FAMILY ACTIVITY: HULA DANCE

In this activity, youth and family members will learn about the history and cultural importance of hula dancing to Hawaiian people. They will learn basic hula dance moves and have time to practice independently. Finally, youth will discuss how dance is a form of physical activity and why physical activity is important to maintain health.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Materials
- Hula video
- Hawaiian music (optional)

Instructions

1. Share Hula History

   ● Hula is an ancient Hawaiian form of communication used to tell stories and share history before writing existed.
   ● Hula dances are made up of hand gestures, hip movements, and footsteps.
   ● The different combination of movements tell different stories.
   ● Although hula was not traditionally used for exercise, it is a form of physical activity that can benefit our bodies like other types of dance

2. Hula Demonstration + Practice
   
a. PLAY hula video
   b. DEMONSTRATE + PRACTICE together basic hula dance steps

   Footstep
   - Face forward and step your right foot to the right.
   - Next, step your left foot to meet the right foot, but stand on your toes (don’t put your heel down). Then, place your heel on the floor.
   - Step your right foot to the right one more step.
   - Then step your left foot to meet the right foot, again standing on your toes. Then, place your heel on the floor.
   - Next, repeat the above steps, but move toward the left. You’ll end up back where you started.

   Hip Movement
   - While standing in place, move your hips side to side gently like a wave.
   - Now we’re going to add our steps just like we practiced before. Continue moving your hips while you step.

   Arms
   - Raise your arms out to the side at shoulder height.
   - Bend your left arm so that your hand is in front of the left side of your chest while keeping your right arm straight. Straighten both arms out to the side again.
   - Now bend your right arm so that your hand is in front of the right side of your chest while keeping your left arm straight.
   - Practice this movement a few more times, maybe moving your hips while you stand in place if
that feels good for your body.

Put It All Together

- Raise your arms out to the side at shoulder height. Bend your left arm so that your hand is in front of the left side of your chest.
- Take a step to the right while moving your hips gently like the ocean. Step your left foot to meet your right.
- Take another step to the right, moving your hips like before. Then step your left foot to meet your right.
- Now, switch your arms so that your right arm is bent and your left arm is straight.
- Take a step to the left while moving your hips. Step your left foot to meet your right.
- Take another step to the left and continue to move your hips. Step your left foot to meet the right again.

c. ALLOW time for youth to practice independently
d. PLAY some music and practice your new Hula moves

Youth should participate in 60 minutes of physical activity per day in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Dancing is a way to meet this requirement while having fun.

**QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE**

While sharing Hula History:
1. What do you know about Hula?
2. What did you learn about hula that surprised you the most?

During Hula Demonstration and Practice:
1. What parts of our body will we use when we hula dance? *(Hula dancing is made up of hand gestures, hip movement, and foot steps)*

After Dancing:
1. What did you think of hula dance?
2. Are there other types of dance that you like to do?
3. How can dance help you stay healthy?

**IDEAS TO INCLUDE YOUNGER SIBLINGS! (ADAPTATIONS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS)**

- Little ones will enjoy dancing to the music and maybe even imitating the dances their older siblings create.
- For non mobile infants – they can enjoy being held and dancing along with you.

**REFERENCES, MODIFICATIONS, & EXTENSIONS**

**Extensions**

- Older youth could do some independent research about Hula and its significance in Polynesian culture
- Find Hula dances online and learn the moves you see there.