

## **Suggested Guidelines for Safety and Awareness at the Jam**

**Physical Safety:** Contact Improvisation is inherently risky. Serious injury, though rare, is always a possibility. By participating in the Jam, you are agreeing to be responsible for keeping yourself as safe as possible within the unpredictable and spontaneous modality of improvisation.

Be mindful of the limits of your skill. While it's worthwhile and exciting to take calculated risks, don't put yourself in physical situations that your skill level does not support. When in doubt, slow down or connect with the floor.

Even as you focus on the duet you are in, stay aware of what else is going on in the space around you. Are there a lot of people in the room? Are people generally horizontal or vertical, moving fast or slow? "Telescope" your awareness in and out to take in the environment.

If you are not actively dancing, moving to the side creates open space for expansive movement and cuts down on the possibility of others tripping over you. Giving bodywork in the middle of an active jam can put people at risk of collision and injury.

A duet is a meeting of equal partners, an exploration of the unknown between you. Even if you have very different levels of experience, no one is the "boss" of a duet. Try not to overly manipulate your partner or allow yourself to be overly manipulated.

During lifts, be sure to let your partner have his or her "landing gear" available: hands and feet ready to land on the floor. Gripping your partner, heaving them around, and working against the flow of gravity inhibits the possibilities of the dance finding its own way without your control, and can be very strenuous. We encourage you to cultivate patient curiosity, and a soft and supple relationship with the floor.

**Boundaries:** You have the right and responsibility to maintain your own boundaries, whatever they may be. You have the right and responsibility to give an honest “yes” or “no” with your body or your voice within the dance; to end a dance; or move away from a situation that doesn’t suit you at any time. You don’t have to apologize, accommodate, or explain. If you aren’t aware of what your boundaries are or have trouble saying “no” in your dances, you have the responsibility to learn how to do this.

If something happens in your dance that is troubling to you or feels like a violation, please speak directly to your partner, refraining from blaming or accusing. We also encourage you to practice hearing feedback without becoming defensive.

**Sexual Expression in CI:** Because we are sexual beings, our sexuality will always be one of many elements present in our exploration of CI. The question is not whether sexuality is present, but how it shows up, and how is it held/expressed in the dance. We all have our individual histories and comfort levels with touch.

A good rule to follow about sexual energy in a dance: when in doubt, don’t escalate the energy, *especially with a partner you do not know well or who may be new to Contact as a dance form*. It is possible, even likely, to misread signals or to allow your energy to bring an unwanted agenda to your dance. Learn to play with the edge of containment vs. expression, and if in doubt, respectfully check in with your partner.

**Witnessing each other on the dance floor:** this is an integral part of the CI Jam experience. Cultivating an awareness of your own personal perspective, your particular “lens”, is part of the practice of witnessing mindfully. There is no way to know what is going on in another’s mind. If you notice something in another’s dancing that makes you concerned for their safety or the safety of those around them, check in with them directly.

**Sound and Talking.** Sound is a natural part of embodied movement. Talking with a partner as a means of deepening into the dance or creating safety for yourself is welcome, for instance when cautioning your partner about an injury or giving/receiving feedback (if they have asked for it) within the dance. However, we encourage an intention to maintain focused dancing by refraining from general social chatter in the dance space. Chatter pulls people out of the direct experience of the dance, and affects everyone within earshot. If you find yourself talking or sounding, you might ask yourself, “is this deepening my dance or pulling me out of it? Am I aware of how my voice might be affecting the other dancers in the room?” Feel free to remind others of this intention, in the spirit of holding the Jam focus as a group.

*This document has been prepared by the CIB  
for use at all CIB-sponsored dance events.*