



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

Wellbeing Factor Cards

Version 2
2024



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 be able 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 choose to 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'

Taking the time to internally reflect on your responses to experiences and includes recognising your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses through the skills of 'noticing'.



In the zone

"In the zone" or "flow" refers to complete immersion in an activity or process, boosting energy and fostering creativity. This state is important for wellbeing and occurs when engaging in tasks that challenge one's skills without overwhelming them. An important aspect of being in the zone is getting immediate feedback from the task itself, rather than the instructor.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Recognising moments of being in the zone helps develop your own self-awareness.
- Being in the zone contributes to mental and physical wellbeing.
- Staying in the zone is facilitated by letting your thoughts come and go without getting caught up in them.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Set clear goals and create a focused environment to facilitate being in the zone.
- Encourage mindfulness as a valuable alternative if in the zone seems challenging.
- Provide well-pitched challenges (not too challenging and not too easy) to promote being in the zone.
- Encourage group flow to improve team effectiveness, productivity, performance, and capabilities.

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 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**.

One way group flow can be achieved is through improvisation.



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 own 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?

Self-awareness: Emotions

Emotion awareness is the ability to understand our own emotions and those of others. Being aware of our emotions helps us communicate our emotions to others and helps us to understand others better.

Developing emotion awareness starts with recognizing how an emotion feels in your body and then recognizing the presence of single emotions. With increased awareness, we can acknowledge experiencing multiple emotions at the same time and express them using metaphors.

It is impossible to avoid uncomfortable emotions in life, like anger and sadness. However, these emotions are an important part of life and are vital to our mental health. Recognising these emotions is the first step in accepting them.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- You don't have to dwell on your emotions or constantly talk about how you feel.
- Emotional awareness means recognising, respecting, and accepting your feelings as they happen.
- Emotion expression can be private, happening in our minds, as well as outward expression.
- Accepting uncomfortable emotions is important for our wellbeing and makes them less overwhelming in the future.
- Sharing your feelings with someone you feel safe with is a good way to practise putting emotions into words; a skill that helps us feel closer to people (and improves with practice!)



'Tuning In'

Taking the time to internally reflect on your responses to experiences and includes recognising your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses through the skills of 'noticing'.



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 the emotion in your body - what does it feel like - take deep breaths as you exhale - 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.



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

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

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 own competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor
- Do you identify and manage your own 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'

Taking the time to internally reflect on your responses to experiences and includes recognising your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses through the skills of 'noticing'.



Self-awareness: Thoughts

Humans on average have over 60,000 thoughts per day; many are automatic and unrelated to what we are doing. Thoughts alone hold no power, but when we invest our attention to them, they can feel real – triggering corresponding emotions. This connection between thoughts and feelings goes both ways - how we feel reflects what we're thinking and vice versa!

The arts offer a non-verbal way to express thoughts and feelings. When young people are given freedom to express their emotions through an art form, they can be guided to identify the thoughts they experienced.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Thoughts are just thoughts. Thinking something doesn't mean it is true or it will happen.
- It's natural to focus on things that are not good. It takes effort and practice to think about what is good.
- Learning to see the usefulness of thoughts is important – does this thought help solve the situation? Does this thought help you to be the sort of person you want to be?
- Rather than pushing away unpleasant thoughts, try to treat them simply as thoughts. This makes them less influential in making us feel bad.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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.

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 all different ways, it can help to diminish their power.



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Incorporate mindfulness into your teaching, focusing on your breath when thoughts are negatively affecting the way you feel.

Open-ended questions for young people

To be used in arts sessions

- What thoughts hinder you 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 own 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'

Taking the time to internally reflect on your responses to experiences and includes recognising your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses through the skills of 'noticing'.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to notice your attention has wandered, maybe to a thought or a feeling, and being able to put that attention back onto whatever we want our attention to be on.

It involves being non-judgemental and not getting carried away with your thoughts. Mindfulness is skill that requires practice. Just like any other skill, you can be given an instruction and feedback, but you're going to need to practice it.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Mindfulness is a skill that can be learnt and developed.
- Being mindful can help relieve stress and improve wellbeing.
- When practising mindfulness, gently bring your mind back if it wanders.
- Mindfulness involves being kind and forgiving towards yourself when your mind wanders.
- Mindfulness helps you detach from thoughts; watching them come and go - useful for thoughts that are not helping you live the life you would like.
- Regular mindfulness practice improves attention and focus.
- Mindfulness doesn't have to be done in a sitting position. Mindfulness can also be conducted through movement.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Introduce mindfulness to children and adolescents gradually, building on a little at a time.

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 let them pass.

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

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



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Develop your own mindfulness practice to enhance your own wellbeing and effectively support the young people you teach.

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 own 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.

Sensory Awareness

Sensory awareness gives us a sense of who we are, where we are and what's happening around us. Our senses include sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, body awareness (proprioception), balance and movement (vestibular), and our internal body sense (interoception). Getting better at using our senses helps us connect with the world and boosts our overall wellbeing. For example, paying attention to what we're seeing, hearing, or feeling, helps us enjoy things more. Also, when we're stressed, paying attention to our senses can help us feel better. Everyone experiences sensations in their own way. When you know what you like and what feels good to you, you can use specific strategies to help you return to your optimal stress zone and continue to function and thrive throughout your day.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Taking a moment to tune into to your senses can give your mind a much-needed break. Even a short break from mental chatter helps you to calm down.
- Understanding which senses you like and what helps you feel calm can be really useful.
- Learning about your own body signals can help you understand and regulate your emotions.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

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



'Tuning In'

Taking the time to internally reflect on your responses to experiences and includes recognising your emotions, thoughts, and physical responses through the skills of 'noticing'.



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 really 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 own 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 is essential for growth but must be delivered constructively and kindly to ensure it is not viewed as criticism. Young people can be sensitive to criticism, especially during stressful times or during developmental stages. However, they can learn to look at feedback objectively and find its value.

In the arts, feedback is closely connected to the creative processes. It can come from individuals or groups, directed towards ourselves, or something we notice in another person's work. Feedback can be given at different times and from different perspectives, such as from the perspective of performers, observers, or directors. Not only does feedback help young people improve technical skills, but it also enhances their social and emotional wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Try to view feedback as an opportunity for growth, focusing on what is valuable rather than feeling criticised.
- When giving feedback to others, consider how you prefer to receive feedback and find the best way to support them.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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.



'Feeling'

Allowing the feelings that accompany emotions and thoughts to flow without trying to suppress them, acknowledging your emotions, and expressing them appropriately.



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.



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Provide specific and positive feedback to support wellbeing and promote positive change and growth
- 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.
- Deliver feedback in ways that suit young peoples' developmental stages, allowing them to absorb it calmly.

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 own 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?



‘Feeling’

Allowing the feelings that accompany emotions and thoughts to flow without trying to suppress them, acknowledging your emotions, and expressing them appropriately.



Activities

There will be multiple opportunities to connect young people with their emotions and help them find ways to express these through their art form. Activities such as **journaling or drawing** can assist young people express themselves creatively.

Expressing Emotions

The arts give us a form and structure for emotional expression as they provide opportunities to express our inner life and explore experiences different to our own. Creative work can help us process and release emotions, benefiting our overall wellbeing. Emotions that are freely experienced and expressed can flow without negatively impacting our health. Suppressing emotions can have negative effects on our mental and physical health. Our bodies and brains take on the effects of performing emotional experiences similar to how they do in ‘real life’. Making yourself smile and laugh can help shift your emotional state to feeling happier.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Emotions are a natural and helpful part of being human, and it’s essential to acknowledge and express them.
- As we grow older, we learn to regulate how we express our emotions more effectively.
- Avoiding uncomfortable feelings, or pretending we don’t feel the way we do, can backfire.
- “Fake it ‘til you make it” can actually work, as portraying or inducing emotional expression can shift your authentic emotional state.
- Every emotion tells us something about ourselves and our situation. It’s important to acknowledge and accept what we feel.
- There are no good or bad emotions, but there are healthy and unhealthy ways to express and act on them. Individuals can explore their own healthy ways of expressing and acting on emotions.

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.



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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.
- Be genuine and authentic in your emotional interactions with young people to avoid 'emotion labour', which can lead to exhaustion and burnout.

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, 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 own 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 aware of my own emotions throughout the day and my need for emotional expression?

Managing Pressure

Stress is a natural part of being human - we cannot avoid stress, rather we can feel more, or less resilient to its effects at different times of our life. Stress can take two forms: threat and challenge. Threat stress involves feelings of apprehension and fear – experienced when feeling overwhelmed or at risk of harm. There are signs of unhelpful threat stress, such as changes in body sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Challenge stress arises from excitement or motivation to tackle a particular task.

According to the Yerks-Dodson Law, we operate in three stress zones: an ‘Optimal Stress Zone’ where we perform at our best, an ‘Under-Stressed Zone’ with too little stress for optimal performance, and an ‘Over-Stressed Zone’ with too much stress, hindering performance.

Key messages

For young people

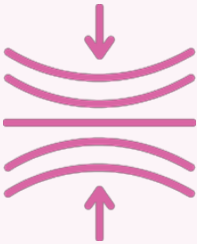
Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Choose positive stress coping strategies for long-term relief, such as breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, problem-solving, creativity, being imaginative, and talking with someone.
- Awareness of different stress zones is important for performing at our best in the arts and for our general social and emotional wellbeing.
- We have a tendency sometimes to ‘take on’ the stress of other people. Show compassion and give them the opportunity to express how they feel without being consumed by their feelings.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Recognise that coping strategies can be culturally based. For example, some Aboriginal people may rely more on emotion expression, communication, and collective coping.



‘Feeling’

Allowing the feelings that accompany emotions and thoughts to flow without trying to suppress them, acknowledging your emotions, and expressing them appropriately.



Activities

Integrate stress relief strategies into your sessions - such as breath work, stretching, and progressive muscle relaxation.

Supports

Be aware of indicators of stress in young people, which can manifest as withdrawal, to 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 own 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?





'Feeling'

Allowing the feelings that accompany emotions and thoughts to flow without trying to suppress them, acknowledging your emotions, and expressing them appropriately.



Compassion

Compassion is the act of acknowledging and recognising that pain and distress are a natural part of being human. It involves responding to these feelings with kindness and a desire to reduce the pain. When directed inward, this is called self-compassion – which means holding one's feelings of suffering with a sense of warmth, connection, and concern. Self-compassion acts as a protective factor for young people experiencing stress. People who practice self-compassion understand that their weaknesses and mistakes do not define them, and their self-worth is not dependent on evaluations and outcomes.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Imperfection is a shared aspect of the human experience.
- Suffering, failure, and disappointment are things we all go through. You don't need to be hard on yourself to improve.
- Compassion is the opposite to criticism.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Practice self-compassion to enhance your ability to respond effectively to the needs of young people.

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

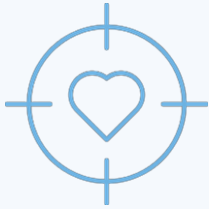
To reflect on during or after each

arts session. It is important you also develop your own 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 own 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 own values, and identifying ways to be the person you want to be.



Doing what I value

Values are the things that people find important in their lives. They serve as guiding principles in a person's life. Values are 'fundamental attitudes guiding our thinking and behaviour. They produce the belief that life is meaningful, and they serve as a measure of how meaningful one's actions are, that is, consistent with that person's value system'.

Providing opportunities for young people to investigate what is important to them, what sort of person they would like to be, and what actions will get them there, helps them to live in a way wherein their values and actions or behaviours are in alignment. This is important for their wellbeing.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your 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

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Encourage young people to explore their own 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 life.
- 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.

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.



Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Respect that Aboriginal values may be viewed from a community perspective, rather than an individual one.

Open-ended questions for young people



To be used in arts sessions

- What things do you really 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 own competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

- How well can young people articulate their own 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.



‘Discovering’

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



Positive Body Image

Body image refers to the thoughts and feelings we have about our bodies, whether positive or negative. Both males and females develop body image, and it can be a mix of positive and negative body image perceptions at the same time. In Western culture, children as young as three years of age already associate attractiveness with being thin for women and muscular for men.

Having a positive body image means feeling comfortable with one’s appearance and viewing the body based on its functionality rather than its form. It doesn’t mean you avoid feeling insecure or think your body is perfect, but you will be able to acknowledge any insecurities and accept your body is yours. Societal beauty standards exist in all cultures, and they can be unhelpful by promoting unrealistic expectations and discouraging uniqueness.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your 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

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Reflect on your own 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 **express critical voice and replace it with 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 own 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 own body.
- If you need support for improving your own body image, the Butterfly Foundation have lots of great resources.

Supports

It is important for teaching artists to escalate any concerns regarding the wellbeing of young people. Refer to the References and Links section of the SEW-Arts website for support avenues.



‘Discovering’

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



Learning from Mistakes

Young people need to feel safe enough to make mistakes to learn and grow. This is known as having psychological safety, or the belief you will not be humiliated or teased for voicing your ideas, questions, and admitting to one’s mistakes. There is a strong relationship between psychological safety and wellbeing.

When children and adults feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to take risks, ask questions, welcome diverse opinions, and find creative solutions to problems. Resilient children see mistakes, setbacks, and obstacles as challenges to confront, rather than stressors to avoid. Learning from mistakes activates creativity.

Psychological safety includes cultural safety. In a culturally safe environment, learners feel respected for their unique cultural background and can freely express themselves without judgement or pressure to represent their entire group. Unequal power relations can be openly discussed and challenged in a supportive manner.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your 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

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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.

Activities

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

Engage in activities that help young people **step aside and listen to the voice in their heads**.

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 own 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

Young people benefit from engaging in novel, varied and exploratory activities. These activities help them learn about their environment, develop new skills, build new relationships, and expand their social network. While some may view adolescent risk taking as abnormal, it's actually a natural phase observed in other animal species, characterised by risk-taking, sensation seeking, seeking novelty, and changing interactions with peers.



'Discovering'

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



Taking risks during adolescence is part of the natural inclination to explore and grow. It helps adolescents discover their identity, expand their skills, and eventually become independent. Positive risk taking involves uncertainty or fear but offers the potential for a positive outcome or skill development.

Neurologists explain that learning a new skill or trying something new physically alters the brain structures. This process stimulates neurons, leading to the formation of more neural pathways. With more neural pathways, brain impulses can travel faster, helping gain new perspectives and handle various challenges.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Even if you see yourself as fixed and not changing, remember that change is a natural part of life. Trying new things and developing your strengths allows you to actively shape who you become.
- When trying new things, reflect on whether they expand your life and possibilities. Consider if they align with your values or contribute to what you care about.

Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

Activities

Have young people **identify one of their strengths** and what they would like to do with these strengths now and into 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.

- 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.

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 own competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor
- Reflect on your own 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

Noticing and understanding how we relate to others is a natural and important aspect of being human. From an evolutionary perspective, this awareness has helped us adapt and survive. Nowadays, our brain still uses this skill to assess ourselves by comparing to others. However, in modern society, this process can have negative effects. For example, we might become pre-occupied with comparing ourselves to others and find it difficult to focus on anything else. The beliefs we form (about ourselves and others) as a result of comparisons might become stuck, unhelpful or critical; or we might resort to unhealthy ways to try to change ourselves.

We can promote positive peer comparisons by highlighting the unique strengths that each person has. Group work is important as it allows young people the opportunity to appreciate the unique skills and contributions each person brings to the group.

Key messages

‘Connecting’

Developing emotional or social bonds to allow you to be authentic, explore commonalities with others, and embrace your individuality.



For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Comparing ourselves to others is a natural human behaviour that helps us learn and adapt as a group. However, how we evaluate ourselves in comparison to others can change at different time points and contexts, especially during times of stress or competition.
- We often compare ourselves to those who seem better than us, even if it negatively affects how we feel about ourselves.
- While comparing ourselves to others can be beneficial, excessive comparison can lead to problems.
- Self-comparison, setting personal goals and being aware of your progress is much better for your wellbeing than constant comparisons with others.

Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

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 own strengths and uniqueness and how they can use their strengths to progress towards their goals.



- Encourage young people to be mindful of their comparisons to others and remind them that everyone has unique experiences and skills.
- 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'.
- 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 own competencies in relation to your chosen Wellbeing Factor

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



Listening

Active Listening allows us to hear not only the words people are saying but also the emotions expressed through nonverbal cues. Both are important in understanding the whole message being communicated.

Remaining neutral is an important part of active listening. Additionally, reflecting what you have heard and using nonverbal signals can show you are listening.



‘Connecting’

Developing emotional or social bonds to allow you to be authentic, explore commonalities with others, and embrace your individuality.



Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Active listening is the foundation for any successful conversation.
- You can give verbal and non-verbal feedback to show you are listening.
- Active listening helps earn others’ trust and to understand their situations.
- Being an active listener means the conversation is more about the other person than you.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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 own 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.



Empathising

The development of perspective-taking or being able to imagine yourself in another person's situation, is crucial for the development of social behaviour and psychological wellbeing. Perspective-taking (an important part of empathising) is a protective factor, as adolescents with high perspective-taking skills tend to have higher self-esteem, greater levels of gratitude, and lower levels of envy. They also show higher levels of trust and reciprocity in group cooperation tasks. Perspective-taking is linked to compassionate concern, making it protective against risky behaviours. Adolescents proficient in perspective-taking are more able to navigate conflict situations skilfully using problem-solving approaches.

Perspective-taking is one aspect of empathy, alongside emotional empathy (feeling and sensing others' emotions) and compassionate empathy. Compassionate empathy uses emotional intelligence, allowing individuals to set helpful boundaries and avoid unhelpful mirroring or adopting others' emotions.

Key messages

'Connecting'

Developing emotional or social bonds to allow you to be authentic, explore commonalities with others, and embrace your individuality.



For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- We have a lot of similarities with other people – more than we often think.
- Thinking about the perspective of other people is important before reacting to what they have said or done.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- 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

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

Activities

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

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

- Cultivate listening skills to developing empathy, starting with their own 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, children are more likely to adopt these compared to merely being instructed to behave in a certain way.

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 own 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?





‘Connecting’

Developing emotional or social bonds to allow you to be authentic, explore commonalities with others, and embrace your individuality.



Working in groups

Working effectively in groups can require different skills compared to thriving as an individual. Belbin’s role theory outlines how people tend to take on particular roles when working in groups. These roles include action roles (task-orientated), social roles (relationship-orientated), and thinking roles (idea generation and problem solving).

While individuals may have a role they feel more comfortable in, they can naturally transition between roles. Some traditional group roles include the facilitator (leading discussion and ensuring every voice is heard), the summariser (clarifying and checking understanding), recorder (documenting group ideas and progress) and presenter (sharing group ideas to others).

In group work, it’s helpful to recognise that the process will have definite beginnings, middles, and endings. Understanding these stages can aid in effective collaboration and project completion.

Key messages

For young people

Messages to weave into conversations or build into the way you work with your young people

- Diversity is key to the functioning and thriving of creative groups.
- The capability of a group is different to the sum of the individual skills/capabilities.
- Group reflection on how well they are working as a group or team is important.
- Potentials and outcomes of group collaborations will be informed by the stage of group formation and the balance of roles adopted within the group.

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Assist young people to recognise their natural roles to enhance self-awareness.

Key messages

For teaching artists

Actions to consider when planning and conducting arts sessions

- Encourage young people to experiment with different roles to develop social understanding and expand their own 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 own 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.