

Welcome to the Inclusive Contact Improvisation Jam!

What is contact improvisation?

Contact improvisation (CI) arose out of the dance performance research of a group of people in the 70's who posed the question: what happens when we fly through the air and collide with one another? It has since branched off to become a practice that can be used toward performance, but also as a social dance that includes somatic methods and hybrid forms such as acrobatics, theatrical tools, and site specific practices, to name a few. Through sharing attention, touch, or weight, partners explore the physics of being in contact, and social questions that could not be addressed in a solo dance practice.

What is a contact improvisation jam?

A jam is an open gathering for play and experimentation. It is a space where we can practice CI without any particular direction, prompt, or score. However, facilitators will offer tools for cultivating one's kinesthetic, social, and compositional awareness in the warm up classes. Those who are less experienced with contact improvisation are strongly encouraged to attend the warm up class.

Why inclusive?

This jam is a place for rigorous, boring, playful, creative, or lazy dancing. It's a space where you can come as you are, with all of your embodied histories, needs, and aesthetics. We will use an intersectional approach to consent culture by acknowledging the ways that everyone—but particularly those who come from marginalized populations—has a need for bodily autonomy and freedom of movement. This kind of consent culture puts an emphasis on people from dominant populations dialing up their listening, rather than putting the onus on members of disenfranchised groups to use their ability to say "no." These jam guidelines and facilitation will support participants in deepening their consent practice. Participants of all abilities, shapes, sizes, ages, incomes, backgrounds, and racial/gender/religious identities are welcome.

Inclusive Contact Improvisation Jam Guidelines

Touch

- The predominant forms of touch in CI are: (a) rolling point of contact, (b) sliding, (c) sharing weight, and (d) using contact to follow momentum. We suggest that these forms of touch be the inspiration for most dances. Make sure to obtain either verbal or unequivocal nonverbal consent before engaging in touch (such as a nod, eye contact, and/or confirmation that the person is moving toward you rather than away.)
- Other forms and qualities of touch can come into play when they arise consensually. These explorations are welcome, provided they are not explicitly sexual. It is never okay to intentionally touch someone's chest or genitals, or to lock someone in a constrained position against their will, or manipulate their body in any way that does not allow them volition.

Safety and Boundaries

- Practice listening to nonverbal cues and get verbal feedback if there is any confusion or ambiguity. Practice hearing feedback about your impact on others without becoming defensive.
- Do not try to convince anyone to do something they do not feel ready to do.
- It is generally not safe to grab or lock another dancer into a position that compromises their mobility, because your partner no longer has a choice as to how they will move. In particular, leave your partner's 'landing gear' (hands and feet) free to find their own way to the floor.
- Telescope your awareness in and out in order to observe the whole environment. This way you will know what others are doing, where they are, and what you need to do to avoid collisions.
- Keep your body soft enough so that in the event of a collision you are less likely to be injured.
- Focus on lifting people by following momentum, or offering platforms and invitations, rather than “muscling” partners into lifts.
- Avoid rolling over sensitive areas such as knees, necks, and heads.
- Witnessing and resting are always options.
- Maintain your own boundaries and do not do things that make you feel unsafe.
- Do not assume that your activities are safe or accessible for everyone else.
- If you cannot communicate your needs with your movement, use words. It is always okay to say “NO” or “STOP” if something feels uncomfortable or unsafe.
- You have the right to accept, refuse, or end any dance without needing to give a reason or apology. Conversely, if someone leaves a dance with you, do not take it personally.

Relational and Social Considerations

- Respect people's pronouns, names, and accessibility needs.

- If people’s accessibility needs contradict each other we will work as a group to negotiate a workable solution that enables maximum participation.
- Cultivate awareness of how your identity and position impacts your experience at the jam. Work on developing an understanding of how any privileges you carry inform other people’s experience. If you have confusion about your how your positionality impacts others in the space, ask a facilitator for resources.
- More experienced dancers should keep dances with newcomers relatively short so that the newcomer can dance with other people and acclimate themselves to being at the jam.
- Be cautious of anyone promoting themselves as a teacher or mentor by using tactics that undermine your experience or your confidence in yourself.
- Unwelcome verbal and/or physical aggression or posturing, harassment, gas-lighting, and other forms of manipulation are not welcome at this jam.

Dress and Hygiene

- Please refrain from wearing scented products in consideration of those who have chemical sensitivities. Brush pet dander from your clothes.
- Clothing should ideally cover most of your skin, and not be slippery. Cotton is a great fabric for CI. Clothing should leave your hands and feet free. Kneepads can make it more comfortable to take weight in kneeling positions, especially on hard floors.
- Avoid jewelry, watches, and clothing with buttons.
- Stay home if you have a contagious infection such as a cold or flu. Please cover open wounds.

Enforcement of these guidelines

- We recognize that there is no such thing as a perfectly safe space, but we will all strive toward building the most respectful and inclusive space possible.
- When someone behaves counter to these guidelines, we will use compassionate calling-in as a strategy to build awareness around the behavior.
- If someone repeatedly behaves in ways that undermine the spirit and ideas of these guidelines, they will be asked to leave the jam.
- If there is a conflict between participants that cannot be resolved with support from the facilitators, an outside mediator might be called to assist in working through the conflict.

I have read these guidelines and agree to follow them to the best of my ability.

Name (printed)

Signature

Date