

# uniwell

## Physical and Mental Awareness for University Students



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# Physical and Mental Awareness for University Students

The project aims to enhance the mental wellness of university students by fostering cross-border collaboration and promoting holistic educational methodologies. Recognizing the unique stressors faced by today's students, we're committed to crafting resources that address emotional, psychological, and social well-being. By integrating traditional and digital tools, we seek to provide supportive environments, resources, and practices, empowering students to thrive academically and personally.

We anticipate the project to yield a comprehensive app packed with resources on mental wellness tailored for university students. The interactive content, from videos to e-books and podcasts, will foster improved mental health awareness and practices. As a result, students will gain enhanced coping strategies, resilience, and emotional intelligence.

# Preface

Welcome to the UniWell E-Book, a resource developed within the framework of the Erasmus+ KA220-HED project UNIWELL: Physical and Mental Awareness for University Students, designed to support university students in navigating the challenges of academic life in the digital age. Higher education today offers incredible opportunities for learning, growth, and connection, yet it also presents new forms of stress and pressure. The increasing digitization of education and social life has transformed how we study, communicate, and develop our personal and social identities. While these changes create exciting possibilities, they also bring specific challenges: cognitive overload, digital fatigue, sedentary routines, social comparison, and the blurring of boundaries between academic responsibilities and personal life.

The UniWell E-Book has been created with these challenges in mind. Its purpose is not only to inform but also to provide practical, evidence-based tools and strategies that can help you maintain your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Each chapter has been carefully designed to guide you through actionable steps, reflection prompts, and exercises that you can immediately apply to your daily life. The resource takes a holistic approach, combining textual explanations, visual summaries, infographics, multimedia content, and self-reflective activities, ensuring that students,

with diverse learning preferences can engage meaningfully with the material.

The UniWell E-Book is organized to provide both structured learning pathways and flexible consultation options. You can read it sequentially or focus on specific modules according to your needs. Its main goals include:

1. Supporting Physical and Mental Well-Being
2. The chapters provide actionable insights to strengthen resilience, regulate emotions, and maintain healthy routines. Students will find guidance on managing stress, balancing screen time, fostering mindful technology use, and integrating physical activity into their daily lives.
3. Providing Coping Strategies for the Digital Age
4. Each chapter combines theory with practice, offering practical roadmaps for stress management, relaxation techniques, and strategies to prevent burnout. Whether you are looking for quick exercises to reset during a busy study day or more in-depth approaches to understanding your personal well-being, the e-book provides resources for all levels.
5. Serving as a Resource for Universities and Support Services
6. Beyond personal use, the e-book has been designed as a ready-to-use educational tool for university staff. Modules can be integrated into curricular activities, student support services, counseling programs, or digital self-help platforms, ensuring that its impact extends across institutional strategies for student well-being.

## How This E-Book Can Support You

### *A Holistic and Engaging Learning Experience*

The E-book's multimodal approach combines clear textual explanations with infographics, visual syntheses, multimedia content, and reflective exercises. This design ensures that students of different learning styles can interact with the material in a meaningful way. Importantly, the E-Book encourages active participation and self-reflection, helping students translate knowledge into actionable daily practices.

Advanced chapters (Chapters 10-12) are included for those who wish to deepen their understanding beyond foundational strategies. These sections offer more detailed scientific explanations and embodied approaches, providing enrichment for students and institutions that integrate the e-book into elective or extended modules. At the same time, the core content remains accessible and immediately applicable, ensuring that all students can benefit regardless of their prior experience with stress-management or wellness strategies.

A distinguishing feature of this E-Book is the rigorous expert evaluation that underpins its content. A dedicated Expert Review Board, composed of highly qualified academics and practitioners, has assessed the quality, relevance, and scientific grounding of all materials. Through their detailed qualitative feedback, iterative reviews, and guidance, the E-Book has been refined to ensure that it is both scientifically robust and pedagogically accessible. The result is a resource that is not only scientifically grounded but also engaging, actionable, and adaptable to diverse student needs. By bridging research and practice, the UniWell E-Book supports students in developing sustainable habits for well-being, resilience, and success in an increasingly digital academic environment. Students can be confident that the strategies and practices presented are research-informed, effective, and relevant to contemporary academic life.

### Expertise Review Board

Name	Expertise	Country
<b>Dr. Sonia Sicilia</b>	<i>Student Support and Inclusion Expert, Functional Psychologist</i>	Italy
<b>Dr. Calin Rus</b>	<i>PhD in Social Psychology and Senior Expert for the Council of Europe at the Intercultural Institute of Timișoara</i>	Romania
<b>Dr. Maria Kyriakidou</b>	<i>Chair of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at ACT, American College of Thessaloniki</i>	Greece
<b>Prof. Dr. Dominique Persano Adorno</b>	<i>Associate Professor of Applied Physics at the University of Palermo and expert in Educational Innovation, Student-Centred Learning, and Higher Education Transformation</i>	Italy

## Closing Remarks

We hope that you will use this E-Book as a trusted companion on your university journey—a guide to understanding and managing the unique challenges of contemporary student life. By exploring its chapters, engaging with its exercises, and reflecting on your own experiences, you will gain tools and strategies that can positively impact your health, learning, and personal growth. The UniWell Comprehensive E-Book represents a unique synthesis of scientific rigor, pedagogical innovation, and practical applicability, and it stands as a testament to what collaborative European projects can achieve in supporting student well-being. Welcome, explore, and take the first steps toward a more balanced, resilient, and empowered university experience.

The Editors

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# CHAPTER 11

## Quality of Movement and Creative Expression

Sernaz Demirel



### Abstract

This chapter explores the interconnection between the quality of movement and creative expression within a body-based learning context. Building upon the foundations of body awareness, space, time, and energy, it focuses on how subtle changes in dynamics, such as weight, flow, tempo, and direction, transform the meaning and expressive power of movement. Quality of movement is discussed through Laban's Effort theory and expanded by somatic approaches that emphasize embodiment and sensory awareness. Creative expression is examined as a process of developing a personal movement vocabulary, improvising with intention, and forming an individual mode of expression. Practical exercises and improvisational tasks are introduced to experience contrasting movement qualities, to explore how shifts in dynamics influence expression, and to practice moving between them with awareness. These activities also create space for inner emotional impulses to guide and shape movement. Short reflection processes, including verbal sharing or brief written notes, help connect these experiences to daily life. In this way, movement qualities are approached not

only as technical elements but as lived experiences that

## Focused Problems

- Limited body awareness
- Struggles in distinguishing and embodying different movement qualities
- Difficulties in sensing movement qualities through breath, alignment, and the natural flow of energy
- Lack of confidence in expressing inner impulses or emotions through movement creatively
- Limited ability to build and expand a personal movement vocabulary
- Difficulties in collaborating and connecting creatively with others

### 1. Introduction

In movement-based learning contexts, technique and expression are often seen as distinct aspects. Yet in practice, movement is never “neutral”; every gesture carries a quality shaped through weight, time, space, and flow [1], and supported by breath and body connectivity [2]. These qualitative differences are not only physical but also emotional [3] and aesthetic, determining how movement resonates with the performer and how it communicates with others [4].

Creative expression emerges when individuals become aware of these qualitative dimensions and use them consciously to explore meaning.

By engaging with effort qualities [1] and cultivating sensitivity to energy dynamics, students can expand their expressive range and discover their personal artistic voice [5]. This chapter therefore focuses on quality of movement as a foundation for creativity, offering theoretical insights and practical approaches to support developmental growth.

*“In dance education, technique and expression are often seen as distinct aspects. Yet in practice, movement is never ‘neutral’; every gesture carries a quality, whether strong or light, sustained or sudden, bound or free.”*

## 2. Theoretical Framework - Understanding Quality of Movement

### 2.1. Laban's Effort Framework

Rudolf Laban identified four effort factors, Weight, Time, Space, and Flow, each with binary qualities: Weight: strong vs. light; Time: sudden vs. sustained; Space: direct vs. indirect; Flow: bound vs. free [6] (Figure 11.1). These categories help participants attend not only what movement is performed but how it is performed. For example, lifting an arm strongly and suddenly communicates authority, while performing the same gesture lightly and freely may suggest playfulness. Such contrasts reveal that quality transforms the expressive meaning of movement.

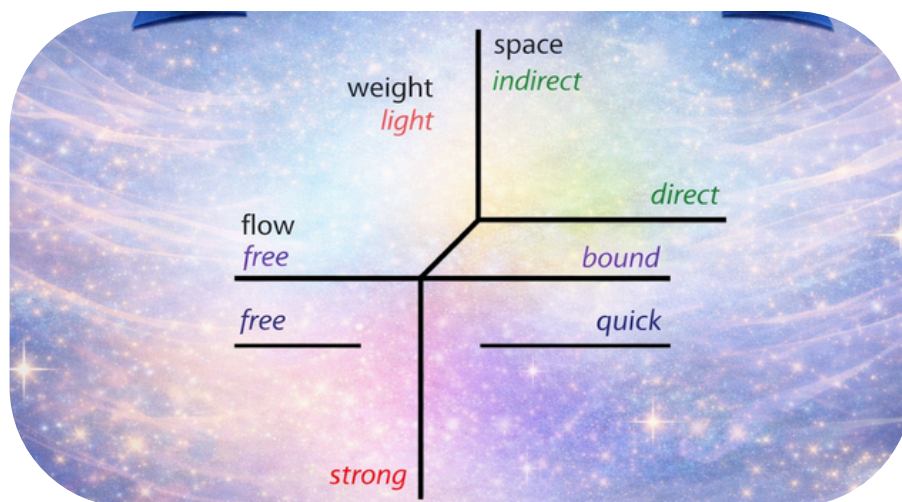


Figure 11.1. Laban Effort Factors Diagram (AI-generated image)

### 2.2. Somatic Perspectives

Irmgard Bartenieff expanded Laban's work by emphasizing functional-somatic integration. Through breath support, core-distal connectivity, and dynamic alignment, participants learn to embody qualities rather than merely imitate them [2]. In this sense, the quality of movement is rooted in lived sensation, how weight shifts, how tension and release occur, how energy flows through the body (Figure 11.2).

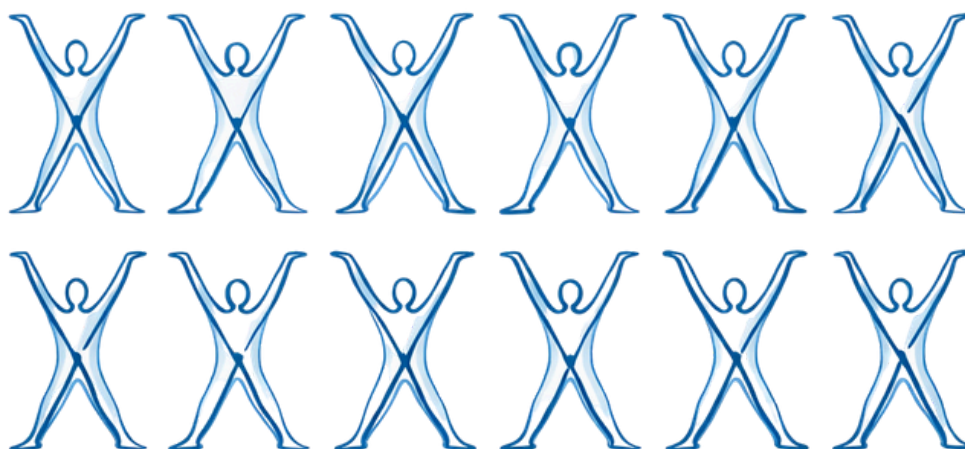


Figure 11.2. Somatic Practice Images (AI-generated image)

Sheets-Johnstone further argues that movement is a primary mode of knowing [5]. The way a mover transitions between bound and free flow, or between strong and light weight, becomes a form of embodied meaning. Thus, qualities are not external decorations but the very substance of expression.

### 2.3. Creative Expression in Movement

#### From Impulse to Expression

Creative expression emerges when inner impulses are shaped into visible form. Authenticity arises not from inventing entirely new movements but from performing with attentiveness to impulse, intention, and quality [7]. Improvisation provides a pathway for this transformation, enabling participants to experiment with how different qualities communicate emotions, ideas, or narratives.

## Developing a Personal Movement Vocabulary

One's expressive voice depends on the expansion of their movement vocabulary. This involves exploring new qualities, combining them in original ways, and reflecting on their emotional resonances. Preston-Dunlop emphasizes that understanding the relationship between intention, form, and quality deepens awareness of expressive and performative processes [8].

### Expression as Connection

Creative expression is not only personal but also relational. Novack notes that in practices like contact improvisation, authenticity emerges through the dynamic interplay of bodies [9]. Similarly, group improvisations with contrasting qualities can foster collaboration, empathy, and collective creativity (Figure 11.3).

*“Rudolf Laban identified four effort factors, Weight, Time, Space, and Flow, each with binary qualities: Weight: strong vs. light; Time: sudden vs. sustained; Space: direct vs. indirect; Flow: bound vs. free.”*



Figure 11.3. Group Improvisation Photographs (AI-generated image)

### 3. Practical Framework - Pedagogical Approaches

#### 3.1. Working with Contrasts

Participants benefit from tasks that contrast qualities: repeating the same motif first as strong and direct, then as light and indirect (Figure 11.4). Such exercises heighten sensitivity and reveal expressive possibilities [6].



Figure 11.4. Contrast Movement Photographs (AI-generated image)

#### 3.2. Exploring Transitions

Transitions between qualities, such as moving from bound to free flow, are pedagogically powerful. They require participants to pay attention to breath, tension release, and timing [2].

*“Creative expression emerges when inner impulses are shaped into visible form. Authenticity arises not from inventing entirely new movements but from performing with attentiveness to impulse, intention, and quality.”*

### 3.3. Emotional Tasks

Assigning emotional concepts (“calm,” “anger,” “joy”) and asking participants to embody them through contrasting qualities (Figure 11.5) allows them to explore how movement communicates feelings [3].



Figure 11.5. Emotion and Movement Connection (AI-generated image)

### 3.4. Witnessing and Reflection

The use of witnessing, where peers observe without judgment, supports reflection and awareness [7]. Journaling or verbal sharing helps integrate embodied discoveries into conscious learning.

*“Transitions between qualities, such as moving from bound to free flow, are pedagogically powerful.”*

## How to Integrate into Daily Life?

- **One Gesture, Many Qualities:** Choose a simple gesture (e.g., extending the arm). Perform it strongly, then lightly; suddenly, then sustained; bound, then free. Reflect on how meaning changes.
- **Quality Pathways:** Create a short phrase with a progression of qualities (e.g., light–sustained → strong–sudden → free–indirect). Pay attention to transitions and phrasing.
- **Emotional Improvisation:** Improvise on a concept such as “resistance” or “release.” Try embodying it with two contrasting quality combinations. Share observations with a partner.
- **Group Composition:** In small groups, each participant selects a quality focus. The group structures a short improvisation where different qualities intersect, contrast, or blend.
- **Notice:** Notice the rhythm of walking, the weight of carrying objects, or the flow of gestures in daily routines. Experiment with altering these qualities and reflecting on the felt difference (Figure 11.6).



Figure 11.6. Qualities in Everyday Life (AI-generated image)

## Inspiring Creative Presence

When qualities of movement are explored, dance begins to be experienced not as a series of steps but as a language of sensation, emotion, and thought. Creative expression emerges naturally when these qualities are integrated with personal intention (Figure 11.7). As Banes notes in her study of postmodern dance, authenticity often lies in ordinary actions performed with heightened awareness [10]. This perspective invites viewing every movement, on stage and in daily life, as a potential site of artistic creation.



Figure 11.7. Artistic Inspiration (AI-generated image)

*“Quality of movement is the bridge between technique and expression... By focusing on movement qualities and expression, this approach fosters not just capable movers but creative individuals who can communicate through the language of the body”*

## 5. Conclusion

Quality of movement is the bridge between technique and expression. By engaging with Laban's effort factors, embodying somatic principles, and reflecting on lived sensation, cultivate sensitivity to how movement carries meaning. Creative expression, in turn, arises from expanding personal vocabulary, improvising with intention, and integrating emotional experience into movement. Work grounded in exploring movement qualities, investigating dynamic variations, and reflecting on embodied experience not only refines technical skills but also strengthens authenticity and presence. By focusing on qualities and expression, this approach fosters not just capable movers but creative individuals who can communicate through the language of the body.

For more information, visit the UniWell website.

<https://uniwellproject.com>

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## Recommended Resources

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## Glossary

- **Movement Quality:** The felt and perceptible character of a movement, shaped by variations in energy, timing, flow, and spatial intention. Even movements that appear neutral embody specific energetic and dynamic organizations (e.g., strong/light, sustained/sudden, bound/free).
- **Effort (Laban Effort):** A framework describing how movement is organized through four factors, “Weight, Time, Space, Flow”, each with two opposite qualities.
- **Weight:** The force of action: strong vs. light. Choosing weight qualities changes the impact and emotional tone of a phrase.
- **Time:** The urgency of action: sudden vs. sustained. Shifts in time qualities reshape phrasing and intensity.
- **Space:** The attention of action: direct vs. indirect. Spatial intention steers focus and communicative clarity.
- **Flow:** The continuity of action: bound vs. free. Flow modulates control, release, and expressiveness.
- **Quality Transitions:** Shifting from one quality to another (e.g., bound → free) is a pedagogically powerful lever for learning and expressivity.
- **Technique–Expression Bridge:** “Quality of movement” is the bridge linking technical skill to expressive intent; focusing on qualities cultivates movers who can communicate through the body.
- **Authenticity (via Attention to Impulse):** Authenticity arises not from inventing new steps but from shaping inner impulses with attentiveness to impulse, intention, and quality.
- **Creative Expression:** The process by which inner impulses become visible form; quality choices (Weight/Time/Space/Flow) are the craft that makes expression legible.

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