



An intentional approach to
promoting social and emotional
wellbeing through the arts

Wellbeing Factor Cards

Version 3
2025



Wellbeing Factor Key Areas

Our wellbeing depends on our capacity at different times to **tune in** or turn our attention inwards to understand our experiences, to **feel** and express our emotions, to learn new skills and build on strengths through **discovery**, and to **connect** with other people.

Tuning In

In the zone

Self-awareness: Emotions

Self-awareness: Thoughts

Mindfulness

Sensory Awareness

Feeling

Coping with criticism

Expressing emotions

Managing pressure

Compassion

Connecting

Positive peer comparison

Listening

Empathising

Working in groups

Discovering

Doing what I value

Positive body image

Learning from mistakes

Trying Something new

Development in one key area is dependent on development in another. For example, trying something new in discovery mode may bring up emotions that require tuning in to and feeling. Therefore, these groups can be used in different ways. Teaching artists may focus on one key area at a time, exploring each of the Wellbeing Factors in that group, or move through a sequential focus on one Wellbeing Factor from each key area.



'Tuning In'

Reflecting on your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses to experiences. It involves the skill of noticing. For Aboriginal people, this may also include deep listening and connecting to Country, tuning into the land to understand oneself and how others feel as part of connecting.



In the zone

In the zone or 'flow' means complete immersion in an activity or process, where creativity flows effortlessly. It happens when we're challenged just enough – without feeling overwhelmed. Important aspects of being in the zone include getting immediate feedback from the task itself and a bit of freedom to do it your way. This flow state boosts energy, wellbeing, and sparks creativity.

Key messages

For young people

- Being in the zone supports your wellbeing.
- Give yourself time to get in the zone during an activity.
- Discover what helps you stay in the zone.
- You get in the zone when you're challenged but not overwhelmed.
- In the zone, your body and mind act without conscious thinking.
- Focus on the process, not just the result, to get in the zone.

For teaching artists

- Set clear goals and create a focused environment to facilitate being in the zone.
- Provide well-pitched challenges (not too challenging and not too easy) to promote being in the zone.

Activities

Activities that incorporate **autonomy**, enable them to **set goals**, and **provide challenges** (but not too challenging) will facilitate being in the zone.

Young people need **time and a lack of distractions** to remain in the zone.

In addition, young people may be able to get a sense of being 'in the zone' if they **know their output is not going to be judged or on display unless** they choose to show it.



For teaching artists

- Encourage group flow to improve team effectiveness, productivity, performance, and capabilities.
- Encourage mindfulness as a valuable alternative if being in the zone seems challenging.

Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What do you notice when you are in the zone?
- What obstacles prevent you from being in the zone? What strategies help you be in the zone?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How can I support young people to get in the zone?
- How can I support young people to remain in the zone once they are there?
- What activities offer self-feedback... rather than relying on feedback from the teaching artist?
- Are young people engaged in my arts session developing an awareness of being in the zone and expressing their experiences?



'Tuning In'

Reflecting on your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses to experiences. It involves the skill of noticing. For Aboriginal people, this may also include deep listening and connecting to Country, tuning into the land to understand oneself and how others feel as part of connecting.



Self-awareness: Emotions

Understanding our emotions – and those of others – helps us regulate our emotions and build a social network. Awareness of emotions starts by noticing how feelings show up in your body. Recognising and accepting all emotions, even the tough ones, are part of our wellbeing journey.

Key messages

For young people

- Recognising your emotions is the first step to emotional awareness.
- Uncomfortable emotions are hard to push away – accepting them reduces their intensity.
- Labelling emotions helps you recognise them in the future.
- Focusing on how emotions feel in your body can help manage them.
- Accepting your emotions makes them less overwhelming.
- Emotional health includes being aware of your emotions and being able to regulate them.

For teaching artists

- Acknowledge and address emotions to avoid anxiety and irritability. Utilise tools such as Plutchik's emotion wheel to identify emotions.

Activities

Breathe slowly and deeply while

learning to tolerate strong feelings or imagine the feelings as floating clouds, as a reminder that they will pass.

Identify the emotion you are feeling

- focus on the emotion without the reason you are feeling that way - where can you feel it in your body? What does it feel like? Take deep breaths as you exhale and repeat until you feel relief.

At some point later you may want to problem-solve why you felt that way and what may help you in the future to not have such an emotional response. You may also simply accept that this is likely a response you may have in the future.



Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions



- Which emotions do you find easy or challenging to recognise?
- Why do you think some emotions are harder to recognise than others?

Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each

arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Do you identify and manage your emotions effectively?
- Do you share your emotions with young people engaged in your arts sessions when appropriate?

Supports

Adolescent brains are still developing, and they will at times need help to self-regulate intense emotional experiences. Some things that work with adolescents are paced breathing, paired muscle relaxation and intense aerobic activity. Some adolescents find it hard to recognise the emotions they are feeling. If this is the case they may be more comfortable just feeling it in their bodies. Create a safe space to minimise the possibility of triggering trauma and allow young people to take a 'brain break' if necessary.



'Tuning In'

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Self-awareness: Thoughts

We have thousands of thoughts every day, but not all of them are true or helpful. What matters is what we put our attention to. Mindfulness helps you notice unhelpful thoughts and let them pass, so you can keep your focus on what really matters for your wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

- Thoughts are just thoughts – they don't always reflect reality.
- It's natural to focus on the negative, but it takes practice to focus on the good.
- Instead of pushing negative thoughts away – acknowledge them as just thoughts, to reduce their power.
- You can step back and observe your thoughts – you're more than your thoughts and emotions.
- Recognise which thoughts help you become the sort of person you want to be.

For teaching artists

- Adolescents often see the world as either good or bad, right, or wrong, with nothing in between. Help adolescents recognise the complexities and grey areas in life situations.
- Encourage young people to observe their thoughts. Guide them to watch their thoughts without getting caught up in them.
- Incorporate mindfulness into your teaching, focusing on your breath when thoughts are negatively affecting the way you feel.

Activities

Activities that help children and adolescents distinguish between thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are all valuable. Here's a valuable activity to practice:

Whenever a thought enters your mind, **imagine it rests on a cloud** floating by.

Avoid judging or labelling the thoughts; simply observe them as they float through your mind.

Don't hold onto them or get carried away by them – just notice them.

When young people identify their thoughts and represent them in different ways, it can help to diminish their power.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What thoughts hinder you from doing things? Are these thoughts based on facts?
- Do you have a reoccurring thought that obstructs your actions? What emotions and actions go with this thought?

Reflection questions for teaching artists



To reflect on during or after each

- arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How can you foster creativity in your sessions to help young people identify and describe thoughts, feelings, and body sensations?
- Do you notice unhelpful thoughts? Can you recognise them as just thoughts by saying "My mind is saying..."

Supports

Be thoughtful about what you are asking young people to share, and how you approach sensitive topics; and consider using a trauma-informed mindfulness approach for some young people. Respect their privacy and understand that reluctance to disclose does not necessarily indicate problems. Encourage connection to thoughts and feelings, without expectation or pressure to share content.



'Tuning In'

Reflecting on your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses to experiences. It involves the skill of noticing. For Aboriginal people, this may also include deep listening and connecting to Country, tuning into the land to understand oneself and how others feel as part of connecting.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about noticing when your mind wanders and gently bringing it back to the present. It involves being non-judgemental and not getting carried away with thoughts. Like any skill, it takes practice – master the skill, and you'll boost your social and emotional wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

You can practice mindfulness through movement, not just sitting still. When practicing mindfulness gently bring your mind back if it wanders.

Mindfulness:

- Is being aware of the present moment.
- Doesn't mean clearing your mind of thoughts.
- Is a skill that improves with practice.
- Can help you slow down and feel calm.
- Is about noticing what you see, smell, taste, and how your body feels.
- Also means noticing what your mind is doing.
- Helps us understand our inner and outer experiences and how they affect wellbeing.

For teaching artists

- Introduce mindfulness to children and adolescents gradually, building on a little at a time.
- Develop your mindfulness practice to enhance your wellbeing and effectively support the young people you teach.

Activities

The arts provide multiple opportunities for mindfulness practice. Some mindfulness activities that can be incorporated into arts sessions include:

Basic mindfulness **meditation**. Sit quietly and focus on your natural breathing or a word or 'mantra'. Allow thoughts to come and go without judgment.

Noticing subtle **body sensations** without judgment and letting them pass.

Noticing **sensory** sensations (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch) without judgment and letting them go.

Emotions: Accept the presence of the emotions without judgment and let them go.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What does being calm look like or feel like to you?
- What does your breath feel like as it moves in and out of your body?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How can I incorporate mindfulness into every session?
- What challenges are young people experiencing with mindfulness?
- How can these challenges be overcome?

Supports

Some young people may experience adverse effects when practicing mindfulness, such as anxiety, panic, feeling spaced out, boredom, or uncomfortable feelings as a result of the excessive use of mindfulness. Exercise caution when using mindfulness with young people who have experienced trauma, as quietness can re-activate trauma. Allow individuals to opt-out if they do not wish to participate.



'Tuning In'

Reflecting on your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses to experiences. It involves the skill of noticing. For Aboriginal people, this may also include deep listening and connecting to Country, tuning into the land to understand oneself and how others feel as part of connecting.



Sensory Awareness

Your senses help you understand where you are and what's happening around you. Using them helps us connect with the world and boost wellbeing. Next time you're stressed, try a sensory strategy to get back to your optimal stress zone.

Key messages

For young people

- Tuning into your senses can give your mind a break and help you feel calmer.
- Use your senses to connect with Country and find calm:
 - Crush gum leaves in your hands and smell their aroma.
 - Listen to the waves crashing at the shoreline and smell the salty air.
 - Watch the dance of a flickering fire.
 - Touch the earth or stand barefoot on grass.
- Learning how emotions feel in your body can improve emotion awareness and wellbeing.
- Discover which senses help you feel calm for better wellbeing.

For teaching artists

- Helping young people pay attention to their senses is a simple way to practice mindfulness.
- Explore your sensory awareness - use your senses as a means of calming yourself when needed.

Activities

Mindfulness activities that incorporate the senses are beneficial for developing sensory awareness.

For example, take five slow breaths and listen to the different sounds around you or notice the different things you feel against your skin.

Group movement improvisation can help develop body awareness (proprioception).

There are many activities suited to this such as 'School of Fish' where participants can move like a group, changing direction in response to each other



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- Which of your senses do you notice the most?
- What sensory activities help you when you are over-stressed? Maybe it's listening to music, having a massage, or smelling a particular fragrance.



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Can you help young people in the session become more aware of their senses?
- What senses are you good at noticing? What sensory experiences help you feel calm?

Supports

Be aware that there may be a range of sensory sensitivities amongst the young people in your arts class. Some young people may need to have a break when over stimulated. Others may need a sensory space that helps them with self-regulation.

Coping with Criticism

Feedback helps us grow – but only when it’s kind and constructive. Young people can feel sensitive to criticism, especially during tricky times. With practice, feedback can be seen as a tool to sharpen skills and boost confidence. It not only makes us better at what we do but when delivered sensitively supports social and emotional wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

- Try to see feedback as an opportunity to improve – focusing on what was said that can help you grow.
- When giving feedback to others, think about how you’d like to receive it. This can help you find the best ways to support them.

For teaching artists

- Engage in thoughtful and dynamic exchanges when ‘giving and receiving’ feedback.
- Remain open-minded and objective, welcoming diverse ideas that differ from your own when providing feedback.
- Focus feedback on the work, offering guidance on improvement without personal commentary or perfectionist themes.
- Avoid giving feedback about something that can’t be changed.
- Deliver feedback in ways that suit young peoples’ developmental stages, allowing them to absorb it calmly.
- Provide specific and positive feedback to support wellbeing and promote positive change and growth.



‘Feeling’

Allowing emotions to flow without suppressing them.

Acknowledging your emotions and expressing them in healthy ways.



Activities

Our brains act like Velcro for the 'bad' stuff and repellent for the 'good' stuff. This metaphor helps explain our brains are hardwired to spend more time focusing on painful or threatening events we want to change or avoid, rather than centring on pleasurable and positive experiences.

Keep reminders of good feedback or document at least one 'good' feedback point for every 'bad'.

Develop group rules and boundaries around feedback processes.

Introduce mindfulness and self-compassion activities to foster constructive feedback.



- Use feedback as an opportunity to help young people develop the skills for self-evaluation in both their art form and social and emotional competencies.
- Young people, especially Aboriginal youth, may be primed by their families' experiences of discrimination to perceive racism in their interactions. This can lead to feelings of victimisation, making it difficult for them to receive feedback, even when it's constructive and not rooted in racism. This sensitivity requires a careful and culturally respectful approach.

Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- How does it feel to share and receive feedback?
- How do you use feedback to enhance your art form?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How do you deliver feedback (informally and formally; privately and publicly)? Public delivery of feedback can result in shame and humiliation.
- How can you align feedback processes to the Wellbeing Factors?
- How can you openly discuss the feedback processes with your young people?
- How can you support your young people to handle and respond to feedback in beneficial ways?



Expressing Emotions

When we let our emotions flow, we build a strong base for social and emotional wellbeing. The arts provide opportunities to help us express what's inside and explore new experiences. Creative outlets not only help us process emotions but also assist us to regulate and understand them. It's all about feeling empowered and balanced!

Key messages

For young people

- You don't always have to express emotions verbally – the arts provide creative outlets for expressing feelings.
- Emotions are a natural and important part of being human.
- Acknowledge your emotions and express them in healthy ways.
- As you grow older, you get better at managing emotions.
- Suppressing emotions can lead to stress and sadness.
- Every emotion tells you something important about yourself or your situation.
- There are no good or bad emotions, but there are healthy and unhealthy ways to express and act on them.
- Find healthy ways to express and act on emotions.
- “Fake it till you make it” works- acting as if you feel a certain way can shift your emotions.

For teaching artists

- After engaging in intense emotional expression in creative work, ensure young people have time to wind down and return to a grounded emotional state afterwards.



'Feeling'

Allowing emotions to flow without suppressing them.

Acknowledging your emotions and expressing them in healthy ways.



Supports

The arts class can be a refuge or distraction for young people dealing with challenges at school or home. Expressing emotions in a class setting can be tough, leading to visible distress or external struggles being shared.

Teaching artists need to offer supportive responses when young people share distress and disclosures. Collaborate with colleagues to determine the best approach and recognise when external services are necessary.

For Aboriginal youth, sorry business is a significant part of their culture, influenced by historical events and elevated mortality rates. Address their higher experiences of death and grief by providing culturally sensitive emotional outlets.

Be continually guided by Aboriginal people.

- Be genuine and authentic in your emotional interactions with young people to avoid 'emotion labour', which can lead to exhaustion and burnout.
- Young people who've experienced trauma may struggle with recognising emotions and can feel overwhelmed. Trauma can lead to emotion dysregulation.
- Young people need support to express their emotions creatively.
- Creating a safe space for emotional expression is crucial.
- For Aboriginal young people, involving Elders and connecting to culture helps create a safe emotional space.

Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

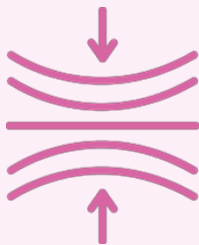
- What are you feeling right now? Is there a difference between how you feel inside and what you show on the outside? When do you think it is ok to keep your emotions inside?
- What do emotions feel like in your body? For example, how does sadness, anger, joy, disgust etc. feel. Where do you feel these emotions, and what might others notice when you experience them?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How am I providing an environment wherein young people feel safe to express their emotions?
- Are there young people who appear to struggle to be aware of, and express their emotions? What strategies can I put in place to specifically help those young people?
- Am I aware of my emotions throughout the day and my need for emotional expression?



'Feeling'

Allowing emotions to flow without suppressing them.

Acknowledging your emotions and expressing them in healthy ways.



Managing Pressure

Stress happens – it's natural! The key is learning to stay in the 'Optimal Stress Zone', where challenges motivate us without being overwhelming. We can learn strategies to help stay in the optimal stress zone – to find balance and perform at our best!

Key messages

For young people

- It is helpful to know which stress zone you're in.
- Find strategies that work for you to relieve stress – like breathing exercises, creative activities, or talking with someone.
- Being in nature, especially for Aboriginal people, can relieve stress through connection to Country.
- Sometimes, we 'take on' the stress of others. You can be compassionate without being overwhelmed by their feelings.

For teaching artists

- Recognise that coping strategies can be culturally based. For example, some Aboriginal people may rely more on emotional expression, communication, and collective coping.
- Help individuals discover what works for them to relieve their stress – it's different for everyone.
- Acknowledge the stress Aboriginal people feel due to racism and intergenerational trauma. Culturally relevant stress-relief strategies are essential.

Supports

Be aware of indicators of stress in young people, which can manifest as withdrawal, acting out, being oppositional, or uncooperative. Use 'perspective taking' when young people are showing signs of unhelpful stress. What is the worst possible thing that could happen if I attempt this task?

Performance-related stress responses (and activities to either increase or reduce stress to get into Optimal Zone) will be diverse, so group activities might need differentiation.

For young people overwhelmed by a task, break down the task into smaller achievable goals. Identify the elements of a task they can already do and focus their attention on the zone of proximal development: where they can perform with support or scaffolding.

Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- How do you know when you are feeling stressed?
- Think of a time when you experienced a stressful situation. What strengths did you use to handle that situation? What did you learn from that experience?
- When you are under-stressed or over-stressed, what activities or strategies help you to move into your Optimal Zone for performance?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each

arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Can you break down the task into smaller more manageable chunks? Which young people in my arts sessions need scaffolding and who can work on the task independently? Are there sub-skills that can be taught?
- Are there young people who may need a more intense focus on stress-relief strategies? How can this be provided?
- What stress-relief strategies do you use? Are they effective or do you need to explore and incorporate additional techniques?





Compassion

Compassion means understanding that pain and distress are natural parts of being human – and responding with kindness. Self-compassion – holding one’s pain with a sense of warmth, connection, and concern – helps protect against stress and reminds us that mistakes don’t define us.

Key messages



‘Feeling’

Allowing emotions to flow without suppressing them.

Acknowledging your emotions and expressing them in healthy ways.



For young people

- Self-compassion means treating yourself kindly when things don’t go well.
- It’s about being aware of your feelings and treating yourself with warmth, care, and understanding – just as you would a friend.
- For Aboriginal people, self-compassion can involve collective compassion, recognising intergenerational or historical trauma, and feeling compassion for oneself and others who’ve experienced racism and trauma.

For teaching artists

- Practice self-compassion to enhance your ability to respond effectively to the needs of young people.
- Compassion and learning from mistakes are paired Wellbeing Factors and should be presented as interconnected.

Activities

Recall someone you care about.

Now, imagine a situation where that person feels like they completely messed up a performance and is upset about it.

What are some compassionate things you could say or do for them?

Next, imagine the person who is upset is you.

What would it be like to do those same compassionate acts for yourself?



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- Why do you think people are more compassionate to other people than to themselves?
- What have you said to yourself in the past when you have made a mistake?
- What does it feel like to be kind to yourself?
- How can you balance being critical with also being compassionate during times of struggle, such as when you've felt rejected or disappointed?



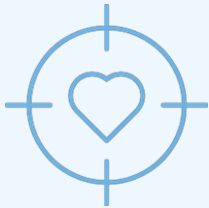
Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each

- arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor
- Discuss with young people how the practice of self-compassion may be helpful or unhelpful in their lives. Revisit and discuss whether they have used this practice.
- Reflect on your use of self-compassion... make a note of your response when something doesn't turn out as planned in your life.

Supports

Young people may struggle to engage with compassion themes when emotionally activated. Returning to a state of regulation or calmness before overtly using compassion activities may help.



'Discovering'

Learning about yourself through an adaptive form of risk-taking that results in building strengths, discovering your values, and identifying ways to be the person you want to be.



Doing what I value

Values are what matters most to us – they guide our thoughts, actions, and help us find meaning. By exploring what's important, we can discover who we want to be and how to get there! When actions match values, it creates balance and boosts wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

- A value is something you do because it is important to you, not because someone else wants you to do it.
- Values are not the same as goals. You may never 'arrive' at a value, but they help keep you going in a direction that is meaningful for you.

For teaching artists

- Encourage young people to explore their values language (avoiding imposing values on them).
- Promote values talk as a way for young people to engage with the world and add meaning to their lives.
- Highlight that values are fluid and can change in form or function.
- Explain that values are about how people want to act – not the outcomes they want to achieve.
- Respect that Aboriginal values may be viewed from a community perspective, rather than an individual one.

Activities

Art forms provide many opportunities for young people to create something that represents their vision of a valued life or their values. This may require the teaching artist to help develop the language around what young people value, what sort of life they would like to live etc..

Identify personal or community values without judgment. Emphasise connecting actions with values.

Link positive and negative outcomes related to their values using various art forms.

Practice problem-solving when it is difficult to line up values and actions. Represent solutions through various art forms.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What things do you care about?
- What values are important to you, and how are they similar or different to others?
- What makes a good life for you?
- What action goes with your value?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How well can young people articulate their values? Is this something that needs revisiting?

Supports

Values can be misunderstood as preferences or behaviours.

Some young people may have obstacles beyond their control, making it challenging to align their values and actions. They may feel shame about revealing their living situation and therefore the focus should be on achievable actions.



Positive Body Image

Body image refers to the thoughts and feelings we have about our bodies. It's not about perfection, but about accepting your body is yours and feeling comfortable in it. It's important to recognise the unrealistic expectations society has about how bodies should look, embrace your uniqueness and be proud of who you are.



'Discovering'

Learning about yourself through an adaptive form of risk-taking that results in building strengths, discovering your values, and identifying ways to be the person you want to be.



Key messages

For young people

- Bodies are unique and amazing in what they can do. (Focus more on what bodies can do, rather than what they look like).
- Body image is about how you feel inside and does not always align with physical appearance.
- Your body is unique – your differences give you style and personality.
- True beauty is not skin deep! It's about your inner qualities and how you express yourself, not how you look on the outside.

For teaching artists

- Reflect on your body image and how it influences what you say to young people engaged in your arts sessions.

Activities

Self-compassion is a powerful tool in combatting perfectionism often tied to poor body image. Self-compassion activities have been shown to improve anxiety and body image.

Arts activities where young people learn to **replace their critical voice with a compassionate voice** will help build positive body image.

Positive affirmations as well as **kinesthetic imagery** when exploring movement has been shown to improve body image.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What makes up 'you'?
- What do you appreciate about your body?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Reflect on the messages you convey to young people engaged in your arts session about their bodies through your words, actions, and the way you feel about your body.
- If you need support for improving your body image, the Butterfly Foundation have lots of great resources.

Supports

It is important for teaching artists to action any concerns regarding the wellbeing of young people. Refer to your organisations best-practice guidelines for the appropriate support avenues.



'Discovering'

Learning about yourself through an adaptive form of risk-taking that results in building strengths, discovering your values, and identifying ways to be the person you want to be.



Learning from Mistakes

To learn and thrive, young people need to feel safe making mistakes. Psychological safety, which includes cultural safety, means knowing you won't be teased or judged for speaking up or messing up. When this safety is in place, confidence, creativity, problem-solving and resilience bloom. Mistakes become challenges, not stressors – which boosts our social and emotional wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

- We learn to be creative by embracing mistakes.
- View mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.
- Practice self-compassion when dealing with a mistake.
- Give yourself time to think about what the mistake can teach you and then move forward!

For teaching artists

- Encourage self-compassion in young people to help them learn from mistakes.
- Show young people that you make mistakes and how you learn from them.
- Focus on creating a psychologically safe environment. Discuss with young people what psychological safety means to them and how to achieve it.

Activities

Encourage the group to brainstorm ideas on how to **reduce the fear of failure**.

Discuss mistakes openly and what can be learned from them.

Explain how learning takes place and how the brain needs mistakes to learn and grow.

Share examples of famous 'mistakes' leading to amazing discoveries.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What have you said (or thought!) when someone else has made a mistake?
- When you make a mistake, what does the voice in your head tell you?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Do you have strategies in place to help those young people who appear afraid to make mistakes?
- How is perfectionist or highly self-critical behaviour perpetuated in your cohorts?
- Do you have strategies in place to help young people who appear to be highly perfectionist and/or highly self-critical?

Supports

Perfectionism can be adaptive or maladaptive. Some young people who have little experience with failure may struggle to cope with mistakes. They will need support to see the value of making mistakes and the learning opportunities that go along with them.



Trying Something New

New experiences help young people build skills, discover who they are, and expand their social network. Taking positive risks can lead to growth and change, strengthening brain pathways and developing new ones. These brain changes help young people gain new perspectives and handle challenges.



'Discovering'

Learning about yourself through an adaptive form of risk-taking that results in building strengths, discovering your values, and identifying ways to be the person you want to be.



Key messages

For young people

- Change is a natural part of life.
- Trying new things and building strengths helps you to learn about yourself and shape who you'll become.
- When trying new things, consider whether they expand your life and align with your values.

For teaching artists

- Encourage young people to explore and test their strengths. Focusing on their strengths helps them feel valued and believed in.
- Trying new activities is a way for young people to discover what they care about and what energises them, helping them develop their values.

Activities

Have young people **identify one of their strengths** and what they would like to do with their strengths now and in the future.

Identify challenges they may have along the way.

In groups of three present a short skit representing one person's identified strengths and future projection.



Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions

- How do you feel when you attempt something new? Do you experience thoughts or emotions that stop you from trying something new?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Reflect on your attitude toward trying something new. Are you able to overcome the voice in your head that may discourage you from trying something new out of fear of failure?
- What are your strengths? Do you see opportunities to further develop and use these strengths in your current life?



Positive Peer Comparison

Comparing ourselves to others is normal, it's an evolutionary skill that has helped us survive – but it's important to focus on strengths! Promote positive peer comparisons by highlighting what makes everyone unique and supporting young people to work closely with others.



'Connecting'

Building emotional or social connections allows you to be your authentic self, explore commonalities with others, embrace your individuality, and foster a sense of belonging within a community.



Key messages

For young people

- Comparing yourself to others is natural- it helps us learn and adapt.
- How you evaluate yourself can change in response to stress or competition.
- We often compare ourselves to those we think are better, even if it hurts our wellbeing.
- While comparison can be beneficial, too much can affect your wellbeing.
- Self-comparison and setting personal goals are much healthier than constantly comparing yourself to others.

For teaching artists

- Create opportunities for young people to collaborate. This allows them to balance negative comparisons by seeing the value in learning from others and getting to know their peers 'close up'.

Activities

Activities that involve **noticing similarities and differences**

between individuals, and between different groups, including **values, interests, preferences and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses** are beneficial in developing healthy peer comparisons.

Help young people to identify their strengths and uniqueness and how they can use their strengths to progress towards their goals.



Key messages

For teaching artists

- Encourage young people to be mindful of their comparisons to others and remind them that everyone has unique experiences and skills.
- Utilise compassion-focused techniques to help young people circuit break overly critical interpretations of self or others.

Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions

- What are the things that make you uniquely you?
- When does comparison with others feel ok for you?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Are you modelling healthy social comparing?
- Are you encouraging young people engaged in your arts sessions to be themselves in how you speak and act?





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Listening

Active Listening isn't just about hearing – it's about picking up on emotions too! Staying neutral, reflecting on what you hear, and use nonverbal signals (body language) shows you are truly listening.

Key messages

For young people

- Active listening helps you connect and understand others.
- It improves others' wellbeing by making them feel valued.
- Active listening builds trust.
- It's about focusing on the other person rather than yourself.

For teaching artists

- Teach active listening to young people to enhance their social and emotional wellbeing.
- Active listening fosters mindful thinking, reducing anxiety and depression while promoting empathy.

Activities

A variety of arts-related activities can be used where individuals are **encouraged to listen to the thoughts and experiences of another person and reflect on their own listening skills** (e.g., interviewing an actor about how they take on roles).

Model active listening skills when listening to young people.



Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- When someone else is talking, are you listening to them or are you thinking about how you will respond or your own similar experiences?
- Is it obvious to you when other people aren't listening to what you have to say?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each

- arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How well do you listen to young people without judgement or feeling the need to come up with a solution?
- How comfortable do you feel as a listener?
- Do you always need to come up with a solution or are young people content with having their story heard?

Supports

Young people often find it difficult to listen to other perspectives when there is conflict. When involved in conflict resolution, ask individuals to tell their side of the story in chronological order while the other listens without interruption. The other individual then tells the story from their perspective without interruption. Encourage young people to consider the similarities and differences between stories. By actively listening and engaging in this process, conflict can often be resolved without further action.



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Empathising

Being able to see the world through someone else's eyes is super powerful! It helps boost self-esteem, grow gratitude, and squash envy. Adolescents who master this skill are better at handling conflicts, building trust, and making smart choices. Perspective-taking is key to social and emotional wellbeing – and it even helps young people stay clear of risky behaviours.

Key messages

For young people

- We have more in common with others than we often think.
- Empathy helps you feel connected to others, which is good for your wellbeing.
- It starts with understanding another person's perspective.
- Showing empathy boosts oxytocin in your body, which increases energy and relieves stress.

For teaching artists

- Foster emotional development to support empathy growth.
- Emotional regulation allows a young person to face uncomfortable emotions of others in a healthy way. Promote strategies to regulate negative emotions.
- Ensure youth are aware that the ability to 'read' faces well is an important part of developing empathy.

Key messages

For teaching artists

- Cultivate listening skills to develop empathy, starting with their feelings and thoughts and then those of others.
- Encourage ongoing practice in imagining and perceiving another's perspective, as repeated efforts are more effective than occasional ones.
- Model desired values. Empathy training research shows when teaching artists model desired values, young people are more likely to adopt these compared to merely being instructed to behave in a certain way.

Activities

Activities that **explore commonalities** between people are a good starting point for encouraging empathy.

Likewise, as are activities where young people are **actively imagining situations** involving others.

Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions

- Based on what you can see (body language etc.) what do you think that person is likely to be feeling?



Reflection questions for teaching artists

To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- Am I balancing a focus on emotional empathy with cognitive and compassionate empathy?
- How am I displaying empathy in my classes?





Working in groups

Group work requires different skills than working solo. Trying out different group roles (i.e., the facilitator, summariser, recorder, or presenter) develops an awareness of self and others and builds relationship skills.



'Connecting'

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Key messages

For young people

- Groups with different members can thrive when everyone respects each other.
- Reflecting on how your group works together improves group functioning.
- We naturally fall into specific roles in a group - trying new roles helps you grow.

For teaching artists

- Assist young people to recognise their natural roles to enhance self-awareness.
- Encourage young people to experiment with different roles to develop social understanding and expand their social and emotional wellbeing skills.

Activities

Use Belbin's model to **identify the role young people play in groups:**

thinkers, action, and social roles.

Do you take on different roles in different groups?

Help young people see what roles they are more suited to and give them opportunities to try different roles.



Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions



- What role do you commonly take when in a group?
- What makes a group function well? Are these things that group members have control over?

Reflection questions for teaching artists



To reflect on during or after each arts session. It is important you also develop your competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- What role do you take when you are teaching or instructing? Are you always the facilitator? Can you alternate roles so that facilitation is shared? Is everyone accepted as equal members of the group?
- What roles do you take in teams within your organisation?
- Do you get opportunities to try out different roles?

Supports

Young people are still learning their own skills and qualities, so group roles can be dynamic. Consider how to encourage risk-taking in different roles.