



COME2ART: Introducing a collaborative scheme between artists & community members fostering life skills development and resilience through creative placemaking

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Erasmus + project, Partnerships for Creativity



*“A life skills curriculum through arts
in the context of creative placemaking”*



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Module 1

Arts in times of crisis: a way to self-regulate emotions

Introduction

The relationship between art and emotion is the focus of many social sciences: from psychology to art therapy, from aesthetics to neurobiology. Rather than investigating how emotions form a bridge between our experience of art and of life, this Module stems from the established fact that artistic practices and, more in general, creative experiences modulate emotions, influence our moods and affect our mental health. Arts can play a role in helping people manage their stress in many contexts and different ways. Considering the level of disruption and uncertainty triggered by the 2020 global health crisis and the huge impact on stress responses and the capacity to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviors, especially in young people, the first Module of this Curriculum starts from the inner dimension of emotions. It aims to provide participants with contents and tools to recognize and manage one's own as well as others' emotions, as the preliminary activity to develop life skills and resilience by engaging in collective artistic practices. Module 1 is composed by 2 Units: in the first one we will deepen what emotions are, the concept of emotional intelligence and practical tools to apply in an arts context. Unit 2 is focused on creative ways that can support mental health, stimulating an experience that boosts motivation and the ability to self-regulate, to reinforce the role of creative skills and practices that played an important role in the way people coped with the health crisis, especially young citizens. Both Units offer a brief theoretical introduction followed by tools and case studies that hopefully will inspire your work with the community members.

Unit 1.1: Emotions and Emotional intelligence theory

This unit introduces learners to recent theories about the ability to understand and



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manage our own emotions, and those of the people around us.

This unit includes:

- What is an emotion
- Emotional intelligence theory
- The relationship between art and emotions
- Case studies

UNIT 1.2: Creative techniques to self-regulate emotions

This unit is focused on how we can use creative ways such as storytelling, drawing, sketching, and mindfulness to reinforce the role of creative skills and practices that play an essential role in the way people cope with the health crisis, especially young citizens. Art and creative techniques are essential to improve wellbeing, flexibility, self-regulation emotions, boost motivation, communication, collaboration skills, empathy, and critical thinking.

This unit covers the following topics:

- Storytelling as a healing process
- Artistic and creative practices for mindfulness
- Drawing/sketching for regulating emotions
- Case studies

Both Units offer a brief theoretical introduction followed by tools and case studies that hopefully will inspire your work with the community members.

The primary learning objectives of this Module are:

- Description of self-regulation of emotions and emotional intelligence theories



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- Description of case studies, where art projects have been used to help people regulate their emotions
- Storytelling theory and tools as a healing process at the personal and group level
- Understand and apply mindfulness exercises in art practices

Assessment

The level of achievement of the learning objectives will be assessed through:

- *Analysis of assignments' results*
- *Questionnaire*
- *Essay*
- *Group conversation*
- *1 to 1 interview with artist-educator*
- *Evaluation of creative outputs resulting from the learning process*



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Unit 1.1: Emotions and Emotional intelligence theory

Introduction

“One of the most negative things we’re taught is that you have emotion on one side and rationality and reason on the other,”
Liz Fosslien

Knowledge and emotions are traditionally conceived as belonging to two different areas. Phenomenological studies on the mind and recent neuroscientific researches highlight that mind and brain are not separated. Knowing and, more generally, perceiving something requires the involvement of an emotion.

This unit introduces learners to recent theories about the ability to understand and manage our emotions and those of the people around us.

This Unit will illustrate how emotions are defined and thus what emotional intelligence is, and how art and culture are the means that ritualise and promote the absorption of emotional intelligence. Lastly, it will describe why it is essential to master this competence and provide **practical exercises to manage our emotions, be mindful that you can use and practice with your community.**

This unit includes:

- What is an emotion - (Tuning in with the rest of the group - preliminary session)
- Emotional intelligence theory
- The relationship between art and emotions
- Case studies



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Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of Unit 1 participants will be able to:

- Identify the core components of emotional intelligence
- Define what an emotion is
- Identify at least 1 case study where arts have had a healing effect on the community
- Express what is an emotion
- Acknowledge at least 2 emotions in others

These **TRAINING MATERIALS** were selected to provide trainers with an understanding of some *key concepts* and *theories* to be inspired by when they deliver

Module

1:

1.1.a: "What an emotion is" by Antonia Silvaggi

This article introduces the participant to the concept of what an emotion is, and since it is important to tune in with your participants at the emotional level, you will find also an exercise to understand your participant's emotions while they enter the workshop.

1.1.b: "Emotions and the brain" (2 mins English)

What is happening in our brains as we experience emotions -- both the helpful and unhelpful ones! This video demonstrates that while sometimes our emotions can 'hijack' our rational thinking, we also have the power to manage our emotions with conscious thought.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNY0AAUtH3g&t=57s>

1.1.c: What is emotional intelligence?

Peter Salovey and John Mayer defined **Emotional Intelligence** as "the ability to



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monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour".

In the 1990's Daniel Goleman became aware of Salovey and Mayer's work, which led to his book, Emotional Intelligence. Goleman was a science writer for the New York Times, specialising in brain and behaviour research. A generic definition for emotional intelligence – EQ - includes empathy, mood management, motivation, self-awareness, and social skills. The link between EQ and leadership behaviour becomes evident in an individual's ability to organize groups, negotiate solutions, make personal connections, and show concern for others' feelings and motivations. This article contains a video a 7 minutes video explaining what emotional intelligence is and Goleman's theory. If you want to go directly to the video, copy and paste this link

<https://hbr.org/video/5236216251001/what-makes-a-leader>

1.1.d To deepen the concept of what emotional intelligence is and the link to arts and culture, we share this video from The School of Life (6 mins duration)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgUCyWhJf6s>

1.1.e Exercises to improve emotional intelligence

This article illustrates 3 exercises you can use with your participants to develop emotional intelligence skills (by Sessionlab):

- **Activities to Improve Self-Awareness**
- 1.Weather Check-In
- 2."When I feel..."
- **Activities for better Self-Management**
- 3.Letter to Myself



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1.1.F Why It Might Be Your Body - Not Your Mind by The School of Life

One of the paradoxes of trying to understand our minds is that, at particular moments, we need to acknowledge that what passes through them may have very little to do with the **workings of these minds themselves but rather our bodies**. Watch this video and discover why it might be your body and not your mind <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVIDbEd5UcU>

1.1.g Art Case study

This article illustrates an artistic practice by 64 Million Artists[1] that happened during the pandemic 'Create to Connect': two weeks of fun, free creative challenges that anyone could take part in if they are isolating, distancing, or working from home.



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1.1.a. What is an emotion

Introduction

This article introduces the participant to the concept of emotion, referring to recent studies. It also illustrates an exercise the **Mood Meter** that can be done with participants to help them discuss and recognise their emotions, as an important step to tune in with participants.

WHAT IS AN EMOTION?

Everyone knows what an emotion is till they ask to be given a definition. The most visible aspect of an emotion is a facial expression.



Figure 1© Verywell, 2017



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If we were asked to show what fear is, one would probably widen the eyes and open the mouth. But would any person, regarding how and where they were raised, be able to interpret?

Researchers' arguments fall **into two categories**

1 **that humans share an innate set of emotions, which they express similarly.** The plot of PIXAR movie Inside Out is based on this theory.

2 **emotions are not universal but rather learned and shaped by culture.** Some culture, for example, like Tahitians don't have a word for expressing sadness. Lisa Feldman Barrett, a leading proponent on this view, argues that "*Emotions are not your reactions to the world; they are your brain's way of making meaning*". We understand that emotion because we are trained to do so.

So, what are emotions?

Emotions are a state of mind, whose effects can influence human thoughts and behaviours. We must acknowledge that we **'think' in two ways:**

- 1** the first with **analysis, logic, procedure, cognition;**
- 2** the second with **intuition, immediacy, simplicity, emotion.**



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Philosophy has always privileged the first over the second, placing the **emotional dimension in a subordinate position to the cognitive one**. Knowledge and emotion are traditionally conceived as belonging to two discrete areas. Traditional Cartesian philosophical dualism reduced knowledge and the learning process to a cognitive and conceptual one – *cogito ergo sum (I think. Therefore I am)*, René Descartes.

Recent advances in neuroscience are highlighting a connection between **cognitive and emotional functions that influences the understanding of learning** in formal contexts such as schools, and also in informal contexts, such as museums, theatres, ect.



Conveying emotions and exploring emotions is important in a learning context.

“When we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students’ emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students’ learning. One could argue, in fact, that we fail to appreciate the very reason that students learn at all.”

Emotions are context-based and **affect cognition and rational choices** because they have power, and **essentially they are energy in motion**, They are a collection of physiological and mental states experienced at a given time.



All emotions are, in essence, impulses to act. The very root of the word emotion is from the Latin “*motere*” “to move”, plus the prefix “*e-*” to connote “Move away”.



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A comprehensive definition of emotions given by Paul Ekman and Richard Davidson in their essay *The Nature of Emotion – Fundamental*

Questions, argues “***Emotions are complex states of mind which include physiological correlates, social roles and cognitive factors. Emotions give a person the energy for a reactive behaviour with the possibility of delaying and thus controlling the actual response***”.

Philosophy, neuroscience and cognitive science are discovering **the absolute relevance of the body dimension in cognitive processes**. Phenomenological studies on the mind and recent neuroscientific research **highlight that mind and brain are not separated**.

Knowing and, more generally, perceiving something requires the involvement of an emotion. Body and context (situation, family, socio-economic context, culture, historical era, gender...) can influence our perceptions, thoughts and decisions. Our emotions are closely related to the biological functioning of our bodies.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNISING EMOTIONS - TUNING IN WITH YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Recognising our emotions and, after that, someone else's overall emotional state is essential. You can do that in many ways, using your art practice.

Recognition is the key first step toward understanding anyone's—our own or someone else's—present emotional state. We know it's not easy.

Here we are asking you to try to use your art craft to help participants express their emotions and how they are feeling entering the workshop space. Depending **on who you have in the room, one of the tool you could use to explore different emotions is the Mood Meter.**

The chart is designed to map out every feeling a human being can experience and project it onto a graph. It allows us to map our observations about pleasantness and energy to understand critical information about emotions at a glance. Using the tool, we can readily visualize hundreds of emotions, from rage to serenity, ecstasy to despair, their co-occurrences and everything in between.

They can vary in intensity, in Marc Brackett, Ph.D.'s Permission to Feel book, gives us a chance to articulate our emotions more deeply. His research as Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, suggests that if we **have RULER skills, we have emotional intelligence.**

R: Recognize

U: Understand

L: Label

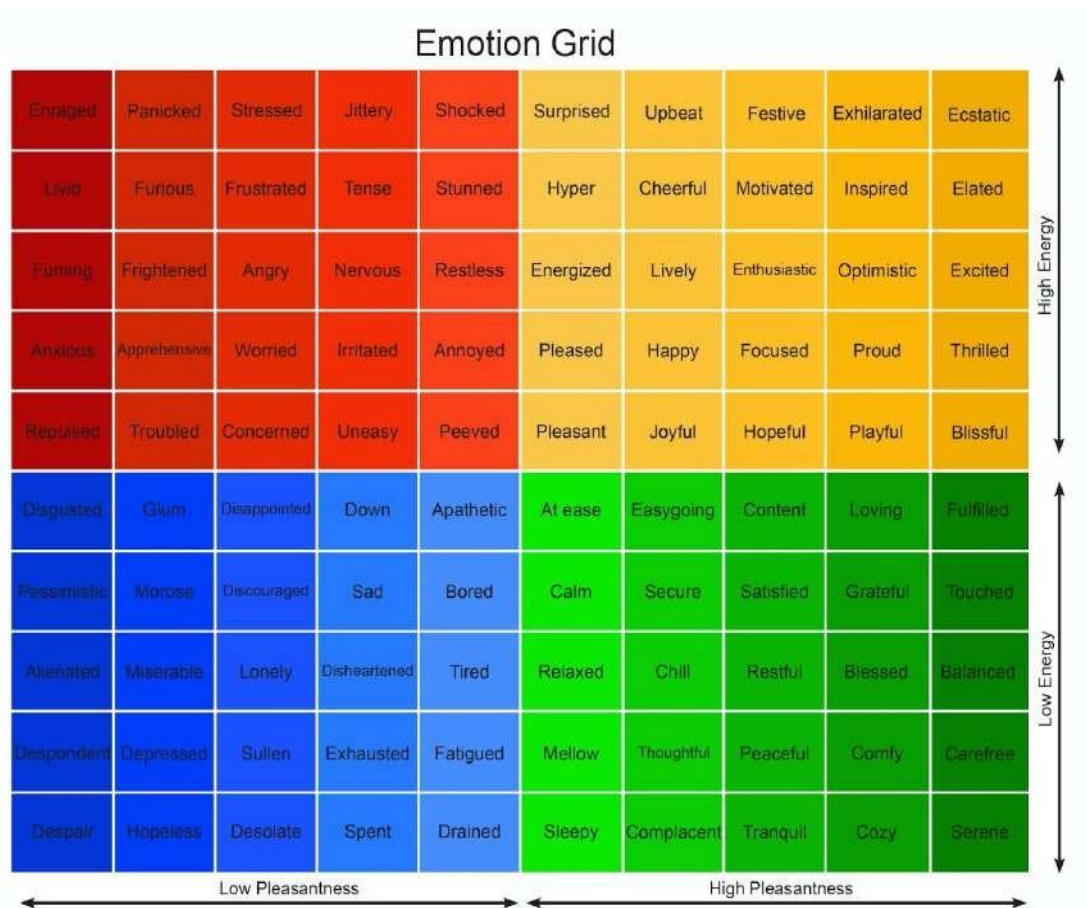
E: Express

R: Regulate



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Bracketts suggests different exercises you can use by sharing this grid with your participants:



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HOW TO READ THE CHART

The chart is a square divided evenly by the horizontal axis

(pleasantness) and vertical axis **(energy)** into four quadrants.

At the far-left end of the horizontal axis is the extreme of unpleasantness, which we represent with a -5 ; at the far right end is its opposite—very pleasant, at $+5$. Likewise, at the top of the vertical axis is high energy and at the bottom is the opposite.

We measure everything on both axes by a number—at dead center of the graph we would be neutral on both pleasantness and energy, **which is scored as 0. They gave each quadrant a different colour, chosen to reflect its emotional state.**

The top right quadrant is yellow. That's where we experience high levels of pleasantness and energy. If you're in the yellow, you're feeling happy, excited, and optimistic. Your posture is likely erect your eyes likely sparkling. You feel energised and ready to take on the world. The top left is red. This is the quadrant for low pleasantness but high energy. Here you may be angry, anxious, frustrated, or scared, but also passionate, assertive, competitive. Your body might feel tense, your breath is likely shallow, and your heart might be pumping fast.

This is a tool you can use with your participants to understand which emotions they feel in different moments of the workshop. A step further is to ask your participants to draw, mime, sketch how are they experiencing that emotion and discuss it.

Here the link for a more comprehensive view and more exercises:

<https://www.thewell.world/files/resources/permission.pdf>

People do not often verbalise questions, we send many nonverbal cues the facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone.



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Closing note: Feelings versus Emotions

Many people use “feeling” and “emotion” as synonyms, but they are not interchangeable. While they have similar

elements, there is a marked difference between feelings and emotions. A fundamental difference between feelings and emotions is that feelings are experienced consciously, while emotions manifest consciously or subconsciously. Some people may spend years, or even a lifetime, not understanding the depths of their emotions.

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1.1.c. What is emotional intelligence?

Introduction

Emotional intelligence was defined by Peter Salovey and John Mayeras "the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour".

In the 1990's Daniel Goleman became aware of Salovey and Mayer's work which led to his book, *Emotional Intelligence*.

Goleman was a science writer for the New York Times, specializing in brain and behaviour research. A generic definition for **emotional intelligence** – EQ – includes empathy, mood management, motivation, self-awareness, and social skills.

Goleman goes a little further in his definition, and outlines the skills of emotional intelligence as being able:

- to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations
- to control impulse and delay gratification
- to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think;
- to empathize
- to hope



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The link between EQ and leadership behaviour becomes evident in an **individual's ability to organize groups, negotiate solutions, make personal connections, and show concern for others' feelings and motivations.**

Fundamentals of emotional intelligence

Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and of the influential article “*What makes a leader?*” published by Harvard Business Review in 1998, researched the link between emotional intelligence and leadership. He argued that all leaders have a high degree of what is known as emotional intelligence. **He argues that IQ and technical skills do matter, but what makes the difference is emotional intelligence (EQ).** In his research, he focused on how emotional intelligence operates at work and demonstrated what competencies are related to emotional intelligence, such as the ability to work with others and effectiveness in leading change.

Daniel Goleman, during his major research, found out that “*intellect was a driver for outstanding performance, cognitive skills such as big-picture thinking and long-term vision were important, but emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others*”.

Click this link to watch the video 'What Makes a Leader?'

<https://hbr.org/video/5236216251001/what-makes-a-leader>



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What are the five components of emotional intelligence at work?

5 Components of Emotional Intelligence



Emotional Intelligence Domains and Competencies

SELF-AWARENESS	SELF-MANAGEMENT	SOCIAL AWARENESS	RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
Emotional self-awareness	Emotional self-control	Empathy	Influence
	Adaptability		Coach and mentor
	Achievement orientation		Conflict management
	Positive outlook	Organizational awareness	Teamwork
			Inspirational leadership

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Why is EQ important?

No matter what stage you are at in your career or what position you hold in an organisation, knowing how to manage and relate to others is important to create an environment in which collaboration is at the core of the organisation's value. Moreover, it seems that successful leadership is primarily about character, disposition and behaviour, with skills being of secondary importance (John Tusa). For a long time the question of whether leaders are born or made has been a debated. We can ask the same question about emotional intelligence: are people born with certain levels of empathy or do they acquire empathy as a result of life's experiences? The answer is both.

Exercising our Emotional Intelligence is useful in developing what are seen as the skills of the 21st century (known as the four C's):

Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication

Critical thinking: the ability to solve problems.

Creativity: being able to think outside the box.

Collaboration: working well with others to achieve a common goal.

Communication: knowing how best to convey one's ideas.

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Glossary

Emotional intelligence: A group of five skills that enable leaders to maximize their own and their followers' performance.

Self-awareness: Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals – and their impact on others.

Self-regulation/Self-management: Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses

Social Skills: Managing relationships to move people in desired directions

Empathy: Considering others' feelings, especially when making decisions. We talk about empathy most commonly as a single attribute. But a close look at where leaders are focusing when they exhibit it reveals three distinct kinds, each important for leadership effectiveness:

- cognitive empathy—the ability to understand another person's perspective;
- emotional empathy—the ability to feel what someone else feels;
- empathic concern—the ability to sense what another person needs from you



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1.1.e. Exercises to improve emotional intelligence

Introduction



Setting boundaries at the start of a workshop is vital to keep the conversation contained within that space. Emotional intelligence exercises explore deep aspects of people's lives, especially in identifying

and sharing so many emotions. **Participants need to feel safe to share without judgment in a group setting.**

When choosing group activities focused on building a team's emotional intelligence, it's important to have a facilitator who understands them. The facilitator should also have the fundamental skills related to group cohesion and be able to spot any conflicts, or issues prior to running the activity. Not everyone will feel ready to contribute, which the facilitator and group must respect.

It's important to develop creative ways for the team to achieve their goals of understanding different emotions and developing emotional intelligence. If they are working on improving communication and emotional connection, you could select listening activities to help deliver their purpose. Identifying any risk levels in regard to self-disclosure is essential to creating a space of trust that means everyone can develop their own emotional intelligence.

Activities to Improve Self-Awareness

Weather Check-In

Checking in with ourselves and communicating our feelings to our teams is the first step to becoming self-aware. The way we feel emotions differs from person to person and understanding this can not only help develop self-awareness but also



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build empathy for how others are feeling.

As an example, Gill Hasson asks in her book *Emotional Intelligence Pocketbook, Little Exercises for an Intuitive Life*. "When someone says 'I'm happy' – what sort of 'happy' are you?" The word happy has a bouncy, uplifting feeling for some people. For others, happiness might mean feeling calm with zero stress, or a zen-like feeling.

The exercise, Weather Check-In uses the weather as a metaphor to describe our feelings. This way, our emotions become relatable, and people can be more honest about their feelings within a safe container. You may want to use this exercise at the beginning and end of a workshop to compare any changes.

Instructions

Prompt everyone to close their eyes, **check in with themselves, and identify how they are feeling in a word or two**. When they know their word or phrase, they open their eyes.

Once everyone is ready, **whoever starts names how they are currently feeling. Then they call someone else's name**.

Person 2 then says, "When I feel [the feeling Person 1 named], I [how they express that feeling or what they do]."

e.g. "When I feel sad, I lie down, listen to sad music, and cry." Person 2 then shares their own feeling and call a name, and so on.

Once someone says what they do, **the rest of the group mimes or does that as well (take a breath, do yoga, go for a bike ride, etc.)**

Facilitator acknowledges that the feelings may change so the request is to name your current feeling (even if it's changed from when you started). This allows the group to affect each other.

Background:

Originally developed by Robin Fox <https://www.social-eyes.org/about/>

Variations explored in AIN Open Space



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Activities for better Self-Management

Letter to Myself

by Hyper Island, @Sessionlab

Writing is often a very cathartic process to understand our own emotions and consider perspectives that allow us to see things more clearly. From a goal-setting perspective, writing our ambitions down in detail can help cement the ideas and serve as a visual cue. 'Manifestation' is having its moment and whilst that might be a good place to start, goals without taking action rarely materialize.

A Letter to Myself exercise works similarly, team members can focus on key actions they'd like their future selves to take, and their motivations. Goleman mentions in his book on Emotional Intelligence, "People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives, having a surer sense of how they really feel about personal decisions from whom to marry, to what job to take." Often done at the end of a workshop or program, the purpose of this exercise is to support participants in applying their insights and learnings, by writing a letter and sending it to their future selves.

They can define key actions that they would like their future self to take and express their reasons why change needs to happen.

Goal

Support participants in applying their insights and learnings, by writing a letter and sending it to their future selves

Materials

- Pens
- Postcards / Writing paper and envelopes
- Stamps
- Flipchart/Whiteboard /markers



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Instructions

Step 1:

Hand out pens and postcards/writing paper. Explain that they are going to write a letter to their future selves, and that this will help them apply their insights and learnings from the workshop/program. Tell them that you will post the card/letters in X number of months, and that they should take that into account when writing them. You can define the timeframe with the group.

Step 2:

Write a focus question or prompts on a flipchart/whiteboard. These can either be defined by you, or through discussion with the group. For example:

- What will I achieve by X date?
- What will I do tomorrow, next week, next month?
- How do I feel now about my work/job/team? And how do I want my future self to feel?
- Don't forget...
- I want to change... because...

- Give them around 10 minutes to complete their cards/letters. More if they need time and you are flexible.

Step 3:

Collect the cards/letters, put them in a safe place, and post them on the agreed date.



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1.1.g. Case Art Study

Introduction

This article illustrates an artistic practice by 64 Million Artists happened during the pandemic '[Create to Connect](#)': two weeks of fun, free creative challenges where anyone could take part in if they're isolating, distancing, or working from home.

What happened?

We know that [engaging in the visual arts](#) contributes to positive mental wellbeing by establishing purposeful activity **and positive emotions, helping to make connections, providing continuous learning opportunities and developing a sense of achievement**. Creativity-based group projects support many of these – but do they also work online?

As many traditionally 'offline' groups and organisations are rapidly learning how to operate and thrive online, this is an important question.

64 Million Artists runs creativity-based participation projects which are fun, free, and focused on wellbeing. They responded to the coronavirus situation with 'Create to Connect': two weeks of fun, free creative challenges anyone can take part in if they're isolating, distancing, or working from home.

Their flagship campaign, 'The January Challenge', engaged thousands in simple challenges based **on drawing, craft, mindfulness, movement and cooking**. Many organisations are now regular challengers, including hospitals, libraries and museums. They take part to boost their workplace wellbeing.

Alongside the daily challenges, they will be distributing free tailored activity packs that enable you to engage others in your communities in the challenges.



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Evidence gaps on virtual creativity

Our participants regularly tell us that taking part in our creative challenge programmes makes them feel good. There is already evidence on the [wellbeing impact of art and culture activities](#), but very little on *online* creativity-based interventions where participants meet in virtual spaces. We investigated what specific elements improve their mood.

We partnered with UCL Division of Psychology and Life Sciences to design a project, Creativity in Mind, for people self-reporting low mood challenges and asked to post their work and experiences in WhatsApp groups. Members of 64 Million Artists facilitated and were in constant dialogue with a clinical psychologist from UCL who was also a silent member of the group.

The three groups were asked to fill in questionnaires to assess their levels of stress, depression and anxiety, as well as their wellbeing, against clinical scales. They were measured before, immediately after, and two months following the 30 days programme. UCL also conducted interviews with randomly selected participants to identify key themes and pinpoint the crucial change agents in their experience.

Key findings

Dr Rachel H. Tribe's qualitative and quantitative findings were that:

- **users' symptoms decreased overall**, according to the depression, anxiety and stress scale (DASS)
- **wellbeing increased to a level of clinical significance** on the [The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#)

Creativity in Mind's mechanism of change fits into three broad categories:



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1. The structure of daily online prompts
 2. Being creative as a discovery and a distraction
 3. Creative *sharing* with a supportive group one is accountable to
- **creativity itself was perceived by users to a key part of their positive experience**, something which champions of creativity in healthcare settings will be encouraged to hear.

One of the Creativity in Mind participants took part in challenges inviting her to get out and engage with her local environment. She later revealed that she had taken part only in her imagination, as she was physically disabled and housebound. This study adds to [existing research](#) showing that digital platforms can play a role in relieving social isolation. It also has promising implications for social prescribing.

To know more:

<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/online-creativity-groups-and-mental-wellbeing/>



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Unit 1.2: Creative techniques to self-regulate emotions

Introduction

This unit focuses on how we can use creative ways such as storytelling, drawing, sketching, and mindfulness to reinforce the creative skills and practices that play an essential role in how **people cope during the health crisis, especially young citizens**. Art and creative techniques are essential to improve wellbeing, flexibility, self-regulation emotions, boost motivation, communication, collaboration skills, empathy, and critical thinking. The first method described is **storytelling: helping others tell their stories. It is a technique to express our emotions**. Telling stories is an innate human instinct. We have always told stories to make sense of the world around us. Recent research suggests that the human mind was shaped by stories so that stories could shape it. As such, storytelling is a tool used in healing processes to talk about emotions because once you acknowledge them and understand them it is essential to have a way to express and share them. In this unit, we will introduce you to a method by the StoryCentre and how you can apply it in your context and help others to tell their stories.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for looking at one's life and trying **to understand how one's personal experiences have shaped how one can deal with and manage one's life, not only about one's professional activities**.

Since mind and body are connected, we will introduce the concept of **Mindfulness** - the ability to be fully present in the moment- and how it has been used in artistic and creative practices. Moreover, **other tools such as drawing and sketching can be used with community members**.

We advise you to keep a diary with your community members and to use drawing



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and sketching techniques to express emotions.

This unit covers the following topics:

- Storytelling as a healing process
- Artistic and creative practices for mindfulness
- Drawing/sketching for regulating emotions
- Case studies

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of Unit 2, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least 3 characteristics of a story
- Identify at least 3 skills that storytelling can help you to build
- Identify at least 1 storytelling technique for community healing
- Experiment with at least one mindfulness exercise for community healing
- Design one art project that summarizes others' emotions
- Listen carefully to the stories and remember them
- Experiment with at least one storytelling exercise with your participants

These TRAINING MATERIALS were selected to provide trainers with an understanding of some *key concepts* and *theories* to be inspired by when they deliver Module 1:

1.2.a The Science behind Storytelling

What is the best way to talk about our emotions? Tell stories! Storytelling is not only a buzzword, there is actual hard science behind how storytelling also works. Narrative sticks in our brain, it moves us (literally), and increases empathy.

In the presentation attached we will explain the main research behind it.



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1.2.b The Storycenter method

There are many methods to develop or create stories. In this article, we are going to explain the Story center method because it is a method whose goal is to empower people of all ages or regardless of their skills to tell their story. This method works **best in a workshop setting**, in fact professionals employing Digital Storytelling are also fascinated by the potential offered **by sharing stories in a group**. It is a methodology requiring a participative process, sharing and mutual help in every phase.

1.2.c: “How to run a storycircle: tips and exercises”

This article explains a storycircle, its importance, and how to run it.

1.2.e: The importance of Mindfulness

This article explains mindfulness and how it can improve well-being and outlines strategies to boost four components of a healthy mind: awareness, connection, insight, and purpose. It also illustrates how mindfulness has similarities with the Flow state, a term coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

1.2.f: Mindfulness exercises you can try out with your community members

This article explains how to practice simple mindfulness exercises with your participants

1.2.g: The Flow exercise

Here we introduce another exercise that you can do with your participants to explore their in-Flow state

1.2.h: Case study

An example of project from the Uk Arts council programme Creative People and Places Hounslow: 'Walking with the Unseen', a project led by local people with no



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specialised experience of arts and cultural leadership. It shares how by working together and deliberating the issues they identified locally, they developed an idea that tackled the huge subject of mental health in a creative and supportive way.

<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/using-creative-self-expression-to-support-mental-wellbeing/>



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1.2.a The science behind storytelling

Introduction

Storytelling is not only a buzzword, there's actual cold, but hard science behind how storytelling also works. Narrative sticks in our brain, moves us (literally), and increases empathy.

In the following text, we will explain the main research behind it.

What is storytelling?

“We want stories. We love stories. Stories keep us alive. Stories that come from a place of deep insight and with a knowing wink to their audience, and stories that tease us into examining our own feelings and beliefs, and stories that guide us on our own path. But most importantly, stories told as stories.”

Joe Lambert, *Digital
Storytelling: Capturing Lives,
Creating Community*

Put simply; storytelling is the art of telling stories. It follows some specific rules such as:

- It has a **narrative arc** (A beginning, a development and an end), an irrevocable **change and meaning**. It's about overcoming a conflict
- Involves personal emotions between storytellers and listeners



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- It leverages universal emotions such as joy, fear... which allows the creation of lasting relationships thanks to empathy
- It gives people a sense of belonging: it's part of the human condition: we yearn to belong. We crave connection

The Science behind storytelling.

Storytelling is not only a buzzword, scientific evidence suggests that: the human mind was shaped for story, so that it could be shaped by story.

Our minds are designed to learn and gather information from observing the actions and emotions of our fellow humans through the mirror neuron system, which is a group of specialized neurons that “mirror” the actions and behaviour of others.

This aspect of brain function allows us to understand and anticipate the actions, movements and intentions of other people. This is what helps us to learn from others.

Narrative thinking is a skill, is the ability to perceive and create connections between sequences of actions and feelings. (Falchetti, 2014). In a world in which we are bombarded with information, stories hold our attention.

In a recent study on **oxytocin, the chemical connected with care**, connection and empathy, it was found that oxytocin is released in our brains when we encounter a good story.

Paul Zak, who conducted the study tells us **'Oxytocin is incredibly important to storytelling because, as we know, stories change our behaviour. When our brains encounter a good story, oxytocin is released, causing us to feel empathy.** The empathy is what causes us to want to take action.'

According to Zak, a story must have a dramatic arc in order to facilitate the



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audience's emotional connection to the characters. When a story is told well, we recognize it, and our minds synchronize with the characters in the story, regardless of the topic. We are social beings and thrive on connection with others.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines show that certain language (such as, descriptive and figurative) lights up neurological regions that incite action and movement.

When we hear powerful and emotional stories, our brain often releases dopamine.

Dopamine helps us remember the experience with greater accuracy.

Psychologists and neurologists have found that stories stimulate the parts of the brain that helps us intuit others' thoughts and emotions.

Our brain produces oxytocin after listening to a character-driven story. Oxytocin has been shown to help motivate us toward cooperation.

Storytelling is involving/engaging, "pleasant/enjoying" because it refers to human experiences, knowledge, emotions, etc. all aspects that all human beings can share and understand "innately"

- Storytelling allows us to create other stories, new reality, facts, ideas...
- Storytelling enhances human creativity
- Stories help to explain the unknown
- Storytelling has a social value for individuals to develop one self-esteem, self-identity, sense of belonging to..., for family, groups, societies, communities...
- Storytelling is a tool for learning/exchange and gain knowledge;



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- Storytelling is a tool share behavioural, moral-ethical rules, values and memories...
- Storytelling reinforces human cohesion

Figure 2@Falchetti 2014 Diamond

Narrative has a potential to understand the complexity and emotional charge.

Storytelling creates a myriad of subjective truths from which we may better understand ourselves/each other, our place within our environment and the experiences that define us.

Who are storytellers and where do they live?

We are all storytellers, it exists in our daily conversation.

- *Tell me ... what you have made today ...*
- *How you feel ...*
- *... your programs/intentions*
- *... how you have done... something*

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1.2.b The Story Center Method

Introduction

There are many methods to develop or create stories. In this article we are going to explain the Story center method because it's a method which goal is to empower people of all ages or regardless their skills to tell their story.

The story of the story center method

The Centre for Digital Storytelling was established in Berkeley, California, in 1994, and became a landmark for all those who had developed a professional interest or a passion for this methodology.

Born in the US between the 1970s and 1980s from the brilliant mind of Dana Atchley and Joe Lambert, Digital Storytelling was the product of an artistic movement aimed at ensuring a more inclusive participation in the arts for all through the use and dissemination of new technologies.

The centre changed name in 2015 to simply StoryCenter (www.storycenter.org), giving emphasis to the importance of the story and not of the medium.

It has worked with nearly a thousand organizations around the world and trained more than fifteen thousand people in hundreds of workshops to share stories from their lives. Through our wide-ranging work, they have transformed the way that community activists, educators, health and human services agencies, business professionals, and artists think about the power of personal voice, in creating change.

Digital Storytelling or Storytelling is a creative process combining the art of telling stories and technology with the aim to develop a personal story in digital format: a computer with a video-editing software and a recorder become versatile tools in the



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hands and mind of the storyteller, who employs them to share his/her story.



The aim of the workshop is for each participant to create digital story of 2-3 minutes, in your setting you can ask to create the story in whatever artistic output you or your audience likes.

The SEVEN STEPS

This method works **best in a workshop setting**, in fact professionals employing Digital Storytelling are also fascinated by the potential offered **by sharing stories in a group**.

It is a methodology which requires **a participative process**, the act of sharing and mutual help in every phase. Of course, it's absolutely possible to make a Digital Story or a story by yourself but working together as a group enhances the experience.

For this reason, it is particularly effective for people who find it hard to express themselves or never had the opportunity to do so.



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In the story circle participants bear witness to each other's stories and offer support and advice.

Having company maximizes the opportunities for having fun.

The sense of achievement at having made a story can be celebrated fully when everyone gathers to watch the final films together and share comments and congratulations.

It's a method that helps people tell their own stories also in a digital format:

- It relies on authentic and personal stories
- It leverages universal emotions such as joy, fear... which allows the creation of lasting relationships thanks to empathy
- It multiplies points of view - The danger of a single story (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
- Allows the storyteller to tell their story, the story belongs to him/her

The method is done by seven steps, but before **First thing is to create a safe environment by briefing participants and setting the ground Rules**

Before beginning any story discussion, brief participants and establish ground rules with the group. We've all been in situations that are new to us. Since our first day in school, we often feel we're in unknown territory. Coming to a Storytelling workshop or session is no exception.

Briefing participants as fully as possible before embarking on the process is invaluable to the success of the workshop as it serves two purposes. One is to ensure that the participants are suitably prepared and the other is to alleviate any fears or concerns they may have with what lies ahead.

This informal session is very important as it sets the mood for the rest of the workshop... a non-competitive atmosphere of sharing and collaboration.



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Ground rules we recommend for Adult workshops:

1. We are all susceptible to becoming sidetracked or forgetful of where we were headed when/if interrupted. Allow the storyteller to complete their presentation completely before opening it up for the group to provide comments or ask questions.
2. Sharing stories can make people feel vulnerable. Begin with an appreciative comment first, then state your comment or ask a question.
3. Given the context, try to avoid sensitive subjects such as politics, religion, unless it's a workshop based on those topics.
4. Confidentiality: What is said in the room stays in the room.
5. The Workshop Space: at least during the storycircle, cell phones off during the discussion

Ground rules we recommend for Youth workshops:

1. **Respect:** Everyone's story is valid; it's not about competition. As facilitator it is important **to remain non-judgmental, no negative facial expressions, body language, or sounds that indicate disinterest or disapproval.**
2. **Confidentiality:** What is said in the room stays in the room.



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3. **The Workshop Space:** at least during the storycircle, cellphones off during the discussion

4. **Emotions:** Deep and challenging emotions may come up. Tears are okay and don't need to be apologized for. (Have Kleenex available.)

5. **Silence:** Is okay. If someone is struggling with what to say, don't make him or her feel rushed.



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The steps into details

STEP 1. Owing your insight Lesson

Helping your storyteller finding and clarifying what your story is about. “Why this story? Why now? What makes it today’s version of the story? What makes it your version of the story? Who’s it for? Who’s it to? How does this story show who you are? How does this story show why you are who you are?”

Some exercises/games to prompt/the discussion (described in full in how to run a storycircle):

- **Share the story of an object of significance to them** – this may be a photograph, which could possibly be used to tell a story.
- **The First Time:** The storyteller spends 10 minutes writing about an occasion when they did something for the first time and how it made them feel and the impact it possibly caused for others. The story is then shared with the rest of the group

Step 2. Owing Your Emotions

Decide how to convey emotional content: “Which emotions will best help the audience understand the journey contained within your story? Is there an overall tone that captures a central theme? Can you convey your emotions without directly using “feeling” words or relying on clichés to describe them? For example, how can you imply the idea of happiness without saying, ‘I felt happy?’



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Step 3. Finding The Moment

Our lives comprise an infinite number of moments, and some of those moments are loaded with more meaning than others. **Find the moment of change that best represents the insight that you wish to convey**

The moment of change might **be the most memorable or dramatic moment**, or it may have occurred without the storyteller even noticing it at the time or grasping its significance in their life.

As you recall the moment of change, ask yourself these questions: What do you see? What do you hear? What's being said? What are your thoughts? What are your feelings? What is the context behind your feelings? Have you been in this situation before or since? Have you been in these surroundings, or had these thoughts or feelings before or since? When? Is that part of this story?

What happened before that moment, what happened after? Does the audience need more or less information? What are the key details that will help the audience appreciate the moment of change?

Over the course of a three-to-five-minute piece, a digital story can consist of a single scene, or it can consist of several. **Because the format is relatively short, it's important to select your scenes with care and establish them concretely to ensure that they are contributing to the overall piece.**



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Step 4. Seeing Your Story

“What images come to mind when recalling the moment of change in the story? What images come to mind for other parts of the story?” Why this image? What is it conveying to you? Is the meaning explicit or implicit? Does it have more than one meaning?

“Do you already have these images or will you need to find or create them? How could you use the images that you already have to convey your meaning?”

Step 5. Hearing Your Story

There is no question that ambient sound can add complexity to a story. With an ambient sound, storytellers can consider how the minimal use of music can enhance a story by giving it rhythm and character.

A note on copyright

Your writing, recorded voice and personal images belong to you. When you consider using others' music, you cross into the territory of deciding what should be the appropriate fair use of the copyrighted material. Put simply, whatever the music choice, honor it by providing a credit at the end of the piece. If you are going to make money directly or indirectly by the presentation or distribution of the piece you have created, then you should have the artist's permission to use the music. Fortunately there are a growing number of legal online music collections that provide free and affordable media, as well as software to assist you in designing a soundtrack that is wholly yours



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STEP 6. Assembling Your Story

When we begin editing, we choose which details we feel are the most necessary to include in order to construct meaning.

This process of telling stories and reading the audience's reaction is critical to understanding story structure. It helps answer the questions: What are the necessary parts of my story? How will telling this part shape the story differently or take it in a different direction?

Once the basic structure of the story is outlined, the next step is scripting and storyboarding, or in other words, laying out how the visual and audio narratives will complement each other over the duration of the piece to best tell the story.

STEP 7. Sharing your story

Before the final version is exported, consider the audience once more, but this time in terms of how you will present the digital story.

It is important to consider the contextualizing information you want to convey to your audience, both as part of the digital story and alongside it. Why did you choose this story to tell? How have you changed as a result of telling this story?

Knowing more about the story, the storyteller, or both, can reveal a new depth of appreciation by the audience.

Being clear about your purpose in creating the story and how it may have shifted during the process of creating the piece will help you determine how you present and share your story. And it is also a moment of celebration and to watch the story with all the group, of course who wants to share it.

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1.2.c How to run a storycircle

A short recap on the Story Center Method:

- it works best in a workshop setting, by sharing stories in a group
- It's a method that helps people tell their own stories, short stories, also in a digital format, but you can be creative and use any format you would like
- It relies on authentic and personal stories
- it leverages universal emotions such as joy, fear... which allows the creation of lasting relationships thanks to empathy
- it multiplies points of view - The danger of a single story (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
- It has developed 7 steps to help people tell their stories regardless their skills

Storycircle steps

Identify your story

The storycircle, guided by a facilitator, in a group sharing setting helps the storyteller to:

- Own their insight: Helps the storyteller finding and clarifying what your story is about. Why this story?
- Own your emotions: Which emotions will best help the audience understand the journey contained within the story?
- Find the moment of change that better represents the insight that you wish to convey

Normally the writing/sharing process starts with a 'storytelling circle'

This session is designed to bond storytellers as a group and to tease out of their innate powers of storytelling.



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The storytelling circle can be tailored to suit variable time slots between 2 and 4 hours. The ultimate goal is to get scripts drafted and finalised ready for voice recording. As mentioned, you can skip this last part.

The five underlying principles of the story circle are:

- Everybody is getting involved including trainers, observers, technicians
- Nobody is allowed to apologize for their lack of understanding, ability or confidence
- What is said in the storytelling circle stays in the room
- Participants bear witness to each other's stories and offer support and advice
- Avoid politics and sensitive issues

If participants are stuck...

1. Running some kind of story circle with word games and memory sharing is a way of helping people to relax and stop being self-conscious.
2. If necessary, use some kind of stimulus, a picture or an object can provide a good starting point.
3. Also following a list of creative exercises that you can adapt.



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Logistics and creating the right atmosphere

- The storytelling circle environment must be a closed space in order to work best,
- free from all interruptions besides emergencies.
- Participants should be able to sit comfortably around the right number of tables for the group size, in a way that everyone can see each other.
- If necessary It needn't be a circle at all, a rectangle or square is fine.
- If possible, avoid rooms with noisy corridors outside and external visual distractions. The last thing one wants in a story circle is half the participants watching a delivery to the building next door!
- It is important that the room used is fairly quiet and private, so that the participants can feel isolated from interruption.
- The facilitator should arrange the seating in a circle in the room so that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.
- The facilitator leads and takes part in the story games, helps boost individual confidence and provides feedback at the end of the session.
- Everyone should be made to feel at ease and the atmosphere should not be pressurised.
- There should be no technology visible around the table; no computers, mobile phones (switched off), or digital recording devices of any kind.

Preparation for the storytelling

The Trainer should provide:

- Pens and paper
 - A Flipchart (game 3)
 - A bag containing household objects (game 4) box of matches and a glass of water (game 9)
- The Storyteller should provide



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- An object of significance to them –this may be a photograph, which could possibly be used to tell a story.
- A draft of a script for their own story, printed out.

Once you have started:

- Start with funny creative writing exercises
- Allow the storyteller to complete their presentation completely
- Everybody participates
- Begin with an appreciative comment first, then state your comment or ask a question;
- We want to foster the ownership of each story by the individual who it belongs to, therefore when we give feedback to use the phrase “if it were my story...”
- Deep and challenging emotions may come up. Tears are okay and don't need to be apologized for. (Have Kleenex available.)

Storycircle final output

At the end of the story circle, every storyteller should know the subject of their story and ideally a first draft should be typed up ready to read.

The participants are invited to read out their first drafts to the rest of the group. Feedback is given by the trainer and supporting comments given by the other participants.

In the case of any storyteller who has difficulty reading, there are alternative options to consider, like producing an interview-generated narrative.

Once again, by the end of the story circle, these storytellers should be content with the method they will use.

Once each participant has its own story they can be creatively developed



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1.2.e. The importance of mindfulness

Introduction

This article aims at illustrating the importance of mindfulness for our wellbeing. The second part explains how mindfulness has similarity with the Flow state, a term coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS

Richard J Davidson¹, world leading neuroscientist and psychologist, renowned for ground-breaking work studying emotion and the brain, USA, author of the Emotional life of your Brain and Altered Traits with Daniel Goleman, argues that well-being is a skill, based on evidence they developed a framework:

The first is **Self-awareness** where you would put mindfulness, and **it involves our unique capacity to regulate our attention and also another capacity that's so important that psychologists and neuroscientists called meta awareness.**

“That awareness is knowing what our minds are doing” as he explains² *“Don't we all know when our minds are doing well? Let me give you an example that I think is a common one. Certainly, I've experienced this and let me ask you, how many of you in the audience have had the experience of reading a book? Where you read each word on a page and you may read one page, you may read the second page and after a few minutes you have absolutely no idea what you've just read. Your mind is somewhere else. That's an example of elapsing meta awareness, but the moment you recognise that your mind is away, that's a moment of meta awareness. **You can bring your mind back to the present moment.**”*

¹ Richard J Davidson, Waisman Laboratory for Brain Imaging and Behavior and Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, USA





Research indicates that the average adult spends a very large percentage of her or his daily life actually not paying attention to what they're doing. "

The second pillar is connection is about the qualities that promote healthy social relationships, qualities like appreciation, gratitude, kindness and compassion during this time of the pandemic, spending a few moments each day. **Intentionally cultivating appreciation. Reflecting on the people who are helpful to you and to others during this time.**

Third pillar is about **self-knowledge**. It is inside into the narrative that we all carry around in our mind about who we are.

The last pillar of well-being is **purpose**. And purpose here is about finding our sense of direction in life and clarifying our values. Why are we doing what we're doing? And when we ask ourselves these questions, we can clarify our purpose and align more and more of our everyday behaviour around this sense of purpose. **So each of these four elements of well-being is implemented in different brain circuits. It's associated with different biological correlates. Cultivating each of these four pillars of well-being can lead to resilience.**

According to Richardson, it's not just mindfulness. It's not just any of these things. **It's really a balance among all of them.**

² How mindfulness changes the emotional life of our brains | Richard J. Davidson |

TEDxSanFrancisco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CBfCW67xT8>

HUMAN FLOURISHING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PIrWIMV_3Q



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So, what is mindfulness?

Mindfulness, which has been described as a ‘relaxation technique formed out of a combination of positive psychology, Buddhism, cognitive behavioural therapy and neuroscience’.

Mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we’re doing at the moment — free from distraction or judgment, and aware of our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them.

It involves observing your thoughts and feelings from the perspective of a non judgemental third.

There are similarities between mindfulness and **the ‘flow’ that is typical of arts engagement** – both require presence in the moment and a sense of absorption.

The term **“flow state”** describes a mental state in which a person is completely focused on a single task or activity. They are directing all of their attention toward the task, and they do not experience many thoughts about themselves or their performance. Some people refer to this informally as being “in the zone.”

The concept of flow comes from the field of positive psychology, which is the study of things that help humans thrive, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Flow has similarities with mindfulness, as both involve a focus on the present moment. However, people often use the term “flow” in reference to situations in which they are being productive, **whereas a person can be in a state of mindfulness regardless of whether they are doing a task.**

Flow and mindfulness “are very similar,” says Ellen Langer, a psychology professor at Harvard who has written several books on mindfulness, creativity and belief. **“The major difference is that mindfulness is a state of mind that is available to everybody virtually all the time. It’s not an unusual thing.”**



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Mindfulness doesn't eliminate stress or other difficulties; **instead, by becoming aware of unpleasant thoughts and emotions that arise because of challenging situations, we have more choice in how to handle them in the moment** — and a better chance of reacting calmly and empathetically when faced with stress or challenges. Of course, practicing mindfulness does not mean we never get angry — rather it allows us to be more thoughtful in how we want to respond, whether that's calmly and empathetically or perhaps, occasionally with measured anger.

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1.2.f. Mindfulness Exercises

Introduction

This article aims at illustrating some mindfulness exercises to get into the state of Flow or getting into the zone before your workshop. They can be done also online. By searching on the net you will find even more exercises.

How mindfulness can help getting into the ZONE

We are all extremely busy and distracted, sometimes it's difficult to focus and concentrate. Mindfulness is a state of mind that is available to everybody virtually all the time. It's not an unusual thing.

Here are some tips to create the optimal conditions to get to your flowstate. You could open your workshop with some mindfulness activities, that focused the participants on being mindful and present to their own capacities to feel.

"The concepts are very similar," says Ellen Langer, a psychology professor at Harvard who has written several books on mindfulness, creativity and belief". The major difference is that.

Ensure that you've already established the necessary group culture and community building to support a safe learning environment.

Practices that invite us into the present moment can evoke feelings of vulnerability, so it's essential that people feel a sense of safety. In addition to cultivating trust and respect in the classroom, offering choice is another important tool for creating safety. For example, always offer a child the option to keep their eyes open instead of forcing them to close them.



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Ocean Breathing¹

The Why: Did you know that extending your exhales so that they're a little longer than your inhales can help trigger the body's relaxation response? A recent study showed that focusing on longer exhales reliably and significantly reduces stress and improves decision-making. Let's try it and see how it feels.

Mindfulness Activity:

1. Invite students into a comfortable position, seated or lying down.
2. Play a calm music
3. Read the script.

Script: Note: The spaces between lines are an invitation for you to pause speaking and give your class time to follow your instruction. "Take a moment to get comfortable and relax into your position. Allow your body to sink into the floor. Get very still and begin to connect to your breath.

I'm going to guide you through a breathing exercise where we make our exhales a little longer than our inhales. Try it with me, but remember you can always take a break or go at your own pace. Inhale deeply through your nose to fill your belly with air for 3, 2, 1. Now exhale slowly through your mouth with lips gently pursed making an ocean-like whooshing noise for 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

{repeat the instructions above 3 more times}

Now, continue the breathing pattern on your own for a couple of minutes. Inhaling for a count of 3 and exhaling for a count of 5. If you need to make the counts a little shorter or longer, please do, the most important part is that your exhales are slightly longer than your inhales.

{wait at least a minute}

¹ @Calm.com





When you're ready, you can stop counting your breath and just listen to the ocean sounds.

{wait at least a minute}

Now, gently bring your awareness back to the classroom. Take a moment to check in with your body and notice how you're feeling."

FINDING CALM²

The Why:

Our bodies are constantly responding to our surroundings, often without our conscious awareness. If it's stressful or overwhelming, we go into fight, flight or freeze mode. Do I need to protect myself or runaway? If we feel safe and connected, we are able to open up and settle into our experience. Is it okay to relax? Scanning our environment is a practice that can help calm the nervous system by affirming that the body is not in danger. Your students may be interested to know that psychologists learned this by watching animals assess and respond to their surroundings.

Mindfulness Activity:

1. You can play some calm music to help create a container for this experience, if you want

2. Read the following script to guide your students through this first activity. Feel free to read it directly or to adapt it based on the specific needs of your group.

Script: Note: The spaces between lines are an invitation for you to pause speaking and give your class time to follow your instructions.

² @Calm.com





“Let’s begin by standing up or finding a comfortable seat. Both options are good. Choose what works best for you right now.

Notice where in your body you are connected to something else. Feel your feet on the ground or your back against the chair. Allow yourself to rest into that connection as much as feels good at this moment.

When you’re ready, start to slowly look around the room. Stay in one place, but feel free to move as much of your body as you need to explore your surroundings. Turn your head, shoulders and torso. Look from side to side and up and down. Take your time and keep moving slowly.

What do you see? Notice colors, shapes, and textures. Notice what you like and don’t like.

Now bring your attention to an object in the room that you like and helps you to feel calm. Take a deep breath and hang out here for a bit, softly gazing at the object you chose.

Take a moment to notice how being with that object makes you feel. Maybe you feel okay, happy, good, peaceful, or relaxed. There’s no right way to feel. And your feelings might change, but for now, notice how that object makes you feel.

When we take the time to look around the room, we can often find something or someone that helps us feel good. This can be a helpful strategy when you notice it’s hard for you to relax or when you’re feeling stressed. So the next time you want to experience these pleasant feelings, try coming back to this object again. You may also try this in other rooms that you’re in.

And, then when you’re ready, come back to your starting position. Taking a moment to thank yourself for trying this activity.”

Reflection Question: What helped you to feel calm? What other feelings came up? What did you like about the object?



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Kindness exercise³:

You can do this sitting up or lying down, but just begin **with a nice big breath**.

Breathing in through the nose. And out through the mouth and as you breathe out through the mouth, **just gently closing the eyes**.

And for a moment, I'd like you to imagine just picture something that. Really means a lot to you in your life. It might be somebody in your family. It might be a friend or a pet to be a place. It might even be a toy, but something that you really really feel grateful for. Just picturing that thing. Noticing.

How it makes you feel when you pick to that thing? Then just allowing that feeling to remain. Gently opening your eyes again in your own time.

Reflection Questions

How did this breathing exercise feel? Did you enjoy listening to the sound of waves? What else did you notice?

³ @Headspace





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FOCUS EXERCISE (1)⁴

- Welcome, state intention of a focus exercise
- Focus on breath for a few breaths, breathe normally.
- How do you feel today/ what is the predominant state of mind you bring?
- How does your body feel?
- Light or heavy? Fully present or elusive?
- How can you ground yourself? Be aware of where you are, feel the contact with the floor.
- The chair, how hard are you holding the handset if you have one...how aware are you of whatever equipment you are using?
- Bring the other people present to mind [names with a few seconds gap between] bring x/y [absent people if any].

⁴ Action learning Associates



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FOCUS EXERCISE (2)

Welcome each person by name after they have said who they are

Invite them to silently focus on their own surroundings; are they sitting or standing/ what can they see immediately around them/ can they see outside the room/ what do they notice most?

Invite them to listen; near sounds/far sounds?

Invite them to pay attention to their breath for three breaths, just watch as they breathe normally.....

Invite them to examine their expectations/how are they feeling about this session/hopes/fears?

Invite them to focus in on their hopes....what is their uppermost response to the possibilities ahead?

Invite them to refocus on their breath, speak for a couple [breathe in, follow the breath into the body, hold for a second, slowly exhale, do that a couple of times silently]

Invite them to spend a minute reflecting on what they might say, a sentence or two, about their hopes for the sessions

After a minute, invite a brief reflection round or start it yourself to model reflective brevity.

20 minutes maximum



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1.2.g. In flow

Introduction

Here we introduce another exercise that you can do with your participants to explore their in Flow state. As mentioned, in a very simplified way, the “In Flow” (by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly) moment can be described as a moment when someone feels at their best, when skills and happiness reach a meeting point and one feels totally absorbed by what they are doing.

It describes a mental state in which a person is completely focused on a single task or activity. They are directing all of their attention toward the task, and they do not experience many thoughts about themselves or their performance. Some people refer to this informally as being “in the zone”

You can ask your participants to reflect on their process following the guidelines below.

Encourage them to think of all the things they might need, or need around them to be “In Flow”, such as music playing, or silence, or alone in a clean studio or busy office with people around, and ask them to visualise this as a personal flow map.

It’s a good way to create an understanding of how people like to work or being more focused.

The exercise:

“I COULD DO THIS FOREVER”

You know when you are working and all of a sudden you look up and five hours have gone by?

It feels AMAZING right. To be in that moment where you feel good about work, you are happy, you are fulfilled. Turns out, those moments can teach us a lot about our unique strengths.



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In the exercise, I want you to think of moments in your career where you have felt alive or were in a state of “flow” at work. Write down any activities/tasks/moments that you have felt that you have loved (or enjoyed) doing at your job.

Once you have that list, I want you to ask yourself what was it that you specifically enjoyed about each of these events. Why did you enjoy it?

For each of these events, is there a strength that you can clearly identify that is fueling them? Multiple strengths? What are they?

Finally, can you quantify or identify some sort of growth that came out of that moment?

MOMENT #1

Name the moment:

What did you specifically enjoy:

Strengths at play:

What happened?:



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