because it helps me, you know, to remember how much I like dancing and like put out there that yes please come around and ask me if you are making anything (*giggle*)

LAURA: good, good. And actually that's our next step then, is for us to get into a studio again.

IRIS K: okay, let's go and do something.

LAURA: and um, do another movement interview so I will use some of your own words to guide you through a movement session.

IRIS K: okay.

LAURA: we can schedule that now actually. If we could do it this week that would be fantastic.

#### Monica Rey: Conversational Interview #1

*Location: Monica Rey's home, quiet and private—there was a visitor who stopped by at one point during the interview and the recording was stopped for a short time.*

*Duration: 1 hour*

LAURA: all right, so, the, we're going to do, uh, hopefully a couple of these kind of interview things..

MONICA REY: okay, uh-huh

LAURA: conversations, I should say...*(giggle)* Um, and this first one is, I want to focus on the role of dance in your life.

MONICA REY: okay, okay

LAURA: Um. so, first question, why do you dance?

MONICA REY: I have to move. Have to, it's not an option not to, I mean if there something on my body that can move, it will move, even if everything else can't or if there's no arms, the legs will be going or vica versa or if the.. you know. Just like you were mentioning about your friend before, it's expression, sometimes we can't express it verbally or, um, in our daily actions but it's a personal expression that's, I-I-I, it's essential and I just, I need it. I try to enjoy everything and not need anything but I think there are certain things that are really critical to help you get thru the other things, cause there are so many other things...

LAURA: *(giggle)* You mean in life in general?

MONICA REY: In life in general, and, yeah, I-I guess the older I get the more I find out it's the good things are here and there, and so I'm like okay it's a little tidbit of a gift and and most of it rigorous and challenging and not a whole lot of fun ,but you somehow try and make some moment in the day fun because you know that this one was a gift or that was a bit of a challenge but I'm getting thru it. Yeah, Yeah, it comes down to I-I have to move. ...

LAURA: *(giggle)*

MONICA REY: *(giggle)* and I think that saying that you read, it's so coined but, you know, 'work like you don't need the money', and uh, 'love like you've never been hurt', and 'dance like nobody's watching..

LAURA: yeah

MONICA REY: that one really , *(arm gesture like it washes over her)*

LAURA: yeah

MONICA REY: yeah

LAURA: Why dance? Why not, um, you know, running or, what's the pull in to dance. what do you think has attracted you to that?

MONICA REY: Um, I-I, don't like that type of regular repetition. Not that I, I need more variety of movement, like a treadmill or running, um I can cycle, but I don't, I don't seek it. I can do it it's not that I don't fit in the repertoire along the way somewhere just for experience, and I think that everyone should run a mile um but I don't run further than that, and um, it feels better.

LAURA: do you think that maybe it, uh, cause you mentioned somewhere before something about expression—cause you can't really express as much...

MONICA REY: mmm hmm.

LAURA: if your running or cycling *(giggle)*

MONICA REY: yeah, it's just more of a chore, and where dancing is, um, it's a little bit of freedom and it's a little bit of an opportunity to let go and it's not like something you have to do it's something that you can choose to do and it's a nice enhancement to so many other things in life even though running and whatever might be as well, I don't see that as quite as much fun. and I do lots of no fun, I exercise in my own way, but um, dance is play, that's what it is, it's playful.

LAURA: yeah not at the same time

MONICA REY: *(giggle)*

LH: I mean if you can get your exercise and have fun at the same time, I mean that's what I'd rather do!

MONICA REY: That's what I think, I know *(giggle)*

LH; some of these may kind if sound like they are the same but I'm going to use different words to see if it pulls something else out.

MONICA REY: sure, ok

LAURA: um so when I observed you on Tuesday,

MONICA REY: yeah?

LAURA: there were a couple things I noticed and I just want you, you know, to see if the things I say resonate with you, um you know, are these things that you paid attention to? well first of all, did you feel more self-conscious having me watching you?

MONICA REY: no.

LAURA: ok, good

MONICA REY: you know I teach in the public all the time, like yourself, and so I will be really focused on what I have to do as well, because you know, I'm not as seasoned as the other people in the class, many of them, but I have life's experiences to bring to the table too that, it gives me that ability to just be, so um no, not nervous.

LAURA: good, so you felt like for you that was a pretty normal class experience then?

MONICA REY: yeah

LAURA: ok

MONICA REY: it was more blocking and um determination than the previous ones

LAURA: mmmhmm

MONICA REY: which is really new to me as far as choreography

LAURA: right! cause you're, you're mostly a partner dancer, right? you usually follow.

MONICA REY: mmhmm, so I haven't done choreography, like this, ever. and, I, not having you know, I understand what a chaine turn is and degage, and a, but I don't have all that solid foundation, I have exposure but not the training.

LAURA: mmm, right

MONICA REY: and so I'm really reaching. but I have enough, oh, I want to call it cavalier, enough confidence to take the risk because I don't know what tomorrow holds

LAURA: yeah.

MONICA REY: and so why not? you know, I know that I don't have anything to lose I don't know if that's if confidence is the right word.. it's more of a.. not being afraid to take a chance and not be good at it. and uh, I'm not going to say I'm not going to fail but I do have to try a lot harder but that's okay because, so what you know?

LAURA: *(giggle)*

MONICA REY: I only have to gain, there is nothing to lose, you know

LAURA: yeah, yeah,

MONICA REY: and it's so fun to dance with dancers-- because I love to look around and see how, you know, look how she walked across, and ok how she turned her head that way, so my mind is like, soaks it up

LAURA: and do you try to pull that into your movement?

MONICA REY: Oh Yeah! Oh yeah! you know kind of like out disco dancing or freestyle dancing, this is like forever ago, you dance like that guy over there, and you're like 'ooh, yeah' then you look over there (other direction) and you're dancing like that person.

LAURA: oh, yes.

MONICA REY: *(giggle)*

LAURA: I know exactly what you're talking about!

MONICA REY: *(laugh)* oh, I like the way that one's doing it. it's kind of funny that you do that naturally, you don't even know you are doing it. till you kind of stand back and realize that you are copying everybody else.

LAURA: hmmhmm

MONICA REY: but that's learning too. and learning about how you move and what's going to work and what isn't

LAURA: yeah, experimenting

MONICA REY: yeah

...

LAURA: um so, some other things that I noticed well okay, so you weren't self conscious about me watching, do you enjoy having an audience like that?

MONICA REY: Hmm

LAURA: or is it something that gives you energy or is it kind of 'no matter'?

MONICA REY: hmm, in your case I would have to say it was 'no matter'. I am, I-I, kind of poke fun of myself because I try to be egoless but none of us really are. and, um, I mean, we can constantly work at it but I don't think, it's, we ever really get it, or I don't. but my rush is, is definitely when I am instructing and sharing, you know, it's because, it's not dance but I, I instruct, you know, fitness. and I-I love that. I love when we are all standing in the warrior pose, the energy in the room is, it gives me faith, it gives me faith in the earth. and it's like, that is my rush, you know, and it keeps me coming back because people come for it and yeah, you know, I wouldn't be honest if I was saying 'oh, well' you know.

LAURA: mmmhmm, yeah

MONICA REY: but in the case of you and me the other night, uh, no, uh, because in more respects, that's something I don't know how to do well, and it's like, I'm the one that's going the wrong way every single time and that's okay, I'll get it.

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: but it's like, that's on film, and although I'm not worried about it, it's not something I'd seek either (*giggle*)

LAURA: (*laugh*) right, right, exactly! I promise I won't put it on You Tube or anything! (*laugh*)

MONICA REY: (*laugh*) okay, oh (*laugh*) and as far as the performance class, you know, it wasn't my intention to perform, it was a time slot that fit in for me

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: and we know how that is when there isn't time.

LAURA: yeah

MONICA REY: and um, I have never done cha cha before, I have never done anything on '2'

LAURA: oh my gosh

MONICA REY: and, you know, I just figured I could figure it out

LAURA: go for it, and you are

MONICA REY: well, it hasn't been easy but I-I-I'll get it, slowly but surely! and I don't mind taking things slowly, and learning things slowly. It's taking me longer than most and I'm okay with that.

LAURA: yeah, I noticed you were so focused on everything the teacher said, when you, you know, that good student who pays attention (*giggle*)

MONICA REY: I have too! (*giggle*)

LAURA: yeah I saw that, and it was, there was this energy that was just like, ok, I could tell you were really driven to get everything you could.

MONICA REY: Yeah. She's a good teacher. and um, I respect that. I respect her craft. because she's, it's obvious that this is what her lively hood is, and what she loves, and yeah, just sponge, sponge, yeah, as much as I can gain. um, and uh I do like to provide the respect that is necessary when someone is

trying to teach like that I know how hard it is when there are lots of people in the classroom and somebody's doing something over here, it's, it's,....

LAURA: yeah, it's a respect thing, for the teacher, absolutely

MONICA REY: it is, it is! and the other people are trying to listen. and not that there isn't a natural trying to figure this out, it's like oh ok.

LAURA: yeah

MONICA REY: but, uh, I like finding out what she has to share.

LAURA: So the classes that you teach, you teach yoga? or ...

MONICA REY: yeah I teach step aerobics, I teach any high level.... I teach anything with weights, um, I teach yoga, tai chi, Pilates, and um, I don't know if I'm forgetting anything ...

LAURA: wow!

MONICA REY: and um, I'm not too funky, I understand the grounded beat and I can take a little bit of a class but um, hip hop isn't quite my style. uh, let's see, oh kickboxing, I don't teach kickboxing,

LAURA: mm-hmm

MONICA REY: I've taken it a couple of times and I can understand several things. I have taken lots of workshops, like true workshops for boxers, however it's not my style,

LAURA: ok

MONICA REY: um, I don't know, those two things just don't quite fit like everything else has pretty comfortable with my body. but I've also just grown up dancing, um. I grew up in the 70s and that's what we did, you know?

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: we didn't partner dance at that time so it's so nice that this has come back because it's so proper and polite, and I absolutely love it as far as community and um uh politeness and kindness, and a good mix of people coming together to dance, not to, you know (*smile*) and

LAURA: yeah.. (*giggle*) that's what I love about it too!

MONICA REY: (*giggle*) yeah , not that there isn't occasionally you run into that, and a whoo! okay

LAURA: right, it's not as threatening as going to a bar, or

MONICA REY: it's not as threatening. It really isn't and I love that.

LAURA: mmmhmm

MONICA REY: and uh, because people are dancing it's not that they haven't had a drink or two but they aren't drunk

LAURA: it's no about the drinking, yeah

MONICA REY: right. and I really appreciate that a lot. as other people aren't smoking in there but it's like they don't have time to smoke because they are dancing so it's an environment where I'm not like *[indicating choking]* *(giggle)*

LAURA: yup *(giggle)*

MONICA REY: so I really like it socially and the fact that there are many ages versus at an age, and uh, not fitting in because, I'm middle aged, you know, and it's nice to be able to go out and dance with, you know, somebody who's 20 or someone who's 70. and everything in between. so, I am finding that, again, very heartwarming and providing some faith in the community at large, you know, that you live with.

LAURA: right, which is so important

MONICA REY: yeah, hmm.

LAURA: so that, um, I want to go back to this, you described it as you kind of get that rush out of teaching, so, more so, would, do you consider yourself a performer, like when I think of 'dancers' that's a huge a definition, you have your dance students, your performers, your instructors, your, you know the ones who would close the door and would never let anyone see them dance, you know, like I'm a 'singer' in the shower *(giggle)*

MONICA REY: *(giggle)* yes, yes,

LAURA: and there are dancers like that too! so, like, how would you describe you as a dancer?

MONICA REY: a student. a student. I would say a student, for sure.

LAURA: mmhmm

MONICA REY: yeah, not a teacher, um, I don't know about performance, yet. I don't have any desire to be like right in front. I mean I'm still comfortable always being in the back, it's not I need to be in front, I love working with the ladies, it's just such a blast, uh

LAURA: mmm

MONICA REY: uh, so I'm still at the learning stage, I don't think will change, (???) it's like my treat. it's like my time and it's what I'm gifting to my self. and it's taken me a long time to get there in life, to be able to have the time and the means to do it. and I haven't had it before. so, I'm enjoying that just for me

LAURA: ...what about, when you, uh, the partner dancing that you do? Is that more from a student perspective as well? or, like, if, when you go social dancing

MONICA REY: right

LAURA: um, what's, what do you get out of that? or-or what do you get or give out of that, you know?

MONICA REY: that's a good question. you know, I would still say, Laura, that I'm at a student level at that, but I'm also one that has my hand up, 'please let me try!' *(giggle)* you know?

LAURA: mmhmm, right, right

MONICA REY: um, I love the-the synergy and the dynamics of moving with someone else..



LAURA: mmmm

MONICA REY: and when that occurs, it's just, it's just, so satisfying, it's like this big fill of fun (*laugh*)

LAURA: (*laugh*)

MONICA REY: and it was just when you click and you move and you get what they're saying.

LAURA: yeah

MONICA REY: at first, it was really hard, it was like 'this is a new language' and I'm, there was a delay...(*laugh*)

LH; translation delay? (*laugh*)

MONICA REY: Yes! or like 'oh I was supposed to be over there and back by then'! (*laugh*)

LAURA: (*laugh*)

MONICA REY: so I'm kind of like flailing around but now, just like with anything, um, I-I know what they're saying faster. and then when you start to click in, and um, being a follow was good for me, not that I've ever been a lead but I-I mean I don't consider myself a 'leader' but I am in a position of leadership teaching.

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: so, so it was like, 'oh I have not said anything!'" (*laugh*)

LAURA: (*laugh*) yeah! yeah it's so interesting that...

MONICA REY: yeah

LAURA: it's like hmmm

MONICA REY: yeah and to guess and to learn and to follow, but then all of a sudden I just love the dynamics of moving like that with somebody, its been a huge, fun, fun treat to grow into and discover later in life.

LAURA: mmm. Um, let's see, and this is an-an observation that I think I may have mentioned to you after the class, there is something that, this really impressed me, I talked about how you were so focused on the teacher, you had this very proper, poised, relaxed, I mean it's like where everyone else was listening to the teacher like this, it was very, and, I was curious as to, if that was your way of 'ok, I'm really focusing' or if you have this,

MONICA REY: Yes, it's such a huge compliment to me. I practiced, um, in my body building days, I didn't care for women that have this posture (*indicating masculine posture*) and if you just kind of sit back, you can still stand straight, but just kind of have a little bit of a step back so you're not like this. you watch sometimes, you know, when they're runners, you know, sometimes like this, you know, and I don't find that pretty. and [*name*] has been specific about, if you're getting to this level, I don't want to see your hands at your sides they are up and you are ready you know.

LAURA: uh huh yeah, right

MONICA REY: so that's what I really try to do in class because she has asked that and it's just more taking a, so that people are comfortable with you just a little bit of that relaxed shoulder back. and I think that has been cultivated over time

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: as far as preference of I don't like how, that you know, cause I know that I am, well not as much anymore, but I know that I am developed and this forward movement I don't think is pretty, so I try and step back, so thank you.

LAURA: so is this, I guess what that tells me is that you value, um, you have this value on the way you stand the way you look, um, it's very feminine?

MONICA REY: yeah, I like to be, I like to be strong and feminine (unclear)

LAURA: yeah, yeah, right

MONICA REY: but I-I don't want to be, I'm not a girl.

LAURA: right. Poised. that word poised just kept coming up for me as I was watching you.

MONICA REY: thanks, that's very kind—cause I sure can't spin or turn yet. *(laugh)*

LAURA: *(laugh)* Oh, it will come! It'll come! *(laugh)*

MONICA REY: *(laugh)* I know, I tell you how many thousands of times I've been right there? — that's why that's why *(gestures toward a mirror on the wall)*—

LAURA: to practice your spotting?

MONICA REY: spot, you know, that pear, the doorknob, the handle over there

LAURA: I'm so glad I'm not the only one! *(laugh)*

MONICA REY: no, I still can't do it, but it's- I'm trying!

LAURA: oh good good good. Um I wanted to ask you about the journal entry I did get.

MONICA REY: oh okay

LAURA: um and I saw, this was, I would say, or would you say that you wrote this very stream of consciously, just kind of sit and write?

MONICA REY: I did-I just whew! I really did not look, I sat down and it was just, 'I don't know, am I rambling am I all over the place?' but I did not look back *(giggle)*

LAURA: Good! That's exactly what I want. but now I want you to look back.

MONICA REY: okay, okay

LAURA: to clarify a little bit. really, uh, and maybe you don't even remember where this came from but, um, cause I just typed up what you had written, this,

MONICA REY: ... *(reading from journal)* “The patience and willingness to sacrifice which doesn’t feel as “truly”, are attributes that contribute to every situation in life wholly... that cannot be approached with out have been a mother.” oh, okay, a mother. Yeah, um, it doesn’t feel like sacrifice, but you know that it is, because again, it’s just like learning to dance for me like in my middle forties, rather than you know, but instead I gave it to her. *(shedding some tears here a little choked up)*

LAURA: right, right, ok. and so, you are coming back to something.

MONICA REY: and we both knew it would get there, it was just a matter of um time, survival. life getting interrupted, and um, you know, the saying is true I guess we live vicariously through our children, um, you try to provide them with dreams that you want for yourself and um, fortunately that is what she wanted too, so it was a very fortunate thing. yeah

LAURA: yeah. do you have other children?

MONICA REY: no.

LAURA: today is the 6-month anniversary of me losing my mom, so I’m kind of right here with you, you know.

MONICA REY: yeah, oh, I’m sorry. you are, yeah.

LAURA: I’m right here with you.

MONICA REY: oh, I’m sorry.

LAURA: and you said it’s been a year?

MONICA REY: a year and 4 months on the 19<sup>th</sup> so a little bit longer. and um, I can, almost talk about her without getting a huge lump, but it’s just natural, it just is, because the loss is huge when we lose the people we love the most. the people that we love the most.

LAURA: mmhmm. you mentioned to me over the phone about how um, she was a dancer right?

MONICA REY: mmhmm. for her whole life, uh-huh

LAURA: and you feel like, this, this is kind of, I can’t remember how you put it but in some ways, you do this not only for yourself but for her,

MONICA REY: uh-huh, she was my first teacher *(with tears)* and someday we would be able to,

LAURA: here’s some tissue

MONICA REY: I know, it’s okay, and she was going to choreograph.

LAURA: oh.

MONICA REY: there was this one Mother’s Day she came down with this little Nordstrom’s box, you know those Nordstrom’s boxes from Christmas?

LAURA: uh-huh

MONICA REY: and she opened it out and there were her ribbons, a CD, and her dance shoes. and she put on her dance shoes, and the ribbons in her hair and put on the CD, I can’t remember, it was a Celine

Dione song, I don't remember the name of it right now but. and she choreographed this dance for me for Mother's Day, that

LAURA: oh my gosh.

MONICA REY: there are not that many children that give their parents that, you know

LH; huh-huh

MONICA REY: and it's an impressive thing.

LAURA: that's beautiful, that's beautiful

MONICA REY: thank you, but, yeah, she's my teacher, and she's my hero, and she's going to celebrate when I move too

LAURA: sounds very much like a dedication, like you're dedicating your dance to her

MONICA REY: very much so. And I just remembered another class I teach, it's called 'the dancer's workout' it's like plies and lots of you know tendus, and uh attitude, and releve's, etcetra., it's choreographed for fitness but that's the one that I really, really, really am rooting for her. I started partied dancing just before she had passed away. and it was just because the doors had finally opened you know, she was grown, she was gone, she was in college, not that college was far away, but you know, she was married, and then, you know so then it was my turn, it was my turn.

LAURA: right, yeah

MONICA REY: and so that's where I was just, it was just also all of a sudden partner dancing was back in and I was like 'Wow! I want to do that!' (*giggle*)

LAURA: right! just in time!

MONICA REY: That fits me!

LAURA: good! ok!

MONICA REY: so, but yeah, she was my teacher, and so I um, feel very grateful that I was able to learn some ballet from her. and watch her do ballet. um, you can always tell somebody who has danced. there's a different finish. like myself just going out and doing it, there's a lot, you know, I don't have the same training but it's so beautiful to watch, you know?

LAURA: yeah, I'm sure, I'm just, wow, that's beautiful. um in this, uh, journal entry it's obvious, the identity you have as mother.

MONICA REY: and that's interesting Laura, because, I'm, I'm trying to find another identity.

LAURA: right, right. Well so, can you uh, try to um, so like "I am a blank" what are all the things you could use to fill in that blank?

MONICA REY: mmm. the first thing that comes is I am a yogi, and I get really stuck passed that. and, and, when I went to a yoga conference recently and the question came up and you know, I had nothing to say.

LAURA: mmhmm

MONICA REY: it was all of a sudden, just huge like void of like, oh my gosh! I, you know I've got so many yoga instructors and the gurus (*laugh*) and

LAURA: (*laugh*) that doesn't mean you learned!

MONICA REY: (*laugh*) but it was quite a, quite a startling moment.

LAURA: hmmm!

MONICA REY: um yeah because I do , I identify myself as a mom. um and and learning to, it's not that I haven't identified myself as a daughter but I identify myself as a, important person in my parent lives.

LAURA: hmmm

MONICA REY: I'm there regularly. and um even though I can't say their ways are the ones I aspire to...and I have to recognize the same would have true of my daughter to me. but I'm there all the time. I just know that that's important. it's important for and it's important for them. so and a sister, I'm a sister. I'm not the best sister, my sister and brother are the ones that look after me. I don't do Christmas presents, I don't do birthday presents, I can't figure it out. it stresses me out. I don't do thank you notes, I feel it's just more paper in the earth. it's not that I don't express it verbally and if a present happened it's not for any specific reason. if I run across something, I give it to them then rather than waiting, I know better

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: and um, so, I'm a, I'm a , I'm a loving, family member, and an Aunt, and uh, yeah, I have plenty of nieces and nephews but they don't get present from me or anything. but they don't need them either!

LAURA: no! (*giggle*)

MONICA REY: when they're around I spend my time with them because they have so much, you know, and I don't just want to add to stuff either

LAURA: yeah, yeah

MONICA REY: so I try to just look for the experience more than the thing.

LAURA: uh-huh, you and I are so alike!

MONICA REY: (*laugh*)

LAURA: I am so the same way, I'm the aunt that's, that gives, if I give a gift, it's something like beads and glue so that we can work together to make something.

MONICA REY: yeah—I know!

LH; that's what I try to do, so I totally understand what you're talking about

MONICA REY: oh my goodness! yeah!

LAURA: so.

MONICA REY: do you mind if I check my phone Laura?

LAURA: oh sure!

MONICA REY: I heard it beep .....

LAURA: well if anything else comes up for you with that, "I am a blank". it almost sounds like this is something you are exploring right now.

MONICA REY: big time, huge, huge! A huge transition, yeah! and it's been kind of an eye opener because, I don't want to say that I was scared that something was all in one basket, I don't feel that was, I don't feel that was bad or anything, I just all of a sudden realized that, hmm, okay I'm a tax accountant okay, I mean, but I don't really identify myself as that. you know I identify myself, and okay, well I guess the words are all over the place right now but, you know I am a survivor. and it's not just cancer and it's not just loss it's just the day *(tears)*

LAURA: hmm, yeah, that's strong for you, huh? I can see that

MONICA REY: yeah, yeah, you know, you just sort of like charge on through life, and you're like whoa another days gone by and you're like whoo I made through another day! and the days keep going which is surprising sometimes! *(laugh)*

LAURA: *(laugh)* yes!! oh yes! how true!

MONICA REY: yeah, but I guess, I do, I oh, but I had to think about that for little bit strangely enough.

LAURA: mmhmm

MONICA REY: um, nothing, nothing just comes right to the forefront right away

LAURA: yeah,

MONICA REY: because , yeah, yeah, it's been a challenge, the journey, the process.

LAURA: do you think that that makes you somehow different than other people? who haven't had those types of experiences?

MONICA REY: yes, I do. I do. I feel I have better awareness of, you know, this moment. I mean it's wonderful to sit across from you and talk to you and your smile is beautiful and your body is beautiful from years and years of dance. and your hard work is impressive, you know, that's what I feel right now. and so I think that I have a better 'in the moment' attitude and getting back to maybe looking into the future, not quite that far out yet and I think that I have a better sensitivity to things and I think I notice things about people that I others wouldn't, because, I don't know, I think it's again from all the kicks in the butt. you start to pay a little closer attention to the small stuff.

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: how important it is and uh. I mean you don't sweat it, as the saying goes but you notice.

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: and I guess that's also a part of yoga is noticing the process instead of 'oh that's my goal' is you know, "I want to be there" instead of "oh yeah, I took this step today" and on the way. like dance is that way for me and

LAURA: exactly

MONICA REY: and learning to dance has been that process that I just love the journey.

LAURA: right

MONICA REY: cause it only gets better

LAURA: right, and even though it's a journey it's, well this is something that I learned from yoga actually, is acceptance.

MONICA REY: yeah

LH; like accept where I am today because where I am today is not where I was yesterday or where I'll be tomorrow and sometimes it's a step backwards and sometimes it's a step forwards, and to honor that in a way.

MONICA REY: yeah, yes, mmhmm. Acceptance. Awareness. Transformation.

LAURA: oh mmhmm...and that has, for me, I've been able to apply that to dancing. and to life in general. or least try to, I wouldn't say I'm successful at it quite yet

MONICA REY: Yeah. and I'm so curious about you too, Laura.

LAURA: well, feel free to ask. I mean like I said, I want this to be a dialogue. Yes, I have this list of questions and the ultimate goal of a thesis project in mind, but it's not all about that, you know?

MONICA REY: yeah, but it's a lot of hard work and it's a huge investment emotionally and everything. but what is your thesis on, for your

LAURA: for me, I have always been a dancer. I mean, I started my first ballet class when I was 3 years old and I just never stopped. Um, but in that time I've had these experiences with cancer and now with loss, and um, so it's something that I've always found comfort in. and it's something that I've always um been alive - like you said about being a survivor, um, I asked you 'do you feel like that makes you different somehow from other people?' For me, there have been times, especially having experienced cancer at such a young age of 12, and having gone through chemo and radiation it was a very lonely place because I didn't know anybody else who was my age, who was experiencing these things—and I just felt like dance was a place where that didn't matter and that was a place where I didn't feel lonely anymore,

MONICA REY: yeah, yeah, 'comfort' is a good word!!

LAURA: and so I-I, it seems like a lifetime ago

MONICA REY: wow, and your momma!

LAURA: yeah, my mom--she was always there.

MONICA REY: she went through that with you!

LAURA: yeah, she was by my side every moment

MONICA REY: mmhmm

LH; so I guess my. I've always wondered who have found comfort in this way, you know, what are the stories of dance in other people who have experienced similar things as myself.

MONICA REY: wow, good for you

LAURA: so that's really what it's about and being able to share the stories of these, they happen to be all women, four women, that I'm working with, and five including myself, sharing these five stories of women who are survivors and who have experienced this disease and but continue to dance in life.

MONICA REY: and it is a place that isn't lonely. that is so perfectly said.

LAURA: you feel like you can relate to that?

MONICA REY: mmhmm, mmhmm. like you said 'comfort', it's where you can find some happiness.

LAURA: right, right, absolutely.

MONICA REY: oh, yeah, I just, startled you know I go through life and all of a sudden it's like you, and you, you know, and like you lost your mom, and you've gone through this too, and it's just so, there's no word, it's so huge, it's just gigantic, the amount of life to deal with.

LAURA: yeah, and here we are!

MONICA REY: so 6 months is not that long and there's still so much to take of.

LAURA: yeah, it's uh, I still don't feel like it's quite hit me and I feel like a lot of, I've been so focused on my dad's healing, because he was so physically injured and I have essentially become his caretaker over the last 6 months, and so I haven't, it hasn't necessarily sunk in yet and I know it's going to but it's not real to me.

MONICA REY: I understand, I completely understand, completely. the year of firsts of everything. that um it's, there's no easy way. sometimes I don't think it's really hit me yet, in talking to other people that have experienced loss, it could be 5 years later it's like, all of a sudden, I got to pull over. the first thing I did because I know better, is that I went to the doctor and I said I won't be able to function, I won't be able to pull myself off the floor, and I need an antidepressant.

LAURA: mmhmm, yeah, same thing

MONICA REY: otherwise, I'll still be there

LAURA: it's been a lot

MONICA REY: mmhmm

LAURA: I'm so thankful to the universe for this...

MONICA REY: (*giggle*) yeah me too! ... *[name]* came up to me after class and it just happened

LAURA: ....let's see if there's anything else. oh, you know what there was a word in here *[journal]* that I couldn't read ...



MONICA REY: oh, 'in the fits + balances...it's kind of a....

LAURA: thank you so much for sharing, for this, you know? Being so open to it.

MONICA REY: [*referring to journal*] I was actually thinking 'don't think about too much' because I knew if I did, you know, I would get stuck.

LAURA: I know, I did the same thing.... You end this saying, 'I know my body'. um, I could just put that in my own self-experience, I can recognize when things aren't right because of dance. because dance made me be aware of my body, and to go and um, but for you it seems a little bit, well because dance was later, oh but you did have a fitness background.

MONICA REY: right! and movement, I know how my body moves, I know when something is not adding up, I know how many calories I'm putting in and I know how many I'm burning and so I go and they tell me that I am over 40, and I'm like, so? (*giggle*)

LAURA: So, what purpose does dance have in your life?

MONICA REY: Fun. it really is, it's fun, it's entertainment and it's healthy. it's healthy entertainment. um, I mean I like to party as much as anyone, I like to have a glass of wine, but I don't want to have 10, you know, like sit at the bar and try to meet people. I just want to have fun and I think moving is fun and especially when you are moving with another person, it's a blast! and I think sometimes your instincts naturally guide you to where you belong...trust those instincts. And I'm trusting them.

LAURA: so in hearing you say that, I hear that you feel that dance is where you belong.

MONICA REY: yeah, it is, that's where I belong, I will always be taking class. always. it's just factored into the budget every year, I figure it out by month (*giggle*). um, it's important for me to keep learning. I don't need to do everything, I just know that there will always be something I can gain and learn....from somebody who is willing to share.

LAURA: okay, that's it for me. unless is there anything else that you ....

MONICA REY: ...just about you, I mean, are you married, do you have a love of your life?

LAURA: no, I'm single, and um, my favorite role is being an aunt. I have 6 nieces and 3 nephews. and uh, you know maybe we can sometime outside of the realm of my study let's get together and have coffee!

MONICA REY: I would love that!!!

### Suse: Conversational Interview from Round 3

*Location: a dance studio, quiet and private*

*Duration: 55 minutes*

LAURA: When you social dance—because I know social dance is kind of the bulk of your dancing—or would you say that? Or is it more the urban jazz stuff, or?

SUSE: I think it's all kind of equal when the lessons are going on. The lessons and the Urban Jazz and the social, it kind of—

LAURA: ok, you would consider them equal?

SUSE: yeah, in the summertime it's more social dancing because there are lessons, there's no *[name of dance group]* yet, and so I'm looking for opportunities to dance.

LAURA: right, okay. When you social dance are you typically a leader or a follower? I feel like I should know this.

SUSE: well actually, I'm just changing.

LAURA: from what to what?

SUSE: I'm more of a lead now.

LAURA: and you had been a follower?

SUSE: yes. I was always trying to get people to go with me that were leads and now I've switched to being a lead in the social dancing much more.

LAURA: okay.

SUSE: so it's kind of equal it depends on who I'm with.

LAURA: Do you have a preference?

SUSE: I, um, do I have a preference? I used to but it's changing.

LAURA: what was it?

SUSE: it used to be always I like wanted to follow, I wanted somebody else to lead

LAURA: and now you're enjoying the lead?

SUSE: I am, I am, I am. Like last night I felt like I was, you know, I have one dance, a couple of dances that I feel in social dancing that I'm good at.

LAURA: right.

SUSE: that I feel, I don't have to be thinking all of the time.

LAURA: right

SUSE: so I'm getting to be multi-talented and that's good

LAURA: well and it gives you more opportunities to dance when you can do both

SUSE: I can ask people to dance! Yeah, yeah

LAURA: cool. Um, so in some of your writings and in some of your conversations we've talked about how you're pretty athletic. Like jogging-is that something that you still do?

SUSE: I still do a little jogging, yeah, treadmill.

LAURA: and weight lifting

SUSE: yeah a little bit

LAURA: and cycling, you just pulled in on your bike

SUSE: yeah,

LAURA: hiking?

SUSE: yeah a little bit

LAURA: have you always been an avid exerciser?

SUSE: um, as a child I took a lot of dance lessons, my parents gave me a lot of dance lessons. Um, in high school...I was of a period where girls were not allowed to do certain things but I did volleyball and girls basketball. I wouldn't have called myself an athlete but I was a cheerleader, not varsity but I was, whatever they call it. .. and in college I took swimming and lacrosse, but I didn't ever think of myself as an athlete. And I took dance, modern dance a lot. And I tried out for some Miss...Pageant and did a dance, and um, I've always taken, there have been periods where I didn't, but I did martial arts for many years. So I guess I was, I am, but I didn't think of myself that way until later. I was just doing things I liked to do. or were required of me in school. Like you had to do some kind of physical activity. But there was a period of time when I ran. Before my back bothered me too much but I used to jog a lot.

LAURA: really?

SUSE: yeah, like I used to do 5Ks and things like that.

LAURA: oh my gosh, that's something I could never get into

SUSE: yeah, but I can't run on concrete anymore

LAURA: was it martial arts that injured your back?

SUSE: it was an accumulation of things. Martial arts and just um, just not, the latest physical therapy theory is that one side developed more than the other, and so it takes over and it gets over taxed. So I'm working on body core and strengthening the muscles in my left, butt, hip, which is really weak. Trying to make that take over more.

LAURA: so you've always done physical activity.

SUSE: most of my life

LAURA: did that change? Was there a change in physical activity from pre-cancer to post-cancer? I mean obviously during the sickness you have to slow down, but—

SUSE: um, I think I, I think, um, it's not a really easy question for me to answer because it doesn't feel exactly like the question. Um, I was always physically active with athletic things but also like gardening and roofing and chopping wood and stuff like that, and martial arts. And then I had to stop when I was, it just was more, I would say, more intentional.

LAURA: right

SUSE: that's the change, it was more intentional.

LAURA: in one of your writings you talked about it being more essential and more a priority in your life.

SUSE: well I think probably I would say that I was more conscious that “oh yes, this is important to me” so it became a conscious priority.

LAURA: right, okay. And was it, was that shift to making it more of a conscious priority, do you think it was more motivated by, ‘I want to be fit in order to be healthy’ or was it more motivated by ‘this is what I enjoy’?

SUSE: fun. I mean there’s an element of that because the bone and all that kind of stuff and I know that and I have consciousness about the mind and body and how, all of that. But it’s more about, ‘oh okay, this is now’, like at that concert last night I could feel myself do that, like “okay, it’s now, you’re here, like pay attention, if you want to dance you got to get up now!” *(laugh)*

LAURA: yep! So did that apply not only the dancing but to the other fitness stuff too.

SUSE: yeah, you gotta go today. Just get in the car, just get on your bike, just do it.

LAURA: I thought it was interesting in one of your journals, you wrote, this is a quote from you and it’s one of the older ones.

SUSE: that’s always interesting.

LAURA: you wrote, “being a dancer means I keep myself fit in addition to dancing I do other exercise that supports dancing such as weight lifting, jogging, and stretching” and what was interesting to me in reading that was you saw that the other things were supporting the dancing-like-

SUSE: I am sometimes conscious about that, I was talking to Leslie about this last night, I said, you know, I went hiking with some people that were like out of my league, ...they like kicked my butt, I tell ya! Cause they were like major runners. And the hiking was just sort of like the warm-up *(laugh)* and they were like hikers you know. And then I said you know, “it’s interesting for me, I wanted to do it and it’s a good perspective” I said “usually in a dance class I’m one of few people that’s like not complaining that I’m worn out, like other people it’s like, oh my knee, I’m tight, I’m sore from dancing, and I’m thinking, this is nothing” I mean it’s not nothing but ballroom dancing to me, I mean, athletically is really in the middle for me. Like the urban jazz and the jogging and stuff is a push for me, but it supports me because it, and I know that because it makes my balance better, it makes me a stronger turner, it’s like, it’s just like everything connects for me. So I don’t think ‘oh I’m going to go work out so I can be a better dancer’ but I’m aware that my dancing is supported because I do these other things.

LAURA: so it’s not like the dancing motivates you to do the other exercises,

SUSE: no, no

LAURA: okay, got it.

SUSE: I don’t think so, although if I’m not working out for a while—like there was a period when I was sick or something and then I went to dance and I noticed a difference and that made me want to go, I thought I gotta get back to jogging because my stamina is not as good as I want it to be when I’m dancing. so kind of, it did in that instance. But on a regular day to day, I don’t think “oh I’m going to work out to support dance”.

LAURA: okay. Um, you this is another one of your little quotes, in a journal, “when dancing I can feel free and in the moment”. So that feeling of freedom—what do you feel like it, what are you free from?

SUSE: ah what am I free from? I'm free from the opposite of not being in the moment.

LAURA: mmmm

SUSE: I mean I'm, if I'm truly enjoying the dancing, I'm not thinking about things, I'm not obsessing about something I did yesterday, or worried about my finances, or—I am enjoying myself in the moment. And I'm not worrying about the fact that I'm not doing something that's not taking care of those other things.

LAURA: and is that a rarity for you? I mean is it, like if you're not dancing is it pretty common for you to be thinking 'oh, I should be doing this and this'?

SUSE: there's a lot of self-talk going on, yeah, yeah, it's something I work on a lot of the time.

LAURA: but dance serves as an escape from that?

SUSE: it's yeah, yeah! I mean there's a few things that help me, that I can escape. Dancing's one, sometimes my art, and sometimes going to movies because that was something that I did as a child. It's like a complete mind escape for me.

LAURA: now the art that you do—as a profession is photography, right?

SUSE: no, well, I have a complicated art life. I used to have a photography business, I mean I used to work as a photographer for my business, income, and now I do the exhibition design. But I also do a whole range of artwork that I used to sell and show but I haven't for a long time. And I just recently had my garage remodeled and I'm just starting to go back to do some just some artwork. Just –

LAURA: like painting or drawing, or all of it, or sculpting, or—

SUSE: right now I am reconnecting with a series of work that I did that came out of my cancer experience that are like these colorful, made up animals, that are called mythic animals. They are made with these pens that are like..., they're like for architecture and a drawing pen. They're like a super fancy, expensive, magic marker. (*laugh*)... and they have like a bazillion different colors... they're Japanese but they are distributed in the U.S.

LAURA: actually that makes me want to fast forward to another question that I have...so something else you wrote, "sometimes when I am organizing or looking for something, or go into a closet or a box, I find things that were part of my life before cancer and I realize how much I had to let go". Can you talk about some of those things you had to let go?

SUSE: pretty much everything. I mean pretty much I had to just stop. I mean my garden, I mean my garden has never really recovered. It's never really gone back to the attention it had in the past. My garden, um, ...my photography business- I really just had to drop everything. My, the artwork in terms of sending slides out and keeping track of what work I was producing and being organized about that.

LAURA: why?

SUSE: I couldn't, I wasn't physically able—mentally able.

LAURA: right—but now that, you know, several years later, is there, do you, is it that your interests have shifted?

SUSE: yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm not interested, that interested in gardening anymore.

LAURA: does that just feel like it's going backwards?

SUSE: it feels like, I just kind of, the only reason I'm doing it is because I own a home and I want it to, I'm just maintaining it. It's just like a maintenance thing. It's not like a drudgery exactly but it's just a few notches above it. (*giggle*) ...I mean some people as they age, they go like, 'oh gardening I just want to be in my garden'—I'm just like, no.

LAURA: it's a little bit of a chore maybe?

SUSE: well I'd rather be going to a music event.

LAURA: so it's a priority shift. You're priorities shifted after having that?

SUSE: yeah, yeah. And the art is a really big question for me right now. Now that I have the studio and everything's in there, like, so what am I going to do now? What things are going to appeal to me? What art projects am I going to do? am I going to do it for me, am I going to do it—what am I going to do with that? What am I going to do with my photography? I mean—

LAURA: this is your current, this is what is happening now this transitional—

SUSE: yeah, yeah, it's all a big question and it could be going on for the rest of my life. What am I doing with my art?

LAURA: right, and what were you doing with your art before?

SUSE: before I was, well I went through different periods so before, I was doing oil paintings.....

LAURA: did you have like a favorite subject matter?

SUSE: I did a lot of work, I had a dog named Isabelle who was a Doberman and did a lot of work with her, and then at that time my Godchild, Leah, was younger and I would do these kind of weird things with her and the dog, like edgy infrared stuff, and um, and then the paintings were just more abstract, they look like maybe something from the fifties to me. Yeah. So those are the things I did the most.

LAURA: and now you're trying to figure out whether-

SUSE: yeah, like what am I going to do with all of those negatives I produced, you know? And am I going to go back to painting? Well I kind of did, a little bit but I don't know. And then I have a whole series of collage type stuff that I used to do. I don't know, am I going to do that? I don't know.

LAURA: you're kind of in that phase right now?

SUSE: yeah, so I, yeah.

LAURA: um let's see, I feel like I'm kind of jumping all over the place but I'm really just trying to get some closure, some answers to questions that came up as I was going through things.

SUSE: that's all right.

LAURA: so you mentioned that dancing creates an attitude shift for you.

SUSE: it can, I think that it's probably something to do with the endorphins thing, you know. It's probably like jogging, you know, just like, oh okay I feel better.

LAURA: yeah, I wrote paper a while back on um, an altered state of consciousness that can happen when you are dancing. Does that sound like something—

SUSE: I don't know, altered state of consciousness sounds like you're taking a drug or something. As if the other time you're not drugged. I always subscribe to the idea that you're drugged all of the time in different ways by the hormones that you have, it's just a different drug. Like you happen to have more of one thing than the other. Um, I don't know, I would beg to differ. I don't know, altered state of consciousness makes it sound like you are doing, you are taking Mesculin or something and I don't think that. That irritates me, but if it were seen as like, yeah it's a different consciousness than walking down the street, of course, because you are in a different set of circumstances. When you are sleeping you are in an altered state of consciousness, so it's all different. So yes, it's it's a different state of consciousness, it can be. If I can get out of my self, out of my everyday thing.

LAURA: right and just like you were talking about earlier about the, dance freeing you from having to obsess over all the little things, so that type of thing.

SUSE: yeah

LAURA: um the [*name of dance group*] group that you started, um, and that happened after you had gotten sick.

SUSE: mmhmm

LAURA: was that something you had been thinking about for a while? Was it something that just came up in discussions with friends? What motivated, what initiated that?

SUSE: it was pretty straight forward, let's see [*name*], I can't remember the sequence of events but there was, the motivation for me was that I wanted to dance with lesbians more, socially. That was it.

LAURA: so it was for selfish reasons? (*giggle*)

SUSE: yeah, I say that all the time. That's what I wanted, I wanted that and I wasn't getting it and I whined about it and I said, 'oh I just wish I had other partners' and then I just, I don't know, I can't remember how I just said, I started talking to people and said, you know, what if we, and I had a few people say—'well somebody tried that'—'people won't respond' or 'it will go for a while'—and I said I'm going to ignore that. I'm going to ignore what people are saying like that and I'm just going to try and do it anyway. And um so I just got together a few people that I was social with then and talked about it and we just started it. Yeah.

LAURA: how many people are in that now?

SUSE: oh, it just really fluctuates. I mean the contact list had a few hundred but the classes are anywhere from 10 to 30, depending upon, I mean—

LAURA: that can be kind of seasonal too right?

SUSE: yeah, but there are now a kind of core, a fairly sizeable number of people that have a dance interest and in different ways that I connect with in different kinds of venues...and some of those people were never dancers. Actually many of them...(*some names are listed here*) I mean I could go through people-..

LAURA: so they probably would have never done it if [*name of dance group*] didn't, create that environment?

SUSE: no, I don't think so. Some might have, like Linda and Sandra... but I think they are supported by the group too—

LAURA: now are you still kind of the main person for that group?

SUSE: I'm trying not to be. There's more people active in the organizing and I keep trying to pull myself away from being the person.

LAURA: you said that you identify yourself as being an introvert?

SUSE: yeah

LAURA: which is kind of interesting because everybody in this study—

SUSE: says they are an introvert?

LAURA: yeah, and I think that's kind of interesting. Um, I kind of wonder if that's not a dancer thing. You know I said I'm kind of categorizing different things, and one of the categories that I have was a social category. It seems that there are different ways that having had affected you socially and then there are different ways that dance had affected you socially.

SUSE: okay

LAURA: and, like if you were, just me saying those things, does that feel right to you? And what would you say about that, like how do you think cancer affected it and how do you think dance affected it.?

SUSE: when you say socially, do you mean—

LAURA: let's see, I pulled some quotes out and maybe that will help

SUSE: you mean like relationships or—

LAURA: not necessarily, um—these are just things that you wrote: "Dance has become a way of relating to the world, to other people"

SUSE: well, with dancing, I'm planning and socializing, yeah

LAURA: are there other big social things in your life or would you say that's kind of the main one or—

SUSE: I would say my main socializing connections are dance, music, work, my dog. That's pretty much it.

LAURA: like meeting other dog walkers and things.

SUSE: mmhmm, that's new, yeah. But yeah, those are the things that create a situation where I'm going to be in contact with other people.

LAURA: and as introverts we need those situations. You know extroverts don't need those situations but I think we have to find them.

SUSE: right, and then you asked about the cancer?

LAURA: well you talked about like when you were going through that,



SUSE: I had to be in contact with a lot more people.

LAURA: as kind of a support for yourself do you think?

SUSE: yeah, mmhmm

LAURA: but you also said that you felt different people in many ways.

SUSE: in terms of?

LAURA: when you had gotten sick.

SUSE: well I had to go into a different world. I felt like I was in a different world. So there was a difference between me and the general population.

LAURA: so do you think that's why you surrounded yourself with others who were going thru what you were going thru?

SUSE: probably, yeah, yeah.

LAURA: control is another one of these things...things like when you were diagnosed feeling like you were free falling and adrift at sea, and 'a lot of things in my life were unattended' which to me kind of falls under that idea of a lack of control, like all of a sudden you no longer have control over your life, or—does that feel right?

SUSE: yeah, mmhmm,, mmmhmm

LAURA: okay, and so there's one thing that you wrote and you put the word "it" in quotes. You said "I felt compelled to do 'it' right and the diagnosis threw me into a place where I was in a world separate or not like my previous life"

SUSE: do the treatment right. Like what, I mean that's what comes to mind, I don't know what I was thinking when I wrote it, but, yeah, yeah. Do it, meaning do the cancer experience right.

LAURA: do all the right things?

SUSE: mmhmm.

LAURA: could that be a control thing as well, like trying to get some of that control back as well?

SUSE: [nodding] trying to not die

LAURA: yeah

SUSE: yeah, if I just do these things, I promise, please don't make me die.

LAURA: you talked about how you were in the hospital getting ready for surgery how you gave a lot of orders, so all of that I kind of put into that category, does that feel right to you?

SUSE: yeah, mmmhmm. And that was encouraged by the people that I knew in the cancer—

LAURA: but one thing that kind of turned that upside down for me was how you talked about buying a van and living in a van and traveling Oregon, which to me is like totally this spontaneous, not planning, not having that control, not—

SUSE: it felt like I was taking control. Like I was taking charge of what was going to happen. I was going here. Even though it was spontaneous, it was me.

LAURA: no one else was making those choices?

SUSE: no *[in agreement]*

LAURA: I see.

SUSE: I was choosing to sit and do nothing, yeah.

LAURA: okay so another little umbrella thing, I'm not real sure about this one. Well how about this first, you wrote that as a child you had always identified yourself as being overweight.

SUSE: yes, as I was growing up. As an adolescent. Yes.

LAURA: were you overweight? Or was that just—

SUSE: that's a hard question for me to answer.

LAURA: did other people see you as that?

SUSE: only my mother.

LAURA: oh! Okay.

SUSE: I don't remember anyone else ever saying anything to me, no. I think, it's a hard question because I'm torn between my, several different places inside of me. Whether I've, by today's standards, no I was not overweight. I know what overweight, no. I was like probably just, I wasn't thin. But I wasn't fat in that American culture way of—but I was probably a little bit more ample but I was a small person.

LAURA: you are so tiny

SUSE: I know but there, it was totally my mom's focus and then of course some teenage stuff.

LAURA: so is that um,

SUSE: it's still obviously affects me.

LAURA: that's what I get, that whole self-perception, body image stuff,

SUSE: yeah, it's off, it's definitely off.

LAURA: does the fitness and the athletic stuff fit into that?

SUSE: *[emphatically]* Oh Yeah! Yes, of course, of course. Yes!

LAURA: kind of like trying to fight it, that body image—

SUSE: there's still a part of me, I even had my mother ask me this question, how much do you weigh now? She actually asked me that question! It's all about her because she lost some weight and when I told her she was very surprised, she thought it would be more I'm sure because my sisters have both

gained quite a bit of weight as they've aged. But um, yeah, the exercise and all of that, it's a complicated mind. But it, at least it's something that I'm doing, even though it's a little obsessional, it's not hurting, I mean I'm not drugging and drinking. I'm not doing those behaviors to cope.

LAURA: your finding a healthy way to cope, by exercising and stuff.

SUSE: yeah, there's a little bit of the fanatic about it but I'm a little bit more relaxed that I used to be.

LAURA: does dancing fit into that realm too?

SUSE: it doesn't, there's not enough calories burned. I mean like yes, like last night, if I go out dancing a bunch, this is, there is some kind of calculation going on. I'll just say there's a calculation going on. You know, today it would be my day to go to the gym but I said 'look, you were out dancing last night, you're going to go dancing on Saturday, you're going to be riding your bike all day today, maybe today's not a good day to go to the gym'. But I like to go twice a week and I'm not going to make it twice this week so maybe I'll lift some weights at home or something. But yeah, there's a calculation going on. But it's not based on anything real, I don't keep a chart, I don't know how many calories I take in, I don't. but there is some kind of calculation happening, yeah.

LAURA: so it sounds like from a very young age body image was kind of a thing for you,

SUSE: oh yes.

LAURA: so then when you were diagnosed with breast cancer-can you talk a little bit about your body image?

SUSE: *[with an audible exhale]* I was very relieved not to lose my breast. Yeah. And I had to let go of gaining weight. I gained about 10 or 15 pounds so it was what I considered overweight.

LAURA: was that a big thing for you?

SUSE: I was so, not until it was all over. At the time it was like whatever.

LAURA: well and like you said you wanted to do 'it' right-the treatment

SUSE: mmhmm. So it was not on the top of the list. You know I would walk or I would ride my bike a little, but I just thought I'm eating whatever I want today. I'm not watching what I eat that much. I didn't have, there was no room in the inn {indicating her head} for that. I mean I was vaguely aware.

LAURA: right. And then with the dancing, how does that affect your body image?

SUSE: in terms of?—well I'm proud of the fact that I am a dancer. And so when I am dancing I'm proud. So that raises my self-esteem and people tell me that I am a good dancer...but I don't carry that consciousness with me. I wish it were more like in me, instead of coming from the outside...there's some kind of message about being too proud or being too full of myself or something. I have a really yin yang kind of flip side thing going on. Yeah. Yeah. I want to be recognized but I only want to be recognized in certain ways. I don't like to be recognized in front of a class. I do not like that. Ugh, I hate that! I mean a little bit is okay, but occasionally Laura Taylor would do that and I was just like..

LAURA: like to be pulled out as a demonstrator?

SUSE: once during a class is okay but repeatedly, I just want to say, get the fuck away from me, I don't want to be held up like this. I don't because the fallout from that is that I don't want to be in that position all the time. I don't want people coming to me as you know, like the person who knows it the best, it's

like no I'm here to have a good time that's not the role I want to be in, so if I'm pulled out, and she kind of stopped doing that. I mean, I don't know if I said something but she started using other people. I like people to know that I'm a good dancer but I don't want to be set apart, I feel like it sets me apart from the rest of the group and I don't want to feel like that. Now, if I'm doing something that's really really hard for me, then I like to be complemented. Or if it's by somebody that I have, like, this may sound odd but if it's by somebody that I feel like they are a better dancer than me, then I feel better about the compliment.

LAURA: yeah, there's a lot of weight to that compliment.

SUSE: mmhmm, and if it happens I'm just like floating, yeah. Yeah.

LAURA: but when you're dancing, I don't hear the, like sometimes dancing can actually be a negative on the body image for people, the whole like 'oh, I'm not standing up straight enough' or constantly comparing yourself to other people but I don't hear that from you.

SUSE: no I don't do that too much with the social dancing. I mean I sometimes lax into oh I wish I had a better partner, it's more like that. But with Urban Jazz that's where it can be really hard for me. There I can go there a bit about like that person is so much younger than me—it's more about age. .. they have more training than me in these things, they can do it better than me, and I consciously try to interrupt that. Like stop that, just like, you're here to enjoy yourself, stop doing that. You've gotta stop doing that.

LAURA: so is that kind of a regret thing? That you didn't start younger?

SUSE: it used to be a regret but I'm not in that currently.

LAURA: good

SUSE: I mean it may have been nice but I'm passed that now.

LAURA: yeah, I think that is it for this interview...thank you...

## APPENDIX E

## TRANSCRIPTS / DESCRIPTIONS OF MOVEMENT INTERVIEWS

Note: The warm-up portions (approximately the first 10 minutes of each session) are guided with the use of the “DanceAbility Teacher Certification Course Manual” (Alessi and Zolbrod 2005). When spoken text is in quotation marks it indicates that the text are words from the participant’s journal or dialogue sessions. Italicized text represents movement descriptions.

Claire: Movement Interview #2

Location: dance studio

Duration: 50 minutes

LAURA: it’s not going to be so much different in terms of how we do what we do, but because you’re so adept in what you do, I mean you’re a comfortable improviser, not everybody I’m working with is,

CLAIRE: oh, okay.

LAURA: I feel like I can give a lot more space than I did last time so that, I’m going to lead you through a typical DanceAbility warm-up, I even have Alito’s script so--

CLAIRE: yeah, right

LAURA: but we’ll only spend maybe 10 minutes on that, on warming you up. And then we won’t actually stop, I want you to try to stay in that ---

CLAIRE: that space?

LAURA: yeah, that meditation or, uh, I don’t know,--you know what I mean-

CLAIRE: yeah,

LAURA: so I’ll have you come to stillness and but stay in that sort of mode. And then I’m going to ask you a couple of questions. Like I’m going to ask you to share your cancer story in movement. Just like when we talked last time and you told me about your cancer story, if you could do a movement translation of that, okay?

CLAIRE: yeah, mmhmm, okay.

LAURA: and we’ll do that for 10-15 minutes. I won’t really say anything other than ‘tell your cancer story’—I’ll give you time, so let’s say we’re going to do that for 15 minutes.

CLAIRE: okay.

LAURA: so if we go for like 15 minutes, I’ll give you like ‘5 minutes more’ or ‘10 minutes more’ so that you have an idea of where you are in that time.

CLAIRE: okay

LAURA: and then for the rest of it I’m going to use a lot of your own quotes, I’m going to throw them out there, a little pause, to see how your body reacts to those words that you shared with me and we’ll just

go like that for a little while. But that's when I will be doing most of the talking, otherwise there will just be a lot of space for you to dance

CLAIRE: okay, so the warm-up and then the cancer story?

LAURA: mmhmm, and I'll say that, and the quotes and see if that inspires any type of movement. Okay? You ready?

CLAIRE: yay! yep!

LAURA: okay so, make sure all of this is running—

CLAIRE: I should have brought the tumor!

LAURA: right!

CLAIRE: *[giggle]*

LAURA: So find a comfortable place.

*she positioned herself in the far corner (upstage right) she is in a beam of light coming thru the window—did she choose this spot for this reason?*

LAURA: Okay, taking a few breaths, attending to the feeling of weight in your body—

*sitting very upright in her chair, hands are in her lap, head is balanced on top of her spine*

LAURA: feeling your breath—waking up your imagination—giving attention to how you feel mentally, emotionally and physically,—just checking in with yourself—being aware of the sensation of your body—warming of the mind with concentration to prepare it for improvisation—if your mind wanders recognize it and return your attention to sensation—and whatever impulses you may have to move, give yourself permission to act on them—altering the shape of your body, keeping your awareness on sensation—

*very slowly, almost imperceptibly lowers her chin toward her chest  
her head then moves side, beginning a lateral bending*

*with continuous slow movement she comes through an upright sitting position and roll forward  
through her spine, arms release from her lap and hang from her shoulders*

LAURA: Sensation of the movement in your own body

*a pulsing while in a forward bend  
rolling up through spine while arms float up*

LAURA: Any sense perceptions, anything you feel or hear or see can remind you to return your attention to the sensation in your own body. It doesn't mean that you let go of external attention, it just means that you root your attention in your body as you receive information from around you.

*rolls shoulders around  
gives herself a little massage*

LAURA: Follow your own desires and your own interest in movement.

*turns head from side to side*  
*lateral bend*  
*one hand in lap the other is hanging and doing small movements rotating from the shoulder*

LAURA: Every shape that you make is part of a personal conversation with yourself.

*arches back*  
*rolls forward*  
*swings arms front to back*  
*a little wiggle, chair responds by going back and forth*  
*alternates reaching arms above her head*

LAURA: Every movement you make is an expression also needed in this room.

*brings one arm across to touch opposite shoulder, then does same with other arm this becomes a repetitive gesture, changing in speed and dynamics*

LAURA: Continuing in your own time, begin to consider reaching into the space with your perception.

*this is the first time she moved out of the sun but not far*  
*turns back to me and initiates some movement from her shoulders*  
*chair begins to roll backwards and rotate in response to this.*

LAURA: Notice what attracts your attention or captures your interest and let it remind you to return your attention to the sensation in your own body.

*she is now in the upstage center area of the space but facing the window*  
*crosses arms in front of her torso*

LAURA: Listening to what your body needs. Begin to move towards empty space, notice what attracts your attention and use those images to both remind you to keep your attention on sensation and to motivate your movement for developing your improvisation as you begin relating with the space.

*travels in a large circle that stops at the back wall*  
*places hands on the wall*

LAURA: Generate energy in your body through movement.

*travels quickly downstage left*  
*circle*  
*rolls to center*

LAURA: Nourishing your body with your breath, generating the flow of your blood, lubricating the joints, inhabiting your whole body with attention.

*traveling backwards*  
*swinging arms side to side, very released*

LAURA: Softening, breathing

*forward bend*  
*arms reach behind her torso with head towards knees*  
*slow roll up through spine,*

*Reaches up with one arm then the other*

LAURA: Beginning to realize how many things the mind can do simultaneously.

*slaps hand to send it side, reverse, making slapping sounds, various*

LAURA: Anchoring in the moment, in your sensation.

*rolls to window  
places hands on window sill and bows*

LAURA: Allowing intuition, the imagination, the subconscious to begin to generate images in your own body.

*releases arms from window sill and uses them to roll herself quickly, abruptly, backwards while simultaneously rolling up thru spine.  
travels in a small circle until facing opposite direction  
rolls slightly forward as arms float overhead and lower gently in front of her crossing in front of her chest but not stopping there.*

LAURA: What you perceive may motivate you to make a movement that your whole body wants to make.

*spins two times  
travels  
spins-travels-spins  
travels backwards quickly  
travels forward starting slow and accelerating  
heads towards opening space by the window*

LAURA: There's value in knowing where you are going, there is also value in arriving somewhere you haven't even considered. Acknowledge that as an improviser, sometimes you make choices and sometimes choices choose you.

*sideways bending  
fast roll to other side of the room  
spin  
fast roll to other side of the room  
explores a box that is in the room, she picks something up out of it and sets it down*

LAURA: We're going to go a short time more in the warm-up.

*backwards spin  
turns back to me  
spirals through spine with one arm reaching behind the chair, reverses this*

LAURA: Sense what your body needs. Begin to search for an ending in your warm-up as you look for stillness in your own time.

*comes to window downstage left  
she seems to be looking for something that is outside of the window even though we cannot see through it*



LAURA: From this stillness, move just your head and see what you can in the space, without moving any other part of your body. And sense what you cannot see.

*lowers her chin toward her right shoulder  
looks around, up, and down*

LAURA: And again, come to a comfortable position.

*rolls back and comes to stillness*

LAURA: And for the next 15 minutes, share your cancer story in movement

CLAIRE: um-I'm getting too hot, I'm sorry. I don't want to interrupt the flow.

LAURA: that's okay it's a good time to do it.

*paused for opening up windows and turning on fan*

LAURA: okay, so re-centering yourself, beginning on your own time, sharing your cancer story.

*she begins where she ended the warm-up, facing toward a window  
rolls backwards  
quik changes of direction  
abrupt stop  
roll forward, head to knees  
hand pushes forehead up  
articulate rolling of chair with jazz hands  
places open palms on various areas of her body  
place cupped hand on heart  
uses forearms to roll her chair forward and back, being careful not to touch the wheels with her hands*

*stops using one arm and continues using only very small strokes of the opposite arm until she crashes into the back wall*

*leans into the wall and pushes herself back  
comes to stillness with hands on heart  
rolls from one side of the room to the other until again crashing into a side wall, leans into it*

*pushes away from wall  
stops  
very abrupt lift and drop of front wheels  
assymetrical, tense shapes of arms*

*leans to her right and controls chair with right elbow, this sends her into a circular motion*

LAURA: Continue for about 8 more minutes, so you are about halfway through your story

*backs into center of studio  
moves hand into and away from chest several times, and repeats with other arm, body/ torso is involved, breathing with this action*

*turns slightly and pauses with hands held above her lap*

*looks around, searching*

*rolls up*

*arms out from shoulders, elbows bent, undulating from torso*

*travels around room*

*back up toward me*

*places hands on back, feeling, searching*

*this self touch continues around to her belly*

*some very awkward, stiff, jerky movements*

*uses arms to move legs off of foot rests, seems to be trying to stand, leans forward, I think she is almost going to do it.*

*arches back with legs extended*

*uses arms to replace legs onto foot rests*

*grabs different parts of her chair*

*circles backwards*

*arms float up*

*pulsing back*

*arms out then palms together, throwing her own arms*

*turns*

*palms in prayer position*

*bends forward*

*arms reach forward and cross in front of her*

*watching hand, she rubs fingers together and lets it go—like releasing an insect*

*she tenderly grasps something and pushes it into her abdomen*

over the next minute or so, finishing your story, I'll know when you are done when you come to stillness.

*some rib cage movements side to side and forward,*

*arms fold in like holding a baby, grasping forearms*

LAURA: Stay in the space that you're in as I give you the next instructions. I'm going to use some of your own words from our discussions and from your journaling. and just allow your body to respond in movement in whatever ways it feels in that moment.

LAURA: "Cancer is something that is always with me."

*right arm out, wiping the air in front of her*

*small motions with right arm*

LAURA: "I didn't think I'd be around anymore, I thought it would get me"

*backing up, pulling arm in*

*sideways collapsing*

LAURA: "I was cautious—I never told anyone"

*crosses arms in front of chest and wiggles back and forth, frightened*

LAURA: "I do things differently than I would have done"

*opens palms and backs away  
clap  
throws arms up and looks up, pauses there*

LAURA: "I started dancing again in my 20s."

*port de bras  
windmill through arms which takes torso over legs*

LAURA: "The point that I thought my dancing was over, interestingly, was when I was on crutches."

*short roll back, abrupt lift and drop of front wheels, rolls forward  
repeats several wheelies while moving forward through space,  
the chair dropping makes a loud noise  
turns around just before running into the wall*

LAURA: I guess I decided, oh I'm going to dance anyway

*spin  
hands kind of monster like  
sneaky*

LAURA: "... people would tell me that, 'well from now on in your life you can only do this' and I was like, 'what?!'"

*fast changes of direction,  
floppy body, out of control*

LAURA: "... they were like 'well, you're going to have a job where you sit in an office all day.' So I started thinking, well I can't do that, there's just no way, I mean I just cant'!"

*stillness  
moves hips and very staccato movements with arms and hips, bouncy*

LAURA: "I didn't know how to figure it out."

*chin forward, travels back, shame*

LAURA: "I felt really different"

*puppet like motion, asymmetrical arm gestures*

LAURA: "It is a race"

*lots of starts and stops, traveling backwards, straight, then turn, then straight, then spin  
arms are straight and moving in all different directions, up down, in to chest, out to sides.*

LAURA: "You are not supposed to be vain when you have cancer"

*limp at her wrist she grasps a clump of her hair, travels around holding on to her hair, pulling it*

LAURA: "Where are the other people like me?"

*rapid movements throwing her head in various directions, her chair follows,*

LAURA: "Being a cancer survivor doesn't make you perfect."

*throws one arm back behind her self  
wheely*

LAURA: "I take more risks"

*travels across room*

LAURA: "I'm pretty strong!...I'm an older woman but I've got some muscle!"

*alternates use of arms to push chair, large arm motions, leading forward with her chin, moves to center of room and balances with front wheels off the floor.*

LAURA: "I think that I have always secretly been a dancer. . . to me what I was doing—feeling—was beautiful."

*drops wheels to ground  
opening up from arm to torso, a flower blooming  
lifting one arm, dropping it, reverse*

LAURA: "not doing what I want, doesn't make sense to me"

*collapsed over to one side of her chair  
traveling using only that wheel  
sequencing movements through her torso*

LAURA: "it is all about my body, my body, my way, my inside, my liver, my spleen, my heart, my lung. it is about feeling, really, feeling my body. my toes, my knees, my core. the core of my body, the core of who I am."

*shoulder rolls back  
open up through chest, pulses  
pushes herself up off of her seat  
arrives at stillness collapsed over lap but looking up and out sideways*

LAURA: "dancing allows for a difference in thinking"

*travels back  
grabs hands and throws*

LAURA: now take a moment to finish anything else that your body has to say as we come to an end of this session. on your own time.

*while still collapsed over side, rolls back  
pulls on shirt  
moving backwards, while extending arms out and up*

*ends looking up, arms and sides, close to window  
faded back*

LAURA: Gradually pulling your awareness back into the sensation of your body. your breath, your weight. coming back to this moment

*seems to struggle, pulling on shirt, shifting,  
then to rest sitting neutral position*

LAURA: how do you feel right now?

CLAIRE: um, a little overwhelmed

LAURA: it was a lot

CLAIRE: yeah

LAURA: you just created an incredible dance.

CLAIRE: it's weird cause I don't feel that, I just feel like there's a lot coming in me right now. so maybe I'm just not—

LAURA: yeah that's a lot

CLAIRE: but that's not bad!!

LAURA: okay good!

CLAIRE: I saw that look on your face like oh shit *[laugh]*

LAURA: I know right, well I feel like, I don't know I feel like I could do that with you.

CLAIRE: that you could traumatize me?

LAURA: no!!

CLAIRE: *[laugh]*

LAURA: no!

CLAIRE: the evil side of Laura comes out.

LAURA: no, I mean you seem very comfortable—I mean I know you talked about in your writing that there's a vulnerability that comes but at the same time there's a willingness to go there, with you—I don't know—that's what I thought

CLAIRE: yeah.

LAURA: okay so it's already 3:00

CLAIRE: was that 45 minutes?

LAURA: it was about 50.

CLAIRE: cause the cancer story part felt long...that's where I felt the most worried about what I did. like how I moved or what I did.

LAURA: like performance wise?

CLAIRE: yeah.

LAURA: like you put pretty high stakes on it?

CLAIRE: yeah. it's interesting, I think so.

LAURA: wow, I know, I was like whew, there were times when I was holding my breath. did you make any discoveries?

CLAIRE: it made my back hurt.

LAURA: oh really, because of the thinking about it, or because of the movement?

CLAIRE: I don't know, but I mean that's where it was, it was. unless it was because like that's where I was moving because that's where it was.

LAURA: do you feel okay?

CLAIRE: yeah, I'm not going to fall apart! *[giggle]*

LAURA: and if you think of anything, send me an email or something

CLAIRE: when I did my story but I controlled it so now you're controlling it, but not in a bad way, you know what I mean?

LAURA: yeah

CLAIRE: like if you choreographed your own story, you designed your own dance, then you're controlling where you go and what you are doing, you know what I mean?

LAURA: yeah, absolutely. ---

Iris K: Movement Interview #1

Location: large dance studio

Duration: 45 minutes of movement plus 15 minutes of dialogue

LAURA: This is Iris K and this is Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007. So just take a moment to get comfortable and have your eyes closed or open, whatever you need right now.-- being aware of your breath-- and how that breath moves through your body. -- being aware of the sensation of breath in your body.-- being aware of your heart pumping blood throughout every extremity, every organ, every cell of your body.-- and sensing the desires of your own body in this moment in time, make one movement"

*she has been lying still, very flat on her back. Her one movement is to bend her left elbow.*

LAURA: and make another movement

*she extends her L arm overhead, with the arm resting straight above her head on the floor.—and unfolding*

LAURA: while still sensing your body's own desire, change the shape of your body

*she folds into herself onto her left side (towards the camera and me) with one arm across her face and the other across her chest and her leg bending, pulling her foot toward her pelvis—sheilding*

LAURA: feeling those sensations in your body, sensations of your shape, of your breath, and your blood pumping and bringing some awareness to time-- being very aware of time, change the shape of your body.

*She abruptly collapses into a prostrate position with her left arm extended flat on the floor underneath herself.*

LAURA: and in a moment I'm going to ask you to change the shape of your body again but let that change take you into whatever movement or motion your body is asking for at this moment--and change

*reaches arms out above head while extending leg and rolling onto her stomach—arms then down at sides—like a morning stretch. lifting her head off the floor and moving it from side to side. pulling arms in and arching up with weight on elbows and forearms. leg remains fully extended.*

LAURA: preparing your body, warming it up, preparing it to dance, preparing it to find it's own dance today

*wiggling pelvis side to side—releasing—rolling--hand covers face/eyes unwinding the rolling,--extending, arching—hands come together into a prayer like position—more rolling then while on back, she arches her back putting the crown of her head on the floor and leg is folded in and turned out, pushing into the floor with her elbows—rolls away from me onto stomach with hands covering face, coming to rest with hands supporting her face with weight supported on elbows and leg bent at knee so a flexed foot is facing the ceiling.*

LAURA: "I feel my entire body. Every cell dancing inside"

*increases arch in back so that her head almost reaches her foot—extends leg and torso out flat on floor and arches up again --breast stroke action twice with undulation through spine. arching up with weight supported on hands like upward facing dog in yoga. lifting pelvis off of the floor.*

LAURA: "EVERY cell dancing inside. I take tremendous delight"

*rolling onto back, hands moving up and down in a prayer position, rolls on back with leg up toward ceiling and while on back appears to be swimming toward the surface with arms and leg pumping in, out, and around—uses right arm to pull extended leg into torso and uses this leverage to sit up and waves arm overhead, then hand with increasing speed, then fingers, this begins to slow while the gesture gets bigger, this evolves into a wave motion with her arms as if she is conducting (I have image of Mickey Mouse in Fantasia conducting the flooding waters)*

LAURA: "I'm becoming fully in sync with my body with my inner life."

*reaches up then out to sides, folds arms into self touching head and down chest-caresses torso with both hands, pushes inner thigh with left hand which causes her body to roll onto her stomach--rests on stomach again with hands supporting head, leg is extended on the floor.*

*rubs face and lies face down, elbows come in while flexing foot, hands slide out on floor overhead, then down to sides while head lifts up and off the floor, shoulder blades are rolling around*

LAURA: "I am a sac of cells each with its own dance"

*rolls pelvis side to side, extends arms overhead again, fingers quickly tap on the floor she is watching herself tap her fingers, looks like she's playing the piano, foot is also tapping on floor but slowly. elbows pull in while fingers continue tapping, and hands come around to buttocks and up lower back (still tapping) and then hands return to the floor. she suddenly starts wiping the floor like scrubbing it and torso, pelvis, head, and leg respond to this quick and large action. whole body is moving and this scrubbing circles around so that her whole body rotates-- she has turned 360 degrees*

LAURA: "each cell is contributing to the way this body does its' thing in this world."

*movement slows down and while still on stomach, leg is bent with sole of foot facing ceiling, arms extend out and palms roll up, back of her hands are on the floor, extends leg and left arm, right arm pulls into her torso and pushes her into a seated position with leg extended in front of her. she reaches right arm across to her foot and pulls on the ball of her foot (forward bending) her movement has slowed down*

*leg turns out and fold in so that her foot is at her right hip--sits up tall--has a very content expression on her face, a slight smile--eyes are closed, hands are flat on the floor in front of her and they start to caress her the floor then her leg, she reaches hands to the floor just behind her hips and presses, her upper spine arches and her head drops back, --this pressure into the floor with her hands lifts her pelvis off the floor and her foot slides underneath her groin, with her knees pointing straight toward me. head returns to neutral and initiates a roll forward thru the spine, she is sitting on her foot.*

LAURA: This is how my cells are dancing today.

*arms slowly come in front of her, hands sliding on the floor, with very open palms like jazz hands. her body stays in this forward bend and her head bobs up and down 10 times--the tempo of this is varied sometimes slow sometimes quick, there are pauses, the motion increases in it's range and her face goes from being relaxed to being scrunched up, to opening her mouth very wide. While doing this her hands rub the floor out and in in front of her knee.*

*her final lift of her head takes her onto her back with foot up towards ceiling and arms extended out from shoulders with hands on the floor. hands then come off floor extending arms toward the ceiling. from my point of view, I see a "w" shape with her body. her fingers start wiggling rapidly and leg seems to draw circles on the ceiling.*

*reaches leg across to right hand which carries her into a rolling action towards her right. she rolls several times transporting herself to another area in the room*

LAURA: What is the purpose of dance in my life?

*on stomach, arches up, hands are in prayer, then caress face, return to prayer and head lowers--caress face quickly now and makes faces--rolls to back and slides arms up and down*



*like making a snow angel—starts clapping various rhythms, hitting floor--playful—waves at ceiling, points fingers and circles them, wax on wax off motion,*

LAURA: “to connect to what really is truth in me”

*slowly comes through corpse pose with slow movement of arms, --again snow angel—lifts into sitting—stretches/reaches right arm sideways, brings her into lying on her right side--a luxurious groan*

LAURA: “to find my deep inner self”

*caress of body, circular motion of hand on torso and chest  
breath  
self embrace  
makes raspberry sound  
slaps rhythm on belly—drumming—continues to chest and cheeks, mouth—rolls to side and slaps butt and leg and foot—very playful, clapping—seems to be waking up her body feeling the sensation of the slapping or is she just playing with rhythms*

LAURA: “dance is...dance is about finding my own way around inside and outside myself”

*sitting on right hip, leg folded in, pulls foot with left arm behind her  
leans back with weight on elbows  
walks on elbow rotating self a quarter of a turn*

LAURA: “it helps me stay connected to my own body”

*crown of head on floor,  
full body movement  
rolls onto belly  
breast stroke  
reaches back and pull foot toward buttocks.  
caress butt  
tosses foot from one had to the other  
toss gets bigger and slower  
hits foot on floor on each side  
humming and making faces  
cupping hands over face and makes sounds—deep low pitch sounds  
body is in upward facing dog position with weight on elbows and hands on face  
she stays here for quite a while, making sounds  
then lies down with chin resting on hands,*

LAURA: “I am an introvert”

*face to ground, pelvis gently wiggles side to side  
continues with low pitched noises  
scooting on belly, pulling herself forward with her arms, face still into ground--slithering very resonant sounds  
rolls onto back  
right hand rests a moment on lower rib cage—sounds continue  
left arm and leg are extended on the floor  
slowly brings hands to where they are hovering about her lower rib cage and slowly down towards pubic area*

*fingers point into heart*

LAURA: "I am a mover who is fascinated"

*continues previous movement to caressing of hip area  
touches herself while bending side to side—tempo varies and it becomes staccato  
takes her into some wild spiraling in the spine  
hands cover face*

LAURA: "I am a woman, a girl inside"

*sounds become high pitched  
yummy type rubbing of belly  
eyes are still closed  
rolls onto stomach and gently pats her butt  
rubs face  
head moves up and down while weight is supported on elbows  
taps fingers in front of her  
taps hand over mouth then on cheeks*

LAURA: "I am a one-legged dancer"

*immediately lowers forehead to floor and brings hands into a prayer position behind her head,  
gently shaking hands in this position like preparing to roll dice*

*rolls into seated position  
caresses leg,  
extends onto left side and pats area of amputation*

LAURA: "I am a dancer"

*extends fully on back with arms overhead  
clenches fists then releases  
sits up, extends hands out to sides in a rested, receiving posture, high release through head and  
chest  
slides left hand down leg toward foot*

LAURA: "I am a dancer"

*rolls into upward facing dog position again with weight on elbows and hands in prayer  
slowly lowers forehead to ground*

LAURA: this is my dance today

*movement slows  
pulls self forward with forearms while hands maintain prayer, back is arched  
extends forward onto floor  
rolls onto left side then to back  
fingers intertwined then returning to prayer, brings prayer hands up to touch forehead and  
extends arms overhead, now lying on back*

LAURA: why do I dance? why do I dance?

*pinching cheeks together*

*hands to head, rubbing  
slight sit up, rolling onto side folding leg in, then sitting up,  
gentle rubbing of hands, warming—then hands to heart  
gentle rubbing of hands, then hands to head  
rubs arms and face, like washing, lathering up*

LAURA: “delight with my body”

*circular action with head/shoulders then whole body goes back and forth then around one  
direction then the other*

*rolls onto side*

LAURA: “playful”

*self hug, in a fetal like position—stillness—resting*

LAURA: “dance is life—love”

*touching ear  
deep breaths with sound  
hand on area below sternum  
pats side, rhythmic  
high pitched squeals—like a witch, laughing  
collapses onto floor*

LAURA: “I want to be in control of my body.” “I want to be in control of my body. my body. her power, her knowledge, her beauty”

*taps floor, making sounds  
on belly  
runs fingers through hair, gently  
arches up  
rolls to side  
caresses torso  
extends / receiving arms outward—like naval radiation*

LAURA: “I believe totally in my body’s innate wisdom and beauty.”

*slight smile  
presentational gestures  
very poised/feminine  
returns to making sounds  
touches left hip/thigh*

LAURA: this is my dance today

*remains in stillness for a moment  
returns to forehead on ground, hands in prayer behind head*

LAURA: is there anything else that I want or need to express in my dance today?

*rubs head,  
pulls self forward with forearms, scooting*

*swimming type action,  
palms turn upward arms extended out from shoulders*

LAURA: my dance is beginning to approach its end. my body will find it own it's own time

*face into floor  
rolls to back  
shakes arms and leg in the air  
leg reaches over head like a shoulder stand, hands move around exploring  
extends body flat with hands palms open, palms toward ceiling, bent at elbows  
brings hands to heart  
END*

*she turns, faces me and immediately begins dialogue*

IRIS K: I started crying there

LAURA: you did?

IRIS K: oh yeah

LAURA: when? do you know when?

IRIS K: yeah I think I was in this position (*lies on stomach*) and it was kind of close to the end, not like so close but you know, definitely in the last quarter probably

LAURA: mmhmm

IRIS K: and I think it was when you asked "why?". I think that it might have been. I'm not sure. you might be able to see it on the video. if I saw it I'd be able to tell you when. but I don't know

LAURA: well I did notice shortly after I said, 'why do I dance' I then said, 'delight with my body' and then I said 'playful' and you didn't seem to really respond to playful, like you weren't there I didn't think, like that was my perception, would you agree with that?

IRIS K: um, yeah, I, sometimes I couldn't hear everything...but I don't know

LAURA: was there anything either movement wise or, uh, things I said that really resonate strongly with you?

IRIS K: well that part where I just yelped out, that was kind of fun. and I think I had something in the beginning that really, I don't think I had ever done before. its was something where I was laying on my back and I think my legs and my arms were going like this [*swimming motion*]

LAURA: yeah you were swimming!

IRIS K: I was swimming! yeah, I was swimming in the air!

LAURA: oh yeah, that was beautiful

IRIS K: yeah, that was amazing to me too. and then I also liked, and I've done this before but I didn't plan it or anything—I love that sounding in all parts of the body—that is just so terrific, so terrific

LAURA: that seemed like a very playful moment. and I was curious as to whether for you if it was more about the sound or if it was about the sensation of that in your body?

IRIS K: it's both. the sound is very powerful, but yeah obviously ---one time I was at a jam it was like overnight, week long jam or something and I just had this feeling where I was using my body as a musical instrument--the sound was driving me, and the sensation. yeah, there are so many ways in the body, I think anyway, to be playful and delighted that aren't necessarily noticeable to the outside world.

LAURA: oh yeah, absolutely

IRIS K: which is just sort of a interesting notion. but of course if you're a dancer, performing you want to make sure you bring that somehow out. but the tears really surprised me and it delighted me really. it's funny to think that it's delightful but it truly is----being moved.

LAURA: was there anything that you were like 'I'm just not there today'. was there anything that I said where you were like 'oh that's just not today'

IRIS K: I don't think so, I mean I liked, I remember talking about the cells, I mean I definitely remember hearing my own words-----I like the word "fascinated"----I like that word, it registered----and I like all that stuff about the cells-----

LAURA: you did a lot of (*prayer position*)—does this represent something to you?

IRIS K: well, I think--dancing feels really spiritual to me, I mean it's really about, I mean it's almost religious I would say. and I wouldn't consider myself an organized religious person but I think that, that's really what that's about, that's about gratitude. and um, I think that's what spiritual about it, it's about gratitude that I found this, I found—and that, it's been huge for me in my life [*tears here*] and so I feel about that, just heart and thankfulness. and then just desire (*extends arms outward*), for whatever is out there for me.

LAURA: yeah there are places where I wrote 'receiving' where it seemed like there were place where it seemed like you were receiving something from the outside in and it seemed like a really beautiful moment.

IRIS K: yeah, it's uh, dancing is really an opportunity to, I mean you walk around the world, you know in your daily life and you think about receiving, I mean you can really I mean you don't usually walk around gesturing like this (*arms extend*) you know.

LAURA: there are times when I have done that!!! Were you aware of the sound of rain?

IRIS K: no

LAURA: I asked because I heard the rain outside and then I observed your fingers wiggling and it looked like rain.

IRIS K: Really? Maybe subconsciously, but I don't remember being aware of that...

IRIS K: I'm glad I said the gratitude thing because that is important-----fortunate. I'm grateful for this, it's seriously just another opportunity to remember how important this is.

Monica Rey: Movement Interview #3

Location: Monica Rey's home  
Duration: 40 minutes

LAURA: So just take a moment to get comfortable and have your eyes closed or open, whatever you need--

MONICA REY: okay, I think I'll close get that within process

*sitting cross legged on the floor, hands in lap, very tall posture*

LAURA: that's exactly right, being aware of your breath—starting there, warming yourself from the inside out. Being aware of how that breath moves through your body, warming and cooling. -- being aware of your heart pumping blood throughout every extremity, every organ, every cell.--

*eyes are closed, deep audible breaths*

LAURA: Paying attention to gravity and the weight of your body, maybe one side feels more weighted than the other, maybe you are pretty evenly distributed on the floor. Paying attention to how your body feels right now. Honoring this moment.

*Pulls shoulder blades back*

LAURA: Sensing the desires of your own body, move one part of your body

*right arm reaches forward and back*

LAURA: And add another part

*left arm reaches forward and back*

LAURA: Now simultaneously move two parts of your body. And adding to it as your body desires. Yeah and you may want to open eyes as you start moving. keep that movement going, play a little bit with timing or the dynamics of the these movements.

*both arms reach out with a high release through sternum  
grasps hands behind her torso—opening up chest  
hugs knees into chest*

MONICA REY: stacatto might be challenging to me because I'm not used to moving quik

*rolls onto hands and knees and shifts weight to knees while movement is occurring through her spine*

LAURA: Just warming your body up from the inside out

*pushes herself up into a downward dog pose from yoga  
treading through feet  
extends one leg toward ceiling, then the other  
comes to a kneeling position, sitting on her feet and hands resting on thighs  
deep breath*

LAURA: Now take this familiar place that you are in and alter it a little bit, so if you are sitting in a yoga sitting position, alter it into something new, and see where that carries you.

*shifts weight onto hip and extends one arm up in a very lengthened sideways bend, I feel like  
the flow is beginning to occur here.  
forearm envelopes around her head, there is a slight smile as she continues to move from a  
deep place in her torso, shifting, reaching, exploring*

LAURA: Exploring with the unfamiliar.

MONICA REY: the unfamiliar--

*rolls onto knees and slowly rises up to standing*

LAURA: Continue your movement while maintaining your attention to sensation and letting your awareness extend from not only the internal space but the external space, the environment in this moment.

*her weight is on one leg with the other ankle circling around  
shifting weight forward and back  
spine spirals and initiates a turn*

LAURA: Allowing your body to move, to explore movement in ways it may not have ever explored before.

*deep arching thru spine*

LAURA: well one thing I've noticed we tend to think a lot from the limbs maybe think about a vertebrae or your forearm, what does it feel like to initiated movement from a different place. Finding your dance today. Maybe is familiar, maybe it's new, maybe it's a combination.

*contracting over while very balanced on one leg  
a wave of movement sequencing thru the body*

MONICA REY: it's a combination

*with weight on both feet, explores hips and pelves with circular motions*

LAURA: Continue this warming up dance for a short time longer. Just doing what your body needs to feel comfortable moving. And continuing in movement, I'm going to start filling in your own words, and seeing how your body responds. Again thinking of this as kind of one continuous dance.

*up to this point she has been very internal, there is a shift to the external here, more of a  
presentation.*

LAURA: "I'm good at letting things go, I have to, otherwise I can't function."

*standing in a B+ position, spiraling torso with a large port de bras  
deep plie, gesturing toward floor, stirring up the air, looks like a waterfall*

LAURA: We have to “..take that next step and keep going.”

*rising up, shifting weight back and front*

LAURA: “..communicating without words”

*leg swings back to front and momentum carries her into a spin*

LAURA: “Dance inside feels like my blood is 7-up. Carbonated and light.”

*rises onto balls of feet and takes small steps with arms up and floating*

LAURA: “I just felt a bigger sense of confidence.”

*hops up and into a deep plie—torso is letting go*

LAURA: “And then to let go more, and not be afraid to make those mistakes”

*folds torso over thighs and bounces here  
unfolds quickly*

LAURA: “The balancing act, not trying to do it all, I can’t do it all...I don’t make my bed. What is the point? You know?”

*assymetrial shifts through body, angular shapes with arms, turns around slowly*

LAURA: “I wear a microphone...it’s a responsibility that I don’t always want..but I do have it and so that is important.”

*large arm gestures  
outwardly focused gaze  
movement seems initiated from chest, from heart, filling room with a giving energy  
supple legs as she walks, knees soft, and articulating thru feet*

LAURA: “I’m very strong, I have two legs and two feet that help me move, so that makes it okay.”

*twists torso side to side and arms follow  
playful quality  
dives head first placing weight onto hands  
follows momentum back up  
centers herself with balanced weight*

MONICA REY:

LAURA: and relax, ...you okay?



*she gestures toward a glass of water*

LAURA: Do what you need to do....

MONICA REY: I was a little more scared this time, because I know what happened to me last time. Not that it held me back, but it was an awareness—

LAURA: of knowing the possibilities of finding something new?

MONICA REY: yeah, and one side is that I kept coming back to my heart sharing or bringing it back into the room, but it was kind of weird

LAURA: isn't that interesting how like simple gestures can bring up-

MONICA REY: *[crying]* I'm sorry.

LAURA: no, you're fine. You might consider still standing because you are going to move a little bit more but I just wanted to check in.

MONICA REY: I guess I'm thankful for what I do have.

LAURA: yeah, a lot of gratitude in there?

MONICA REY: I have a lot, just by having, -- all those moving parts that we need to move well

LAURA: you had some really beautiful moments. There was a moment when you went on to one knee and just, your whole body just rounded over sequentially and it just felt like a waterfall to me.

MONICA REY: I think I felt that when you said to move from the vertebrae, I just need to cascade forward. Because my spine just needs to unwind because I think, because you're up and just whoa—

LAURA: and sometime I think those are the most beautiful and powerful moments in dance I think because there such this tendency to be upright and this awareness of being here but when that does go somewhere else its so like wow, cause it's unexpected.

MONICA REY: because I don't stop to think about, my body just responds. This is where it is, and to almost move differently and to look in deeper to evoke a movement that you're not sure where it's evoked from but it's interesting to see that too, what's cognitive in practice.

LAURA: right, yeah, it all kind of sneaks in, and it looks great.

MONICA REY: yeah, yeah, but it kind of holds you too

LAURA: there's a little bit of both there, I know!

MONICA REY: yeah. *[laugh]*

LAURA: do you find when you are doing this that you, does it go thru your brain first or is the movement coming and then you're realizing what you are doing? Or is it a little bit of both?

MONICA REY: a little bit of both. What I find is that I'm not thinking and I purposefully kind of turn that off a little bit because then I was trying to think of something to do, rather than as you had mentioned, or successfully in extracting as far as movement but I know that I move in a certain way, um,

you know we all have our way I guess. Yeah, cause I like to lift to the universe and the spirit above when I dance because it's kind of like that heart sprinkling, water fountain. But yeah, I have tried to purposefully separate that, I can't say it hasn't happened because I'm thinking how does my body feel and what does it need next.

LAURA: absolutely, it's all trying to integrate all of that.

MONICA REY: yes.

LAURA: yes, it's that whole, uh, integration, that's my word

MONICA REY: and it's a new one for me though Laura and It's expanded me emotionally and in movement too.

LAURA: and emotionally what was happening this time?

MONICA REY: I guess the first thing that pops into my mind when you say that without thought is it's more of a letting go. Maybe because I knew more of what was going to be up and felt more able to let go. It's not that I didn't let go the first time but maybe because it was a little unforeseen and you are feeling it as you go, and today I was able to move into that place sooner and kind of take my, based on your guidance and what we had done before, it was more of a letting go sooner process. I don't know if that makes sense.

LAURA: yep, it totally makes sense, yeah

MONICA REY: I was able to shed a little quicker and able to let go, and yeah—I didn't feel inhibited but I felt less inhibited, so it was a good process.

LAURA: did you recognize the words as your own as I was saying them?

MONICA REY: yes, yes. It's all me. I do feel carbonated blood, and it's night like a cola where it's dark, it's light—Oh we're lucky to be able to feel that, and we know that from movement.

LAURA: well are you ready to do a little bit more?

MONICA REY: okay

L so um, let's see. Okay. So on this one, I'm going to be asking questions or asking you to share a couple of things. And again if there's something that you want to skip over that's fine. But if you are in a place where you're like okay next! That's totally fine.

MONICA REY: thanks for the wide open invitation, it makes it comfortable going in.

LAURA: Find a comfortable place to start, getting in touch with your breath and how your body feels right now.

*standing on an angle, palms of hands together in front of chest*

LAURA: Has dance helped you cope with your experience of having cancer?

*begins to shift hips back and forth, alternating the bending of one knee then the other, hands sway side to side in response, she's crying, smiling, nodding.  
rhythmic pulsing in body, slides hands through her hair, this is a feel good moment*

LAURA: Does your body have information that can only be revealed through movement?

*pulsing stops and movement becomes more fluid, more exploratory.  
changes shape of arms  
drops suddenly into a bending position over one leg and pops up  
half turn and walks forward a couple steps with stylized arm movements  
turns and sudden pause, arm surrounds head slowly*

LAURA: What is the story of your present, of your life as it is now?

*pausing here  
side to side weight shifts  
picks up leg and extends back leads with pelvis, a sinking action  
rib cage moves around as arms, head, and pelvis follow*

LAURA: Continue this dance a little further, past the today and into the tomorrow, what do you hope for your future?

*full turn  
arms softly float down  
turns to profile with hands on heart, deep inhale  
cascades torso over leg and spine sequences up  
smiling*

LAURA: What does the dance of a cancer survivor look like?

*pauses  
as arms reach out and up she spins  
she starts to cry but seems to enjoy it  
movement is getting bigger, more encompassing, her whole body is moving*

LAURA: What is your dance? Your dance today?

*What is your dance? Your dance today?*

*her movement is responsive to the music, rhythmic  
head and neck are loose and free  
grounded through pelvis as her hips move,  
organic movement*

LAURA: Dance the dance that makes you feel most healthy and alive.

*energy shifts upward  
quik steps, then slow arm gesture, she begins a repetitive movement, tribal, upward  
feet come together, she faces forward and reaches arms overhead and she appears to grow  
taller, and taller  
shifts to a receiving kind of energy, internal focus, eyes are closed  
rib cage is very active, luxurious, I find my rib cage moving with hers*

LAURA: is there anything else that you want or need to express thru movement? Allow it to happen

*hands come to heart and gesture toward me in a statement of gratitude  
undulations thru spine,  
palms are out and elbows bent, very feminine lateral movements*

*shoulders roll around  
articulation of fingers*

LAURA: taking the next couple of minutes to bring your dance to and end on your own time.

*slowly lowers herself to the floor, sits on one hip, very relaxed posture, a very different posture  
then she started with, still poised and lifted but organic, head relaxed over to the side and she  
begins to speak:*

MONICA REY: I just want to express my thanks

LAURA: there were moments that I wanted to get up and dance with you, but I didn't want to distract you. There was this moment when you were moving your rib cage and it looked like a yummy moment.

MONICA REY: it felt really good, it was really delicious

LAURA: I so wanted to join you!

*[laugh]*

MONICA REY: thank you for taking me to a mesmerizing place

LAURA: is that what that was for you?

MONICA REY: yeah, it's not too often you get to really, really, really dance from the soul, without some sort of structure. I think sometimes when you are cleaning the kitchen but not with this type of propelled thought. It's very intense. I feel like I've just been like thru 3 hours rather than 30 minutes.

LAURA: yeah.

MONICA REY: yeah.

LAURA: mmm, were there any moments in that that stood out for you in particular either in the words you were responding to or the movement you were doing.

MONICA REY: uh how does it feel to be a cancer survivor. It really is an uplifting feeling. It's not because you've had it and gone through it, it's because you're here. So yeah, because just because you are here and whoo, it's so uplifting just to be here.

LAURA: right. Last time we talked we talked a little bit about, um, thinking about the future and how you tend to not go there so much. And I asked –

MONICA REY: that was a little scary in there, I was trying to remember what was it and it was that, okay. Yeah. Still feel—yeah, that one made me pause and stop and think before movement. Because I still don't know, there wasn't something naturally that came out either, it required *[laugh]* yeah it still, kind of barricade, to be resolved, maybe never but all worked on.

LAURA: and then the question of is it really, I mean I loved how you were saying last time that you like to be present in the know and all of that but you also touched on sometimes it's a hindrance to not

MONICA REY: yeah, because we all hope for the future and we should probably do some stuff to get there, you know?

LAURA: yeah, I get it.

MONICA REY: you are going thru a huge process just doing this and it is a process and we are learning so much along the way, whatever we choose to undertake but um, yeah sometimes we don't undertake those processes because we're, hey, we're living in the moment, and not that that is a bad thing, I think that's really cool and again I'm very grateful but there's some tasks that still need to occur for a cool future too I think.

LAURA: I know for me I got stuck in the whole, I didn't think as a pre-teen and teenager about what I wanted to be when I grew up. And you know, so deciding on a major in college was so hard because I never thought I'd be around to be blunt about it.

MONICA REY: right! Right! And so when it [the future] shows up it takes you by surprise. Thanks I feel like I'm being wishy washy

LAURA: no I get it, I totally get it.

MONICA REY: yeah thanks, it will be different for us, it just will, for those of us who are just thankful to be here, to plan ahead is just a different process, a different endeavor.

LAURA: we are just so aware of our fragility and our mortality and I think a lot of people who haven't had those types of experiences I think it's kind of easy to think oh that will never happen to me kind of thing and being people who have experienced—

MONICA REY: it's one of the things I've learned from life and especially from these experiences is, how dare I judge anybody about having an experience themselves and trying not to be cavalier with verbiage...

LAURA: ...so one of the things I said when you were moving was 'does your body have information that can only be revealed thru movement' what do you think about that?

MONICA REY: that was an interesting question! Um, I do, I don't know exactly what the movement is but I feel expressive, um, I do think that because like I'm stumbling for words right now, but I don't know what the movement is right now. But I do, it felt natural what you were saying. But I still felt like I had to poke around for , well yeah but what would that be. So I think there's still some discoveries there because I haven't allowed myself um, to be that free yet, I guess with thinking that way.

LAURA: that's kind of something that's come for me in the process of doing this project, is, because I find that the deepest most valuable information that I get seems to be right after I do these movement sessions with people.

MONICA REY: okay, yeah

LAURA: which is why –

MONICA REY: that's what just describe what I was trying to say! I do, it makes me feel better, cause I do. yeah, I'll enjoy pondering that and seeing over life what does happen. Because I don't know if it's the movement or the dance or the question, probably a culmination of all of the above. But it does take me to a very private, personal place that's inside and there are just more, I don't want to say magnified but they are like that movie projector, they are up, so now I'm like oh that's mine!

LAURA: yeah it's like seeing it from the outside or something?

MONICA REY: yeah, yeah! Well and you make me think. And it's been very healthy for me Laura, it really has.

LAURA: good.

MONICA REY: scary sometimes too, and tiring.

LAURA: I know, and I'm sorry for that!

MONICA REY: I mean that in a really positive way. You're good, yeah. And you're easy to be scared with [*laugh*] maybe the movement is the venue to allow it {the pouring out that occurs after} because sometimes the mind can't get into that, thinking that maybe the dance is able to get into that. Because I think that sometimes the mind has gates and it automatically stops and I think that's why it's feeling so inside out is because I feel more comfortable with movement allowing me in, rather than my head allowing me in.—

LAURA: thank you...

Suse Movement Interview #3

*Location: dance studio*

*Duration: 55 minutes*

LAURA: So just take a moment to get comfortable and have your eyes closed or open, whatever is needed.-- being aware of your breath—taking a few deep breaths-- and sensing how that breath moves through your body. -- is it warming or cooling or both?-- being aware of your heart pumping blood throughout every extremity, your legs, your feet, your toes, your arms, your fingers, torso—being aware of every organ, every cell.--

*standing in comfortable parallel*

*a little movement in head*

*slight shifting of weight from one leg to another, don't think she's even aware*

LAURA: Paying attention to gravity and the weight of your body, which parts feel grounded, which parts are you maybe holding? You can release those and let go. Honoring your body in this moment. Sensing the desires of your own body, make one movement

*tilts head toward shoulder*

LAURA: And make a 2<sup>nd</sup> movement.

*makes a full circle with head*

LAURA: And continuing with that body part that you are moving, you head, add another body part to move.

SUSE: at the same time?

LAURA: uh-huh

*adds right arm spiraling*

LAURA: And just continue with that for a little bit. Adding different body parts, exploring different areas to find movement.

*more spiraling in spine adding slight leg movement*

LAURA: Really just kind of listening to what your body needs right now.

*rolls down and up thru spine  
quarter turn right*

LAURA: Still being aware of your breath

*arms overhead and clasps wrists while in high release  
arms still clasped lower to rib cage (like holding baby)*

LAURA: And continuing in this same way, add another element of time and dynamics. There is a tendency to kind of get into the same flow of things, with the timing of your movement

*slowly shifts weigh onto heels then center  
staccato quarter turn (back to me now) with a drop forward in the torso  
sudden changes in direction*

LAURA: So all simultaneously, you are listening to your body's needs, to warm it up, you're exploring moving different body parts, moving in different ways, and you are paying attention to the dynamics in which you do them.

*runner's stretch while twisting thru spine  
side ways runner's stretch, chin to chest*

LAURA: Allowing your body to move, and to explore movement in ways that you may not have ever explored before. See if you can find movement that is unfamiliar.

*lies down into half bridge  
moves legs side to side and extends them  
moves legs around inside hop sockets  
circles wrists*

LAURA: And just continuing to prepare your body, warming it up, preparing it to dance, and to find it's own dance and to express.

*straight legs, feet to ceiling,  
point flex ankles  
wind removing pose  
half bridge*

LAURA: Continuing your warm up just a short time longer, so just really finding what's needed.  
*extends legs to corpse pose but with arms over head*

LAURA: And on your own time, just finding an end to the warm-up for yourself.

SUSE: what?  
*still lying on back but brings hands to belly*

LAURA: finding an end to this warm-up.  
*feet to floor*

LAURA: And relax. Sorry, I tend to get quiet don't I? I need to make sure I'm talking loud enough. okay. How are you feeling right now?

SUSE: okay...

LAURA: okay. So this next part, I'm just going to kind of, it will be movement responses to different questions, and so I'm not going to go into your words yet. Although this may, this will evolve into that, you will know when that happens. I want to kind of approach it as one continuous thing but two parts. Where you will have movement responses to questions and then you'll start hearing your own words to respond to, like we've done before.

*she continues to stretch and move while I'm talking this is still exploratory movement*

SUSE: alright

*sits up to listen*

LAURA: would you like music, or no.

SUSE: I don't know they are 2 different things. Uh music might be nice, yeah.

LAURA: I'll put some music on but I'll keep it kind of quiet.

SUSE: it makes me less self conscious but it also makes me part of the music

LAURA: right, so I might fade it out at some point. but it's pretty atmospheric so that--

SUSE: maybe turn it down a bit?

LAURA: how's that

SUSE: okay

*still sitting with legs extended and leaning back supporting weight on hands*

LAURA: Alright so again, just finding a comfortable place to start. You can be down, high or low. Taking a couple of deep breaths.

*she starts to stand up suddenly  
but finds a position in a kneeling position*

SUSE: you're going to have to talk louder.

LAURA: sorry, because of the music. What is the story of your present? Of your life as it is now?

*lowers head*

LAURA: in movement, expressing that in movement.

*in a crouched position she initiates movement with head which takes her into a couple of full rotations of her body, unwinding on the balls of her feet  
balls herself up  
continues to circle  
rolls up to standing*



*continues to turn around  
shifts weigh  
hands are wide open  
continues to turn, very slowly*

LAURA: Continuing this dance of your present, of your life as it is now, continuing it a little further, passed the today and into the tomorrow. What do you hope for your future? what does your life look like?

*breaks through some sort of barrier  
walks outside of confined space and seems to embrace the space she was in, a gesture of awareness in stillness for a moment  
begins to cover a lot of space, spinning and taking large steps circles the entire studio-- stops in a modified 4<sup>th</sup> position and tilts head.*

SUSE: I'm done.

LAURA: that's okay, you can be done. That's as far as the future can go right now.

SUSE: *[laughing]* I've already done the whole future!

LAURA: well, okay, since we're kind of at a stopping point—was that—

SUSE: it was interesting

LAURA: yeah, well tell me about that. from starting with your present

SUSE: what I realized is that I think of my life right now as really kind of stuck. And I just kind of keep looking. Like I just kind of keep circling, circling and looking, circling but I'm not, I just don't know which direction to go.

LAURA: is that related a little bit to what we were talking about with your art. like you were'nt sure what the next thing is in that?

SUSE: yeah, yeah. Do I want to, you know with my work-- Do I want to try to teach more? And so I'm like--I could only circle. That's all I could do. that's all I feel like I can do right now. So that's what I was doing. And then when you said tomorrow, then I thought well I would like it to be like this and I would like it to be on a much bigger circle. And then I would just keep making the circle bigger and bigger.

*She is actually 'dancing' while she is talking, continuing to circle around*

LAURA: yeah, you definitely started to cover more space. That was something that stood out for me, I was like, oh wow.

SUSE: yeah, in my mind, I was like, it was definitely like the middle and then I would go out and make a circle, and then I would go out and make the circle. Yeah it was an image thing.

LAURA: yeah, that's great. So do you think about your future much?

SUSE: yes.

LAURA: in terms of—

SUSE: I worry. I have concerns and worries about aging and money.

LAURA: okay

SUSE: so those concern me

LAURA: so what about the—

SUSE: cancer?

LAURA: uh, okay?

SUSE: I think it could happen any day but I don't know.

LAURA: and then what about the just, just the goals for the future and, I mean you talked about wanting things to move out more, but--

SUSE: um. My goals are more around, like more around dance-- It's like I want to keep dancing until I die. So that would be a goal. And um, otherwise I have relationships, I mean I'm at a place where I feel like my goals are to change myself in a way that I'm not doing the things that I used to. In terms of relationships. I've just recently made a very big leap, a very big, I've been making very big decisions about that.

LAURA: about relationships

SUSE: getting out of relationships, how to have relationships differently. I mean I actually work on it every week.

LAURA: are we talking about friendship type of relationships?

SUSE: yes, all relationships

LAURA: like ending some, or?

SUSE: well, yeah, like ending one really big relationship and then not getting into any intimate relationship.

LAURA: okay

SUSE: consciously not, choosing to, making choices—I'm thinking about my choices all of the time. Almost all of the time, every time I have an interaction with people. What's going on here. I mean I'm not obsessive about it but yeah, it took all that-- I have to change. I have to change if I want to be healthier. I have to learn, there are some things that I didn't learn as a younger person that now I um, have a goal of learning

LAURA: is that a little scary for you?

SUSE: it's, it will be a relief. Yeah, it will be a relief. Because I have been, felt tortured. Like I haven't, there are things that I don't know how to do and I just really want to do it different, I really, I mean I'm doing it different. I'm already doing it different. I'm already much more, I'm really much more in the consciousness and thinking thru, like is this how I want to be responding. You know? Do I want to be pissed off at people all of the time. How can I be, what can I do about myself to have a different experience in life than I've had? But I mean I've made the choices and now I'm going to make different choices. So yeah.

LAURA: it sounds like you are at a very transitional place?

SUSE: kind of, I mean it is transitional but I think that it is going to be a constant transitional, but um, part of it counseling and a lot of it is that I started to go to Al-Anon a few years ago.

LAURA: mmhmm, wow.

SUSE: yes. It's—that's a big thing-- I have a very long history of being involved with addicts and alcoholics. And so it's self worth, self image thing, and this time I'm stopping.

LAURA: right.

SUSE: I mean it's , I wasn't even, I can't even explain it. you know. I just need to be different and I'm going to try to change how I respond to my feelings of a lack of self worth, and not be involved with people that are'nt available to me.

LAURA: right, that pull you down. Yeah.

SUSE: and I've done that most of my life. pretty much

LAURA: mmmhmm.

SUSE: pretty much, yeah. And for, in different ways, yeah

LAURA: wow, kind of big, these things that you are going through now, huh?

SUSE: huge, big, yeah.

LAURA: um I guess with the whole future thing, and this has come up with other people. Um, not so much with you, is I have found with a few of these people, and myself included, that it's actually very challenging for some of us who have had this experience of cancer, to think about life later.

SUSE: yeah

LAURA: And it maybe from, you know, I was diagnosed when I was 12, I never thought about what I wanted to be when I grew up, cause I didn't really think that that was going to happen.

SUSE: yeah, you had it earlier on. Mine was in my 50s.

LAURA: right, so it could totally be a different thing. But I'm just curious if there's any of that type of thing?

SUSE: um, I'm just assuming that I am going to keep living. I'm trying to do that. That is what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to stay under the assumption that things will go on. I mean I feel like that the best I can do.

LAURA: absolutely.

SUSE: I don't hold to that everyday. It's not that I don't cry at home and feel like crap and scared! I mean, you know, it's part of my life.

LAURA: right. So it's a conscious thing, to try to think, okay this is going to keep going.

SUSE: I have to, you know, I just have to, I'm just doing, you know, just keep with it, go to the counselor, work out, dance, you know just keep going, just do the best you can each day. and try to talk and think about things in a different way and Just do that the best you can.

LAURA: right, absolutely.

SUSE: that's my plan.

LAURA: sound like a good one....*[inaudible exchange]*...um, I just want to ask you a question about, when you just finished dancing, you talked about how there were some interesting things that came up for you, you know with your present and the really small circles, and how you felt confined—which leads me to wonder, do you think that there are truths or answers that can come out thru dance and movement that don't necessarily come out when you're asked these questions verbally or thru writing?

SUSE: I'm sure there are. Yeah, But I have not used my dancing in that way. This is this only time that I've used dance in that way, I think. Unless, for a while I was doing like an open dance time on Saturday mornings where they would just play music, not ecstatic dance but anybody could go, one of the rules it you don't talk.

LAURA: yeah, yeah, I know what you're talking about.

SUSE: and in that way, I felt that it's been a way that I can process information. And maybe when I was, I'd forgotten that I took contact improv when I was just after diagnosis or during diagnosis

LAURA: really?

SUSE: I had completely forgotten about that. And so I think that was a way of kind of working thru some of that body stuff—being in contact with people. But I don't, I mean- and every time when I meet with you I think, you know, there's this whole area of my life that I don't explore, I mean I talked about it with meeting with you, I talk about meeting with you and I get a lot of insight information, but I don't feel like there's a way for me to do that. I don't know, I mean, how would I do that? Unless I was with a group or something that that was what their goal was, was to dance and work things out, I mean unless I was with a dance troupe or something and you were talking about it at the same time. Because people are, social dance don't—

LAURA: don't necessarily go there?

SUSE: no, no.

LAURA: although in some ways, I mean I think maybe on a very subconscious level you are, --

SUSE: yeah, right, but it's not a goal of it! It's not like I'm doing dance therapy or I'm doing dance exploration of my personal issues.

LAURA: right, exactly

SUSE: I mean I'm not being sarcastic, it's just that, I could see where it would work for me. for sure. If there was an opportunity. I mean obviously I signed up for this! *[giggle]*

LAURA: all right, so find another comfortable spot, I'll put music on again and we'll do, this will be quotes, I take that back, I'm going a couple of my own questions but then I'll start to go into your quotes.

SUSE: okay, okay

LAURA: so, again find a comfortable spot. Has dance helped you cope with your experience of having cancer?

SUSE: Do you want me to dance about that?

LAURA: I want you dance your answer. Dance your answer.

*steps into a second position, palms outstretched  
half turn, arms begin to go up then covers face because she starts to cry*

SUSE: I'm crying.

LAURA: okay, that's okay, do you need a moment? You can take some time.

*hands on head*

SUSE: yes.

*she continues to dance, almost like beginning to slide into splits*

SUSE: that's a little too big of a question

LAURA: too much, okay, we'll move on.

SUSE: I can't think of a movement that's big enough, I can't.

*says this while standing in an open position  
hands in a receiving position, palms up*

SUSE: it's too big, that's my answer.

LAURA: that's a great answer, just take a moment, just relax. Do you need a tissue?

SUSE: I'm okay with crying, it's just that's what I realized, it's so big.

*still seems to be searching with her movement*

LAURA: so I'm going to flip that over and have you dance the dance that makes you feel most healthy, most alive. The best you can, exploring that.

*self embrace  
leans  
opens arms and walks into the bigger space  
there is a vastness to her movement  
slides hands out on floor, upward facing dog  
hops feet under her self and pops up  
she has just lost about 30 years of age  
steps into a wide second position and spins  
folds into a ball, crouched down  
a lot of level changes  
second position plie  
extends one leg back and spins  
backward soutenu, one arm up  
sideways bend, then reaches forward and around, swiping area in front of her  
goes to floor, slightly sensual movement  
spins on floor and ends*

SUSE: I feel like I'm done.

LAURA: that's fine, relax. I'm going to start saying some of your quotes.

SUSE: that was kind a combination answer to both questions.

LAURA: I can see that.

SUSE: those two questions are intense.

LAURA: do you think you would have been as intense if we were sitting at that table and I asked you those?

SUSE: no! *[emphatic]*.

LAURA: why?

SUSE: because I'm here, dancing, it's completely different, completely different!

I mean it's just so logical to me. I mean I'm dancing, and it's-- I mean it's not word thing. Yes! I could go on forever. those are the answers to those questions—yes, and I could go on forever. and I can't imagine like when people are trying to choreograph that kind of depth, how do you do that? How do you choreograph what feels beyond the body although you are doing it in your body? How do you do that?

LAURA: I do this, I set up the video camera and I improvise and then I watch and I pull things from that.

SUSE: that was--I thought about that, how do you communicate those kinds of feelings

LAURA: well what was really interesting to me as and observer of these 3 sessions, this just now, I felt like as and observer, it was the first time I saw you completely get outside of your head, outside of the, like there have been times where it seemed a little bit like you were really kind of thinking about the words I was saying and what movement matches those words from here, and um, think about--

SUSE: not so much, no. I don't do that.

LAURA: okay, this felt like, this felt much deeper to me,

SUSE: it was, it was a deeper feeling.

LAURA: okay, an emotional thing.

SUSE: it was a deeper tie to the earth moving

LAURA: yeah.

SUSE: it was a feeling that I have when I took uh, it was a similar feeling that I had with a couple of other music or dance related things. Just like completely--tied to the earth.

LAURA: all right we're just going to do just one more. This is movement response to your own words.—“I often like to be in the midst of the dancing throng of people who are all being affected by the music and are dancing.”

SUSE: can you say it again?

LAURA: [I repeat the above]  
*she stands, moves near me to hear then goes into the space*  
*swinging action of arms*  
*arms float up, taking it all in*  
*spinning*

LAURA: "It allows me to be social in a comfortable setting"

*playful and swinging movement*  
*a couple of balance like movement*  
*some hopping*

LAURA: "I am in introvert"

*feet come together*  
*brings backs of hands together and pulls them into torso with a bow*

LAURA: "I feel different from some people in some ways"

*extends one arm forward , the other near her face*  
*lots of shrugging*  
*jerky type movement*

LAURA: "I felt I was adrift at sea and had nothing to hold onto"

*drunken walks*  
*swaying side and forward and back*  
*huge arch, with head released back*

LAURA: "I felt compelled to do 'it' right and the diagnosis threw me into a place where I was in a world separate or not like my previous life."

*slows down then pulls feet together*  
*angular movements with arms-almost soldier like*  
*walks to far mirror, touches own reflection*

LAURA: "I am a dancer"

*big arm gesture*  
*curls up on the floor*  
*swings legs which pull her to sitting*  
*high release sit*

LAURA: "Dance feels like excitement and happiness and all kinds of emotions"

*big leg gesture while sitting*  
*swivels hips side to side*  
*flexed wrists*

LAURA: "I can feel connected to the past in a positive way"

*embraces the space in front of her*  
*opens up thru chest*

LAURA: "This is a dream that dance holds for me, to be moving till I die"

*up and down movement*  
*sweeping action with arms*  
*lowers to modified runners stretch*  
*slides low in straddle position*  
*big arch in back*  
*arms do very unique movements for her, dive thru and splash gesture*

LAURA: And just continuing until you find and end to your dance today.

*ends right away*

SUSE: I'm going to pull up a chair

LAURA: *[inaudible]*

SUSE: I wasn't thinking very much

LAURA: I just recently watched the last 2 videos of your stuff and... I've been watching those videos and I realized a lot of the movement that you had been doing was very much from here [waist] up.

SUSE: oh yeah.

LAURA: like you did a lot of walking patterns and things, so you covered space, but it was a lot of arms and head and torso, but that is not what was happening today.

SUSE: no it was different. I don't know what, it's happened recently, I don't know what's happened.

LAURA: it was pretty amazing, I actually teared up

SUSE: what?

LAURA: I teared up in that last one actually, it was, no it was when I asked you to dance the dance that most healthy and alive. What, can we go back to that moment, what that was for you?

SUSE: well, it had, what actually ended up happening is it was a carry over from what was happening from the question before. Which was, what was the question before?

LAURA: I think about the future?

SUSE: no, no, it was, the one that I started crying on.

LAURA: oh, has danced helped you cope, uh, let me look at this [my notes]

SUSE: it was something about what was power of dance in your life

LAURA: "has dance helped you cope with your experience of having cancer"

SUSE: no,

LAURA: that wasn't it—

SUSE: no, are you sure?



LAURA: I'm sure.

SUSE: well I heard something very different. What I remembered hearing is, what's the power of dance in your life? That's what I heard.

LAURA: I may have followed it up with that.

SUSE: I don't know, but, okay so that there was a question that made me feel, that made me have a lot of feeling that I felt I couldn't, there was no way to dance it, and then the next question came which was—

LAURA: dance the dance that makes you feel most healthy and alive?

SUSE: yeah, but so it was a combination of those two things. And um, I've noticed, it seems like before today, but I don't know when exactly, I've started being more up and down. And I don't know when that happened because I'm not in a dance class right now but it seems like there was a precursor to this but it felt like today, that I felt more at ease going up and down. There is something that has happened for me—or today in this session where I was up and down more. And um, I usually have more difficulty, just physically have more difficulty with that and um, for some reason I'm not having that, and so that pulled me a little bit in place and I'm not sure why, how that's shifted, but it shifted and I may not be able to do that tomorrow, just because of my age like that, the up and down, and the knee bending and the up and down, you know it's just, you just can't do it. It just, your body, my body isn't, I'm not 20 or 30 or 40 anymore. I have a different body now and I can get really stiff.

LAURA: although you could have fooled me in that dance you just did!

SUSE: yeah, that felt, that felt, I was really surprised. I surprised myself. I thought, whoa this feels like I'm younger or something.

LAURA: yep. So any discoveries through your movement just now besides the ones you've already shared.

SUSE: umm, I think the thing that I feel sad about and maybe I could do something different about it, is I feel like I'm a deeper person than I'm able to express. I don't, not that I'm not capable of expressing it but the avenues, I felt limited. And this experience makes me think, oh I'm a pretty interesting person. How come I can't, like and where can I go where I could explore this more and share this more. How can I share what is happening? what do I do with the video tape when I get it? I mean it's just—that was a little bit of a discovery.

LAURA: so if you were doing this study, and you were doing a study on dance in the lives of people who have experienced cancer—

SUSE: I'd make it into a documentary and submit it.

LAURA: well I guess my question is what kinds of things do you think you would find?

SUSE: oh, what kinds of things, [laugh] oh I've already got you programmed! Well I would probably go in with certain ideas and then I would probably get blown away.

LAURA: mmhmm, yeah, that's what has happened.

SUSE: I'd go oh, whoa, that's so interesting and there would be this drive to share. oh this is so interesting, how come nobody—how can I share this with more people! I think that would be one of the things that would go on. It's a lot like art, you know, music and art, it's like there's this incredible gift—you know I feel like that with *[name of music group she works with]* sometimes, and I have friends

that I say, I want to share the gift, I want people to come and experience the music, but they don't come and I just stopped because I think, okay, the people that are coming are the people that want the music. but its' really hard for me not to want other people to want the gift. but they don't. if they don't, they don't. and so then like you, I have to find the people who want to share. so to me, you know, it's a dilemma like in our culture. like other cultures don't have that dilemma because there's not the boundaries that we have in our culture, so it's just different

LAURA: right. so how do you think being involved in this process has affected you?

SUSE: um, well I feel like it has affected me, I mean it affects me when it is happening and I do have some memory about it, but I don't know how to make it go any other place. so that's it. I mean sometimes when I'm dancing I think 'why am I not doing more with my dancing? is there some other way I could be doing this but I don't have any idea. Maybe this is it.

LAURA: yeah, or maybe it's the beginning of something—I don't know

SUSE: yeah, so I don't know, if I were doing it I think it would be also tedious, like grant writing or something

LAURA: I'm looking at the clock

SUSE: Oh, yeah, I need to get going.

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