

## **So Let's Begin... Ingredients for a Proper Warm-Up**

Warm-up is important for our dancers. Here, we begin constructing a proper warm-up.

### **Cardio**

Running, jumping jacks and cardio is so important to get our muscles ready for a good stretch. I then begin with any movement to get my center moving – torso swings, creating pli  in the legs, and just an overall good body swing! I always have the dancers get their heart rate moving prior to stretching. I love jumping jacks, and having them run around the gym, studio, or facility. Sometimes the dancers are coming from sitting at class all day...always good to get their bodies moving!

### **Body Movement**

Starting at the top of the head with neck rolls, into shoulders, side stretch. Again, it's important to watch your dancers in all of their movement, especially in the beginning of the season. Side stretch should not have adjusted hips. Hips should still be square to the front. Remember your stretches should be preparing your body for what you want your dancers to do in their choreography. Try to maintain a strong alignment - hips over shoulders, over knees, over ankles. Pull that belly button to your spine, close your rib cage and press those shoulders down. Proper body alignment starts with a good warm-up. It allows dancers to focus on what will be asked of them during class time.

### **Focus**

Always remember to stay focused. Coaches, be prepared when you are going into your class with an idea of what you want to do for that rehearsal. If you know you are going to do big jumps, make sure you are warming up the legs, ankles and core. Also – with those big jumps you want to strongly stretch the hamstrings. Can you imagine eating the same thing every day? Your body desires some variety! Your warm-up should have consistency, but it's also good to keep your dancers on their toes and change or add additional stretches. This is also good practice to keep them focused in class. If it is too repetitive, you may have dancers zoning out. Have some consistent stretches, but include variety in order to keep your dancers engaged and continue to build their strength and flexibility.

### **Flexibility**

So many dancers want flexibility, but don't understand that it's not an overnight success! Yes – there are "flexible" dancers, some with more open hips or "natural" ability. I encourage all coaches to openly discuss and keep your dancers focused on working with the body they have. It's so easy to look at someone else and want to stretch like they do, keep your dancers focused on their own body. Going through the motions may help some dancers, but not all. So remember when doing your warm-up (or whomever is running warm-up) to have it based on ALL of your dancers.

**Consistency**

Lastly, stay consistent with your warm-up. If you have a 40 minute warm-up at the studio, take that with you to competition. It will keep your dancers focused as you are staying consistent with how their bodies need to move. If you don't have ample space in the venue, try your best to get your dancers somewhere that they can stretch and do what is needed!