



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is YPAD?

- YPAD (Youth Protection Advocates in Dance) is a non-profit organization dedicated to building empowered dance communities and keeping kids healthy and safe in all dance environments.
- Our Advisory Panel includes PH.D specialists in multiple fields and dance leaders that span the country.
- YPAD's programming has a strong focus on the emotional, physical and sexual health and the self-esteem and identity of children and teens. Our educational umbrella encompasses interactive seminars for all adults in dance that have an influence over children including their parents and dance workshops for all ages and levels.
- YPAD has a library of evidence-based research which raises awareness regarding the exploitation of youth in our dance culture, inclusive of but not limited to; psychological harm, sexual abuse, hyper-sexualization or kinetically unsafe instruction for growing children and young adults that leads to unnecessary injuries.
- YPAD provides inter-active seminars and educational programming to studio owners, conventions, teachers, dancers and dance parents. Topics include self-esteem, identity, body image, healthy social media use, media literacy, effects of sexualization, bullying, injury prevention, nutrition and more.
ypad4change.org/seminars
- Our outreach division, EDIFY Movement, organizes dancers to teach at orphanages in Mexico and Africa and service events at dance studios across the nation for homeless shelters, assisted living communities and food drives.
edifymovement.org
- YPAD's programs and services, including our first-of-its-kind certification and YPAD standards are outlined in greater detail at the end of these FAQs, as well as in YPAD's brochure and on our website: ypad4change.org/standards

YPAD's focus is on providing dance studios, conventions, competitions, instructors, dance professionals, parents, community members and dancers with the support, education, tools and resources they need to make healthy choices in the dance

environment and the world. We are committed to pursuing our mission without shame or judgment. **This is a journey and we are all in this together!**

Does YPAD want to “police” music, movement and costume choices in the dance world? Is YPAD advocating for increased government oversight of the dance industry?

- No. YPAD’s focus is on providing education, resources and support so that we can work together to keep youth and teens happy, healthy and safe in dance.
- We believe that dance professionals play a key role in influencing the self-esteem and identity of those under their care.
- Our goal is to share tips and tools to everyone in the world of youth dance (including studio owners, instructors, competition and convention owners, parents, and the dancers) in order to avoid potentially harmful situations. YPAD isn’t interested in blanket censorship, policing the dance industry or in spearheading legislation. **Instead, we believe that education leads to self-regulation.**

Isn’t the “appropriateness” of a music, movement, concept and costuming choice a matter of personal opinion?

- Our commitment to creating positive, healthy and safe dance environments for our children doesn’t come from opinions, it comes from a large body of research and advice from the top psychologists, policymakers, professors, health care professionals and youth dancers who agree: unhealthy dance environments are harming children.
- Our YPAD Handbook “Tools Not Rules: Standards, Recommendations and Suggestions” has been thoughtfully created by PH.D specialists and dance leaders from across our nation to offer guidance in these areas. Please visit YPAD4change.org/standards to access this useful resource.

Does YPAD offer any services, training or other programming?

- YES! YPAD offers a wide variety of information, resources, and support services, as well as a variety of educational and dance-related programming. **Please refer to our brochure or our web site for details.**

- **YPAD’s primary offerings:**

Certification - YPAD's first-of-its-kind certification program is designed for dance studio owners, dance instructors, competitions, conventions, judges and parents who are influential over children, who wish to become educated on cutting edge research from industry experts on keeping our youth dancers happy, healthy and safe in all ways: physically, mentally and emotionally. Certified studios will go through intensive training to uphold YPAD's standards relating to costuming, music choices, movement choices, injury prevention, sexualization, sexual abuse reporting and more. The YPAD Certification Program is taught over two 6-8 hour days (usually over a weekend). Live "on-site" and interactive videoconference options are available. This certification also includes a module on marketing and branding so you can thrive as a YPAD Certified Organization and be recognized as leaders in integrity. Please write info@ypad4change.org for details and pricing. ypad4change.org/certification

Interactive Seminars – YPAD offers a number of interactive seminars:

Self-Esteem and Identity in Performing Arts - An interactive seminar that addresses the effects of performing arts on children's and teens' self esteem and the influence social networking and entertainment media has on their identity, body image, relationship with self and others. Participants are introduced to their "Spirit Swag" - the style of their character!

Support for Parents (and Caretakers) in Today's Dance Culture - An interactive seminar that introduces parents and caretakers to cutting edge research on topics such as nutrition, injury prevention, self-esteem, social media use, internet safety, body image, sexualization, bullying, boundaries, advocating for their child and more. This forum also allows the parents to openly share the specific struggles or concerns they may be having with their child and to interact with other dance parents to help facilitate solutions and support one another.

YPAD Teacher/Judge Seminar – An interactive seminar that provides dance educators with an introduction to the "Tools, Not Rules" they need to navigate these complicated issues. Programming includes insights into healthy costume, music and movement choices, as well as other topics aimed at keeping children and teens happy, healthy and safe in dance. The seminar also serves as a private forum for educators to voice their concerns and struggles with their students' healthy emotional and physical development.

Anti-Bullying Campaign for Boys (Big Brothers in Dance) – This support program offers young male dancers encouragement and support from adult male dance mentors who have weathered the storm and are now thriving in their craft.

Dance Environment Sexual Assault Resources – YPAD's first-of-its-kind sexual abuse in dance division raises awareness and provides education, resources and guidance on spotting the signs of sexual abuse and sexual abuse reporting; helping survivors, their families and the communities around them connect with the professional help they need.

Mindful Social Media Fasts for Dancers - Dr. Tomi-Ann Roberts, Ph.D., and YPAD Founder Leslie Scott have teamed up to facilitate this life changing experience for youth who have completed YPAD's Self-Esteem Seminar. Dancers embark on a "social-media-free" three-day guided journey with their peers, during which they share, reflect and engage in alternative activities that enhance their lives as well as their ability to make healthy choices while online.

Holistic Hip Hop Classes - Open your Mind and your Body will follow! As dancers, we will see stunning results by working on our mind and Spirit before our movement! Students learn some tips and tools, which will break down mental and emotional barriers in students of all ages, gender and skill level so you can experience the gift dance was meant to be.

All of this and much, MUCH more! Please go to ypad4change.org to see all of YPAD's programming, offerings and services!

What is the difference between healthy sexuality and sexualization?

- Healthy sexuality involves acknowledging and accepting that we are all sexual beings and that human development includes sexual development. Sexuality is an important aspect of our physical and mental health. It involves the mutual respect of consenting partners and fosters intimacy, bonding and shared pleasure. Healthy sexuality includes approaching sexual interactions and relationships from a respectful and informed perspective, free from coercion, objectification and violence.
- Sexualization, on the other hand, is unhealthy and may have long-term consequences to all aspects of a child's development. It occurs any time sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person or child. When children are portrayed with adult sexuality, this adult sexuality is imposed upon them rather than chosen, and this is a form of sexualization. It also occurs when a person is viewed as an object to be acted upon, rather than as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision-making.

When a person is made into a "thing" for others' enjoyment, elevation of status, financial gain and/or sexual use, sexualization and objectification has occurred.

It is important to understand that self-motivated sexual exploration is not considered sexualization, nor is age-appropriate exposure to information about sexuality.

In his book *Girls on the Edge*, Dr. Leonard Sax sums it up this way: "Sexuality is good, but sexualization is bad. Sexuality is about your identity as a woman or a man, about feeling sexual, that's a healthy part of being human, a healthy part of becoming an adult. Sexualization is about being an object for the pleasure of others, about being on display for others. **Sexuality is about who you are. Sexualization is about how you look.**"

If I can't use sexualized concepts, music, movement or costuming with my youth students, won't that limit my artistic expression and/or freedom of artistic speech?

- First and foremost, we believe in the creative power of our dance peers – every day we see examples of talented choreographers and dancers creating amazing, positive, and healthy dances. It can be done.
- Second, similar to academic institutions, dance educators are ethically responsible for creating a healthy and safe learning environment for their students. When we work with children, we give up a certain degree of artistic freedom, by necessity. We would never bring a nude model into a junior high art class, or use “Fifty Shades of Grey” as a high school English class reading assignment. Dancers are both athletes and artists, and we use our bodies for expression so the safety of the learning environment is, in many ways, more complicated than an academic classroom. However, in dance education and all other types of education there is a common denominator: The educational methods we use with children are going to differ from those we use with adults.

You've said that sexualized costuming can be harmful, but aren't children even less dressed when they're in a bathing suit?

- We wear different kinds of clothing for different purposes. Some are functional. Coats keep us warm in winter, leotards allow us to stretch and move freely, swimsuits help us glide in the water and get some sun. Other forms of clothing are highly decorative -- less function and more form (like prom dresses or tuxedos). Dance costumes tend to be more form than function, as they are often designed to enhance expressive features in dance, all while allowing the dancer to move.
- When sexualized costuming is used, it's not the same as being on the beach in a bathing suit. When children wear bathing suits at the beach or pool, they are not on display for an audience. In most cases if a costume looks like a bikini, it is not functioning as a bikini– its function is mostly expression. There are fun and healthy concepts that may utilize a bikini (such as when a piece has a beach theme), and when the movement and song are not sexual in nature the costume choice of a bikini is not sexualization. However, if the message behind the costume choice is “be sexy,” the children wearing those costumes are being sexualized.

On a related note, are you against bare midriffs?

- No. We don't believe that the midriff is sexual in nature, as it is the core and foundation of dance; however it is sexualized in culture and research reveals that it can be a point of shame and comparison for many young dancers. We have recommendations and resources for keeping it "body positive" on our website: <http://www.ypad4change.org/standards/>. We invite you to use these resources to help facilitate a conversation with your dancers on these important issues.

What's wrong with "dancing sexy"? Don't we have the right to express our sexuality?

- Adults absolutely have the right to express their sexuality, including through dance. We are sexual beings and healthy sexuality is an important part of life. However, when adults impose sexuality on children (whether it be through instructing a child to do sexualized movement, dance to highly sexualized lyrics, wear sexual attire, or "act sexy" for the camera/audience), the effects can be very damaging.
- Children can begin to view themselves as objects, only appreciated and valued for their sexy appearance, as opposed to their competence, training and skill. When expressions of sexuality are one-directional, as is the case in dance performance (designed for a viewer, a judge, or an entire audience to look at and evaluate) then the "expression" of sexuality is not mutual or consensual. The expression is solely for other people's enjoyment. When very young children "perform" sexuality this way, then they are learning that their bodies belong in a sense to others, not to themselves.

While YPAD's mission is focused on protecting children in dance, we are concerned with the increasing levels of objectification of adults (which affects both women and men) in our media-saturated culture and in the world of dance. Young dancers admire and emulate their instructors, as well as the adult dancers they see on YouTube, in music videos, on awards shows, TV, etc. When those adults are being objectified or engage in self-objectification, those behaviors become not only acceptable to children, but also influential and something with which to aspire. We are encouraged, however, by the work being done by amazing organizations like the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, RewindReframe.org, American Psychological Association, the #WomenNotObjects campaign and others to address these disturbing trends on a more general level.

Children don't understand the sexual messages or double-entendres, so how harmful can lyrics be?

- Unfortunately, a great deal of research shows that children often DO understand lyrics and, in fact, these lyrics actually impact the way children's brains, identities and attitudes toward sex, drug-use and violence develop. This is especially true

for adolescents, who connect deeply with music. For them, music influences identity development probably more than any other entertainment medium.

- In a nutshell, when lyrics suggest that men force themselves on women and treat them as sexual objects to collect, they can have a terrible effect on how boys treat girls. These types of lyrics can also teach girls that their main value is to give sexual pleasure, which can impair a teenage girl's self-worth and lead to a poor or distorted body image, eating disorders, depression, and even drug or alcohol abuse.
- On the other side of this is increased music messaging of females dominating and objectifying men. Music and many music videos distribute the message that in order to be an empowered feminist one must take away the power of another gender and aggressively dominate them. This is not moving towards gender equality, but instead teaching young girls a distorted definition of empowerment.
- These effects can be compounded in the world of dance. When we dance to music, we simultaneously internalize it and strive to express the message of the song with our bodies. When we rehearse, we listen to the song – including the lyrics – over and over and over. When the lyrics of that song involve direct or indirect messages of sexualization, drug and alcohol use or violence, our children and teen dancers are hearing those messages in a very concentrated way. And when they are also affirmed by external sources such as social media, applause or a trophy, the effect of the sexualization is compounded even further.

Two psychologists on our Advisory Panel have weighed in on this important issue – please take time to watch Dr. Tomi-Ann Roberts' and Dr. Christina Donaldson's videos on our resource page at ypad4change.org/resources.

There aren't that many "clean" songs out there these days – won't we all be using the same music?

- It's true that lots of the popular music today contains profanity, sexualized lyrics and references to drinking, drugs and violence. This can make finding healthy music for your dancers more difficult. YPAD is committed to helping you by developing resources and relationships with groups who can make the music selection process easier. For example, please take a look at our curated list of age-appropriate music on Spotify, and check out our affiliates like Squirrel Trench music, which can edit music into a form that works for you.
ypad4change.org/music

But my students want to become professional dancers – shouldn't they be learning the sexualized dance moves that music video

choreographers use... or learn to dance in heels so they'll know how later on?

- Not all professional dancing jobs require sexualized movement. In addition, most of the sexualized movement we see adults doing in music videos, award shows, etc., require a solid foundation of technique, which is where we should be focusing our educational efforts with children. Dancing in heels does not need to equate to sexualized movement but all too often that is the trend. **We are not referring to character shoes.**
- There's also a risk of physical injury. Children's muscular and skeletal systems are not fully developed and dancing in high heels creates the same risks as putting a child on pointe in ballet too soon.
- For children who are preparing to enter into the professional dance world, it is crucial they are aware of their worth as humans so they can advocate for themselves. Exploitation in the dance world comes in many forms, whether it be dancing on concrete without hazard pay, being paid below Dancers' Alliance rates, or being sexually harassed on set.
- Staying healthy as an adult in the professional dance industry requires a strong self-esteem and the ability to enforce safe boundaries. We can help children build these skills now by teaching them that it is okay to act their age, to advocate for themselves, and that they should never compromise their physical, emotional or sexual well-being for any job.

Who is Leslie Scott?

Dancer, choreographer, artistic director, educator and dance and child protection advocate, Leslie Scott is the Founder of YPAD. Leslie has been teaching for 26 years and is well known not only for her talents but her unwavering work ethic, contagious positive energy and bold use of movement and education to spread a positive message. She is on Faculty at the Edge Performing Arts and Millennium Dance Complex in Hollywood, CA and on guest faculty on several conventions, has taught in 22 countries and currently travels the world with her purpose partner, husband and YPAD Director Joseph Zanolich and their cherub Carmella to spread the YPAD LOVE!

Leslie created YPAD as a reaction to the dance media and trends she used to be involved in creating. As entertainment media, social media and dance have merged, Leslie witnessed harmful consequences on the healthy emotional, physical and sexual development of youth. She believes dance can change the world because dance changes people. Through education and activism she is committed to uniting our global dance community, parents included, to always put the dancer before the dance.

How can I help?

There are so many ways you can help YPAD! Our power comes from the commitment of many—studio owners, instructors, parents, teen and child dancers and all who care about creating positive, safe, healthy dance environments free from exploitation and commodification. Please join with us in using dance to empower our community and teach youth to advocate for themselves.

MEMBERSHIP: The easiest way to support our cause is by becoming a YPAD MEMBER! Members make a significant difference in helping us help kids and teens stay safe in dance. Your tax-deductible membership gift will be put to immediate use in many urgent advocacy, outreach and education initiatives. You receive discounts from our growing list of affiliate vendors and have access to our distance learning webinars, discounts on services, certification and more! *Visit YPAD4change.org/membership for details.*

Other ways to get involved with YPAD include:

- **Volunteering:** We have a wide variety of volunteering opportunities, ranging from outreach, project management, newsletter production, assisting in social media communication to fundraising and participation in one of our advisory panel groups. If you have the will and skills to help us, we'd love to hear from you. info@ypad4change.org
- **Certification:** YPAD's first-of-its-kind certification program is described above in these FAQs. For information and pricing, email us: info@ypad4change.org
- **Sponsorship:** Do you have a business, non-profit, goods or services with a message and purpose that aligns with YPAD's? If you do and are interested in obtaining a Y.P.A.D. endorsement for your convention, conference, studio, business, goods or services, please contact us regarding potential cross marketing opportunities. Email us at info@ypad4change.org

For more information, please go to ypad4change.org