

WANT TO JOIN THE CIRCUS?



# IGNITE CIRCUS

Located in St. John's NL, Ignite Circus was founded in 2018 on the principles of compassion, creativity, community, and courage.

We operate with a participant-centered approach serving young people in difficulty in partnership with community organizations. Certified circus instructors, in collaboration with social workers, councilors, therapists, and psychologists from our partner organizations, facilitate a safe space for students to explore the parallels between learning the patience, perseverance, and practice required for continuous growth, not just as circus practitioners, but as members of a broader community as well.

In class, students learn acrobatics, tumbling, equilibristics (balance skills), clowning, and object manipulation skills such as juggling and hula hooping.

Balance, strength, flexibility, and the ability to juggle are often paralleled between the activities inside the classroom and the interactions students have outside the classroom.



# COMPASSION



We take a participant-centered approach to trauma-informed practice by meeting people where they are in their journey and accepting them as they are without judgement, while encouraging respect of one's self and peers.

# CREATIVITY

We encourage a safe space for experimentation and exploration where students can gain the self-confidence needed to change themselves and the world around them.

Circus art allows individuals to perform *for* an audience, creating a spectacle with the viewer in mind - unlike sport, where individuals are performing *in front of* an audience, who happen to be watching the athlete work towards a goal. The difference is subtle, but has an important effect, allowing for the development of confidence and realization of talent. (Kiez, 2015)



# COMMUNITY

We celebrate diversity, and strive to create programming that is accessible to members of our community who typically face barriers to inclusion.

Circus inspires self-confidence and a positive sense of self-identity by addressing the social and cognitive needs of isolated populations through collective creation processes; these creative opportunities bring together unique individuals, collectively driven by their imagination, ingenuity and independence

By partnering with community organizations, we can ensure that we continue to prioritize the individuals who would benefit most from social circus while continuing to offer effective programming to the members of our community.

# COURAGE

A man wearing a red beanie and a dark hoodie with a colorful 'IGNITE CIRCUS' logo is performing fire breathing. He is holding a large torch with a massive flame that extends upwards. The background is a blurred city street at night with warm lights and falling snow or sparks.

At Ignite Circus we recognize that it's ok to be afraid sometimes, because fear can be good - it's what keeps you safe. But when we acknowledge our fears, while still recognizing what we are truly capable of, we find the courage to succeed both in circus, and in life. There is a balance between fear and bravery, but when we can tip the scales to being more brave, and less afraid, we learn that taking calculated risks can be rewarding!

PHOTO: RITCHE PEREZ; PERFORMING AT PLEASANT VIEW TOWERS, ST. JOHN'S, "WARMEST WISHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS", DECEMBER 2020

# BALANCE

A person wearing a red beanie, a black face mask, and a dark hoodie with a colorful 'IGNITE CIRCUS' logo is performing a fire balancing act. They are holding a flaming torch in their mouth and another flaming torch in their right hand. The background is a blurred brick wall.

Balancing engages the entire body of the performer through controlling, stabilizing, or immobilizing either the human body or objects in extraordinary positions (Barlati, 2020).

The trick to finding balance is knowing when to make the micro-adjustments needed in order to reset the balance, or equilibrium; With each push too far in any given direction, an equilibrium becomes harder and harder to maintain or regain.

The life lesson learned quickly by students who focus on balance, is that just as in circus, many situations we encounter throughout life require constant reassessment and re-adjustment too, and moderation is critical to success.

# STRENGTH

In social circus classes, aspiring acrobats learn how to create intricate shapes with their bodies while balancing on the floor or on their friends. Practicing acrobatics can help students to reconnect with their bodies, and learn ways of controlling their physical capabilities in ways they never before thought possible.

Aside from the physical strength, flexibility, and agility required to “fly” or “base” in partner acrobatics, the teamwork and dedication required by each individual involved creates opportunities to reinforce concepts of dedication, reliability, trust, and commitment. Through the practice of acrobatics (alone or with a partner) students can begin to explore their motivations for participating in their community, both on an individual, and interpersonal level.



# FLEXIBILITY

Contortionists adapt the positions of their bodies to fit through awkward spaces by using flexibility to their advantage. Circus is all about adapting, or having the flexibility to make the changes that enable a performer to modify their plans to accommodate new situations as they arise. Contortionists are good at making things fit into seemingly tight spaces because of their flexibility (both literally and figuratively), whether it's twisting their body into a tiny box or around a broom, or finding new ways for fitting time for self-care in an already busy schedule.



# JUGGLING

Juggling involves perseverance, concentration, focus, and the ability to multi-task. Juggling is a really difficult skill to learn! It's one that requires a lot of resilience, because the process of learning to juggle involves losing control and having to start over again, many times. Jugglers are continuously picking up the pieces to start their journeys over again and again, but one thing that can help along this journey, is knowing that each time you start over, you're not starting from scratch - you're now starting the next step of the journey with all the skills you learned the last time you tried, and all the skills you learned all times you tried before then. Eventually, after trying and trying and trying again, the goal will be achieved and scarves, balls, or even machetes will be flying through the air.



# NEW PERSPECTIVES



Circus can help us to see things from a new perspective, whether it's by exploring different ways of being by performing in masks, or by literally flipping upside down! Circus can not only help its practitioners gain communication skills and self-confidence while encouraging reconnection between body mind and spirit, but it also has the potential to bring people together to build a supportive community of individuals motivated by their collective creativity, courage, and passion.

# GET INVOLVED

## Partner with Ignite Circus...

- by creating space within your organization's ongoing art, recreational therapy, or physical education programs to offer Social Circus opportunities
- by helping participants from your ongoing outreach programs navigate access to transportation so that they may attend social circus classes offered in partnership with Ignite Circus
- by continuing to create outreach opportunities that enable young people in difficulty to access much needed community resources such as councilors, therapists, and social workers

