

Next, specify particular mental training strategies that you can use to develop the areas you've just identified. For example, if you've set goals aimed at improving your confidence, review the confidence-building strategies described in chapter 4. Then narrow those options to two or three techniques that you like the most. You can do so by experimenting with each technique for a few days to see which ones work best for you.

The final part of the design phase involves organizing your prime dance program into a daily and weekly schedule. This step integrates your physical, technical, and mental training into an organized plan; for an example, see table 11.1. To create your individualized plan, use the prime dance Program Planner worksheet (found in the web resource) to address the key aspects of preparation that you've specified in the Areas for Development worksheet.

Implementation

The second phase of the program, implementation, is where you put into action the plan you've just designed. It's best to begin your program as far in advance of your dance season as possible. Starting your program early gives you a chance to develop the most effective program possible and incorporate it fully into your overall dance training program. It also lets you fine-tune the program to best suit your needs. Most important, it gives you sufficient time to fully benefit from the program.

You may feel some concern about the time commitment required for such a program. Even without dance, you probably lead a busy life that includes work or school, as well as family and friends. Adding a comprehensive

TABLE 11.1 Sample Mental Training Program

| GOAL | STRATEGY | PLACE IN SCHEDULE |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Increased motivation | Goal setting | Every Monday |
| Increased confidence | Positive self-talk | In training and performances |
| Lower intensity | Deep breathing and muscle relaxation | Before classes, rehearsals, and performances |
| Increased focus | Key words, imagery | Just before dancing |



Worksheet 11.2: Program Planner

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| Morning | | | | | | | |
| Afternoon | | | | | | | |
| Evening | | | | | | | |

From J. Taylor and E. Isanet, 2015, *Dance psychology for artistic and performance excellence*, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

program to your busy life may seem overwhelming. With all of this in mind, as you establish goals and create your program to meet them, consider what is realistic for the life you lead. No matter how good a program is, it has no value if you don't follow it consistently.

As you settle into your program and integrate it into your overall life, evaluate whether it is manageable. If you find that the program you've created is simply too much, scale it back rather than trying to pull off a time- and energy-consuming feat that you simply can't manage. Reduce your program to the essential elements that allow you to progress in the areas that are most important to you. Over time, the effort and time you put in to developing your program will pay off in increased efficiency and consistency.

Maintenance

The third phase of the program, maintenance, is important because in dance the training never stops. To continue to improve, you must maintain a consistent training program that addresses all aspects of your dance. If you don't maintain your physical conditioning, technique, and artistry through regular use, they will atrophy. The same holds true for mental training. Once you've

Instructors help you learn visually and kinesthetically.



developed a mind-set that allows you to achieve your dance goals for the season, you can adjust your program in order to maintain that high level while also making room for minor improvements.

The quality of your program in the off-season is determined by your commitment to your dancing and your desire to raise your goals at the start of each new season. Some dancers don't do mental training at all during the entire off-season; as a result, they have to work each year to regain their previous season's mind-set. Others maintain a moderate level of mental training that gives them a consistent base to build on when the new season starts. Still others use the off-season to *gain* mental strength and enhance less developed parts of their dancing; to do so, they continue a rigorous program that takes them to a new level of mental fitness for the new dance season.

Evaluation

Finally, to ensure that your program remains fresh and beneficial, we encourage you to continually evaluate it. Self-reflective practice involves looking back at what you have done in order to continue learning and growing. We recommend that you reflect on your program about every six months in order to identify which parts have worked well and which need to be modified or removed. This type of evaluation enables you to regularly make certain that you are getting the most out of your efforts.