

## How to carry out inclusive capoeira games

Capoeira is a perfect way for connecting all types of people & catching the positive vibes. It teaches through practice VALUES - the basis of which are to not be afraid of being yourself, to not be afraid of making mistakes, to enable and empower each other through support, and as a result to become stronger and grow together.

Although at first glance it may seem that "Capoeira" is simply an intense physical training, and that "Capoeira" dancers are dangerous acrobats, nevertheless, the essence of it is the sense of community and the all-encompassing force referred to as "axe", rather than combative aggression. Capoeira teaches young people discipline and order during the class, but also mutual respect. And that is particularly important, especially when these days young people can no longer be forced into submission to a deemed



"authority figure" - this generation demands that their respect and attention be earned without fear but with the ability to inspire them. Hence, Capoeira teaches not only specific movements with which one can then learn to express themselves as if from a diverse vocabulary during a dance with another player within the bound of a circle of people called the "roda". Capoeira teaches social skills and helps people overcome social barriers, especially in this age when most tend to isolate themselves both physically and emotionally, by shifting their lives onto social platforms on their smart

phones. Capoeira workshop is a living proof that it takes less than a few hours in order to discover an authentic connection with others, when we concentrate our attention on what we have in common rather than what makes us different. Our ability to thrive and to find joy in life depends on our ability to maintain a close connection with others because, after all, we are a social species. Each and everyone of us wants to be seen and understood, and probably every one of us is afraid to fail or to make a fool of themselves in front of others, which is what often stops us from simply being "ourselves", however during such activities as "Capoeira" we manage to remember that we are not alone, and that we can develop together if we dare to throw down our social "masks" and to meet each other as equals.

### HOW CAPOEIRA TEACHES US TOLERANCE.

What is tolerance then? Is it simply waiting until someone finishes speaking or perhaps we can take advantage of the opportunity to practice being open-minded to what someone has to say beyond our own personal convictions and expectations? In modern society we like to think of ourselves as tolerant and project a "self-image" of tolerance, especially when it comes to gender equality, LGBT rights or religion, but how many of us are actually OPEN to hear out someone else's "Truth", even if it may challenge our own "Truth"?



So how does the face of tolerance appear in a Capoeira setting? It is true that Capoeira initially may attract people who are generally interested in the martial arts and the sense of power that it generates. However, this unique contact sport shows that true strength is gentle, it is not about proving ones superiority with force, it is about knowing it within and choosing to be gentle with others anyway. Tolerance means being patient with each other, especially when people of various physical training experience come together to train together. We work as a team and put aside our individual desires to gain or to "achieve" something, and instead we choose as a group to honour each persons limitations - even if it means that the whole group needs to repeat the same sequence until everyone is on board. As the African proverb goes: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

### ACROBATICS & CAPOEIRA

Every Capoeira class seems to be unique, or centred around a particular theme. Some sessions involve a lot of acrobatic training, focused on developing the body's coordination skills, balance as well as strength of



core. All the exercises that one does in an individual training session at a gym one can do together with a partner during Capoeira. After-all, it is a much greater challenge to maintain balance while trying to move in unison with another body. Therefore this class should be focused on work in

partners, requiring us to not only be aware of our own body, but that of the another body as well. At the end of the day, this teaches us greater awareness of how our body's move through space, how we shift weight, and what muscles need to be activated in order to support us. During our training we played around learning cartwheels, handstands and side-kicks, which brought us back to the simple joy that we experienced as kids who knew how to "play".

### FREEDOM IN THE BODY.

One form of freedom is to have developed the body physically to such an extent that it becomes a tool for creativity and expression through movement. Moving or dancing with another is a form of non-verbal communication through physical contact, alike to a conversation between bodies. And yet we often talk about "physical education" in society as



something that is optional, rather than something that is an inherent part of being human, where the mind is perceived as superior to the body.

But all forms of movement, whether through sports or dance, train our "body language". We focus our minds on learning a verbal language, yet we forget that we are constantly communicating information with our body to the world, with how we hold ourselves or our mannerisms, perhaps even more so than with our words.

The fact is, like any skill - language or sport, we first need to build a strong foundation through technique. We need to train the body just as we train our mind. And with time, the technical skills become so deeply ingrained in our subconscious and our muscle memory, that we can finally express ourselves without limitations. That is true FREEDOM in the body.

### DEFENSE OR OFFENSE?

What does the way we move (or how we dance, as a LEAD or FOLLOW?) tell us about the way we go about our life? The main focus should be placed on observing our instinctual inclination to either ATTACK or RETREAT. Most tend to feel more comfortable in one or the other, and this can be easily witnessed



in how people train in martial arts. Do we avoid being "hit" and direct our energy towards escaping any confrontation? Or do we do the opposite and "attack" first out of fear of being "hit"? Or maybe we feel comfortable "attacking", yet when someone "attacks" us back we feel unable to stand our ground in defence.

The last workshop should be focused on balancing our internal ability to both enter DEFENCE and OFFENCE when needed. We were able to observe our body's natural "comfort zone" in order to push past it. The goal was to find out our weakest link, and develop that part so we can become a more wholesome individual in all areas of our life. Because if we tend to live life out of a position of "defence", avoiding confrontation at all costs, we need to

find the inner courage to put ourselves out into the world and take action. Similarly, if our all our energy is focused on "offence", and we do not know



how to stop and take a pause in order to recover, we may benefit from learning how to preserve our energy inwards. After-all, life is constantly moving between cycles of ACTIVITY and PASSIVITY.

## ZOO CAPOEIRA

Sometimes there are days when we want more "play" than "work", and during these kind of days the best way to begin a training is with "zoo" capoeira. Although this form of capoeira seems to be the most suitable in attracting the attention of children, sometimes "young adults" need to play too. The name "zoo" naturally implies animals. The way we warm up is by imitating how certain animals move, such as the cat ("gato"), the spider ("aranha") and the monkey ("mono"). These are perfect tools to let go of the day-to-day pressure we experience, especially when living in a society where we feel like we need to be serious in order to be taken more seriously. Sometimes we just need to be silly, and not take life or ourselves so seriously.