



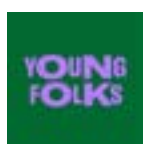
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CREATYOK

CREATIVE ARTS AS THERAPY
TOOLS IN YOUTH WORK



BOOKLET

CREATYOK

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media and smartphone use among youth has led to increased micro-scrolling and exposure to unrealistic portrayals of life, contributing to issues like anxiety, depression, and reduced social skills. Creative arts therapy has gained attention in youth work as an effective tool for emotional regulation, self-expression, and identity exploration. Through visual arts, music, theatre, and dance, young people can process emotions in a safe environment while developing interpersonal skills essential for meaningful relationships. Integrating creative arts in both formal and non-formal education fosters well-being and resilience in a digitally influenced world. This research explores the role of various art forms—dance, music, photography, videography, and theatre—as therapeutic tools within institutional settings in Cyprus.

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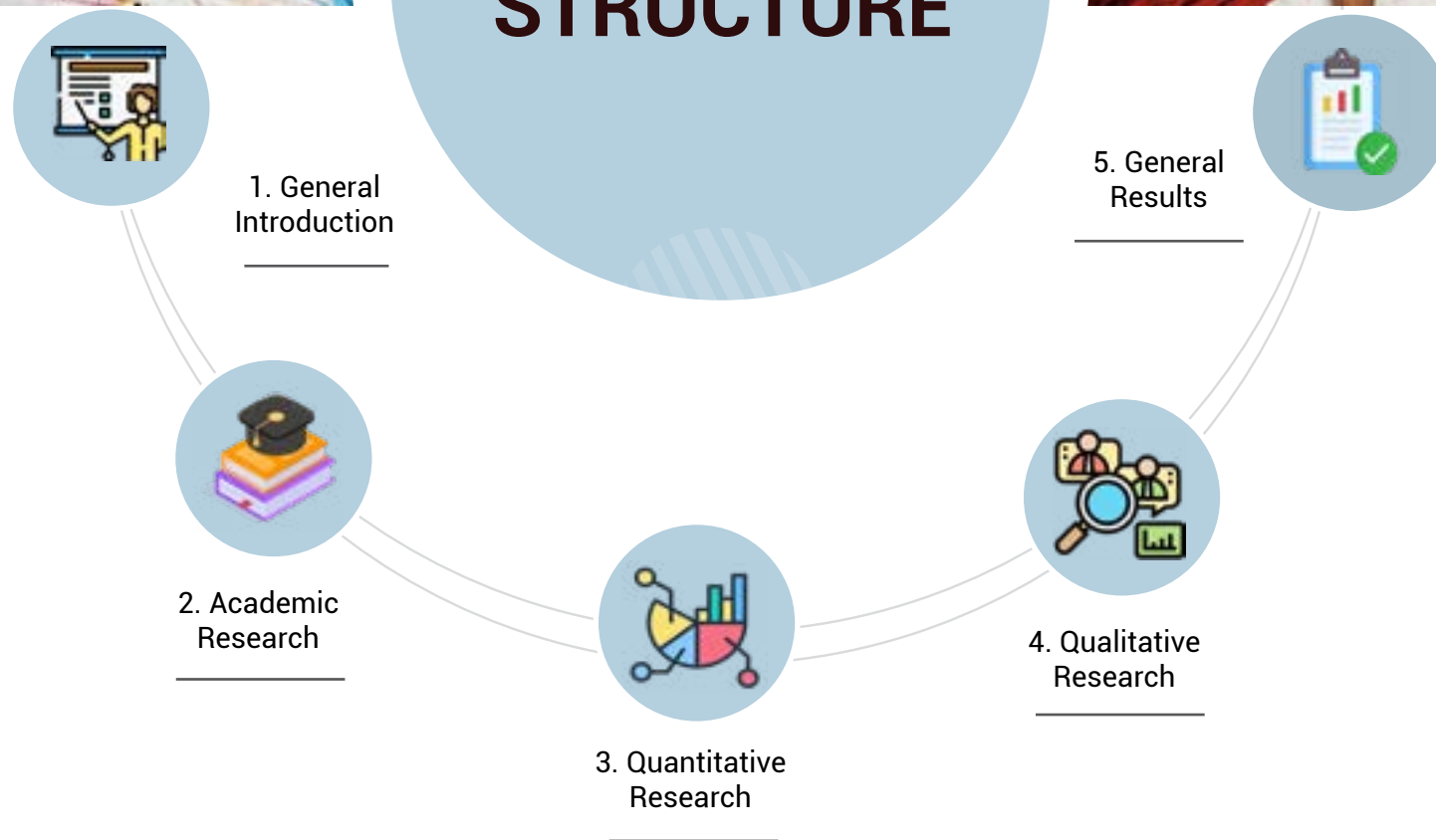


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RESEARCH STRUCTURE



The research on the use of creative arts as therapeutic tools in youth work across Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia takes a comprehensive approach, incorporating academic studies, country-specific insights on art therapy, best practice examples, surveys with youth and youth workers, expert interviews, and overall conclusions. However, due to varying levels of art therapy development in each country, certain aspects may be incomplete, as specific institutions or best practices may not yet exist in some regions.

Section 1: General Introduction



"Triangular Exploration of Art and Youth Well-being in Europe"

As part of the Erasmus+ KA210-YOU project "CREATYOK – Creative Arts as Therapy Tools in Youth Work", an innovative and cross-sectoral research initiative was undertaken to investigate the impact of creative arts on youth well-being across Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia. This holistic exploration combined academic research, quantitative data from over 260 youth and youth workers, and a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with therapists, youth workers, and facilitators. Together, these three methodologies offered a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how art-based practices—ranging from music, dance, and drama to visual arts and crafts—serve as powerful tools for emotional resilience, social inclusion, and personal development.

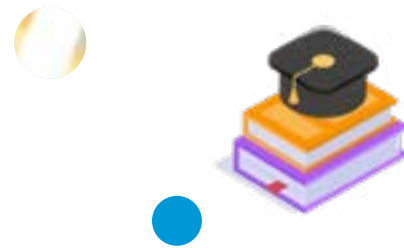
The academic dimension provided comparative insights into the institutional landscapes, policy frameworks, and professional recognition of art therapy in the three countries, highlighting Latvia's structured and state-recognized model, Poland's growing professional field, and Cyprus's vibrant but grassroots-driven practices. The quantitative research, conducted through multilingual surveys, captured youth perceptions and experiences with creative arts, revealing high emotional benefits but unequal access across rural and urban contexts. Finally, the qualitative interviews brought forward the lived experiences and voices of practitioners—sharing real-life stories of transformation, resistance, cultural identity, and healing, especially among vulnerable and marginalized youth groups.

By triangulating these perspectives, the project not only documents the current state of creative arts in youth work but also charts a roadmap for integrating these methods into wider youth development strategies. Through this work, CREATYOK affirms that when youth are given the tools to express, explore, and heal through art, they do more than create—they transform.

Section 2: Academic Research

"Art Therapy As a Tool"

This report presents a comparative analysis of the use of creative arts as therapy tools in youth work across three countries: Cyprus, Latvia, and Poland. The aim is to highlight effective practices, institutional roles, educational structures, and challenges to inform future program development and policy improvements. Creative arts therapies include modalities such as art, music, dance, drama, photography, and videography, offering holistic approaches to mental and emotional well-being.



CREATIVE ARTS AS THERAPY TOOLS IN YOUTH WORK: ACADEMIC RESEARCH		
CYPRUS	POLAND	LATVIA
OVERVIEW Application of creative arts in youth therapy is NGO-led and mainly grassroots: formal training and integration into education are lacking. Activities include visual arts, music, dance, photography, and theatre.	OVERVIEW Creative arts recognized across multiple modalities, with growing professional associations and educational programs. Notable focus on music therapy and inclusive initiatives.	Art Therapy Art therapy is legally recognized as a healthcare profession, with specialized university degrees and integration into health and social systems. Disciplines include visual-plastic arts, dance/movement, and drama therapy.
CHALLENGES Lack of state recognition and limited access in schools and rural areas	CHALLENGES - No official recognition of art therapy as a profession - Barriers to access for marginalized groups	CHALLENGES - Limited public awareness and understanding - Underrepresentation in mainstream education

COUNTRY 1: CYPRUS



Overview of Art Therapy in Cyprus:

In Cyprus, the application of creative arts as therapeutic tools for youth is present but somewhat limited in scope. Most activities occur within specialized institutions or are NGO-led, with therapy often emerging as a secondary benefit rather than a primary focus. While higher education programs support creative arts, access for youth, particularly in secondary school, remains inconsistent. Nonetheless, various forms of creative expression such as visual arts, music, dance, photography, and theatre are increasingly being used to promote emotional well-being and inclusion.

Art Education and Studio Practices:

Art therapists in Cyprus utilize a wide range of therapeutic methods including emotional regulation, self-awareness, and empowerment through artistic expression. Art studios and special schools offer individual and group therapy sessions using painting, sculpture, and mixed media. These tools enable youth to externalize emotions and develop coping strategies, especially those who struggle with verbal communication. Personalized approaches and symbolic exploration are central to therapy in educational and private settings.

Dance and Music:

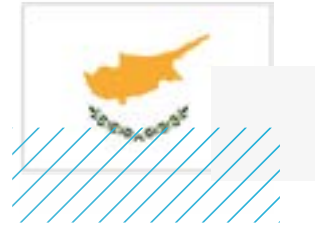
Inclusive dance and music schools play a pivotal role in enhancing self-esteem and social inclusion. Programs actively engage youth with and without disabilities, promoting respect for diversity. Participants report increased confidence, emotional expression, and social bonding. Creative development is encouraged alongside technical skills, with feedback from participants highlighting the therapeutic and social benefits of these inclusive experiences.

Photography and Videography:

Academic institutions in Cyprus support photography and videography programs that explore identity and self-expression. Workshops such as UCLAN's village photography project and EU-funded portrait programs for teenagers highlight the emotional and cultural impact of visual storytelling. Although not always marketed as therapeutic, these activities promote self-discovery and peer connection. Film festivals and youth programs also incorporate workshops that use cinematic tools to express personal and social narratives.



COUNTRY 1: CYPRUS



Theatre and Identity Exploration:

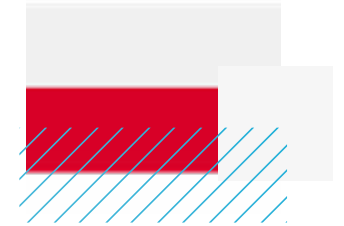
Theatre in Cyprus is a powerful medium for conflict resolution and identity building, especially in NGO-led programs. Initiatives by AHDR and YEU Cyprus use interactive theatre to address historical memory, reconciliation, and social justice. The 'Theatre of the Oppressed' method encourages youth to participate in active role-play, fostering empathy and critical thinking. Government-supported evening courses and affordable theatre access also promote engagement. Projects by THOK and other organizations focus on marginalized youth and rural populations, ensuring access through subsidized or free activities.

Conclusion:

While Cyprus demonstrates strong grassroots and institutional initiatives in creative arts therapy, broader integration into formal education is still developing. Most programs are NGO-driven and depend on project funding, often with limited awareness among youth. Expanding art therapy in schools and rural areas, increasing awareness of EU-funded opportunities, and securing consistent funding could significantly enhance access and impact. The current efforts lay a solid foundation for deeper integration of creative arts in youth mental health strategies.



COUNTRY 2: POLAND



Overview of Art Therapy in Poland:

Poland is experiencing a growing recognition of the value of creative arts in youth therapy. Various modalities such as visual arts, music, theater, dance, and photography are being used to support the emotional and social development of young people. Among these, music therapy is especially notable for its impact on children with disabilities, helping them communicate, engage socially, and regulate emotions. While momentum is building, challenges remain in terms of societal attitudes and accessibility, particularly for marginalized populations.

Music Therapy for Youth with Disabilities:

Music therapy is emerging as a vital intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental challenges. Therapists use instruments, rhythm, and vocalization to enable non-verbal expression, promote sensory integration, and foster social engagement. Research shows improved communication, emotional resilience, and self-confidence among participants. Despite these successes, systemic barriers such as limited resources and public stigma still hinder widespread access.

Institutional Involvement and Key Organizations:

Several institutions are playing a central role in expanding and professionalizing art therapy in Poland:

- ****Polskie Stowarzyszenie Terapii przez Sztukę (PSTS):**** Established in 2007, PSTS promotes research, practitioner training, and public advocacy for arts therapy. It also offers certification to ensure professional standards.
- ****FotArt:**** A collaborative network of therapists and artists focused on inclusive art therapy programs, especially for people with disabilities. Their initiatives reach across Poland, emphasizing creativity and empowerment.
- ****Playing with Art:**** A national educational project open to schools, libraries, and therapy centers. It fosters creativity through interactive art activities, supporting emotional well-being and community connection among youth.



COUNTRY 2: POLAND



Research and Literature Highlights:

Polish scholars have contributed significantly to the academic and practical understanding of art therapy:

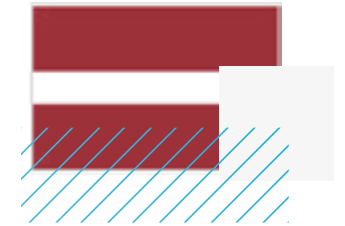
- **A. Korbit** emphasizes the integration of art therapy into education and explores its psychological impact.
- **R. Bartela** explores self-therapy through creative expression, providing both theoretical insight and case studies.
- **E. Józefowski** discusses the educational potential of art therapy and the need for professional standards in the field.
- **M. Sasina** examines how contemporary music enhances creativity in children and its broader cultural and cognitive benefits.
- **A. Kędzi** investigates theater as a space for youth self-expression and socio-cultural education.
- **G. Maciak** promotes project-based learning methods in early education to stimulate creativity and personal development.

Conclusion:

Poland's growing commitment to art therapy reflects a promising direction for youth mental health care. Through organizations like PSTS and FotArt, and projects like 'Playing with Art', the country is building a robust ecosystem for creative expression and healing. However, broader recognition, accessibility, and formal regulation remain necessary for long-term success. With continued interdisciplinary collaboration and policy support, Poland can strengthen its role as a leader in youth-focused art therapy in Europe.



COUNTRY 3: LATVIA



Stages of Development and Current State:

Art therapy in Latvia is a dynamic and evolving field that encompasses four key specializations: dance and movement therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, and visual-plastic art therapy. It is formally recognized as a healthcare profession that facilitates individual or group therapeutic processes through creative means—focusing on the patient's emotional, cognitive, and social expression, supported by a trained art therapist.

Three distinct developmental stages mark the growth of art therapy in Latvia:
1990s–2005: Initiated through the efforts of dedicated enthusiasts, this stage involved continuing education programs and the establishment of professional associations.

2006–2009: Formal recognition of art therapy as a profession began, along with the development of structured higher education pathways.

2010–present: Continued development of professional practice, academic research, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Best Practices, Challenges, and Trends:

Best Practices:

A client-centered approach and initial contact-building are foundational steps in successful therapy.

Art therapists tailor methods to each individual's emotional and psychological needs, emphasizing flexibility, empathy, and trust.

Challenges:

Limited public understanding often leads to misconceptions or skepticism.

Misuse of the "art therapist" title by unqualified individuals dilutes professional credibility.

Limited integration within the general education system limits broader access, especially for youth in mainstream schools.

Trends:

Increasing integration of art therapy into medical and social institutions.

Emphasis on cultural sensitivity, including use of Latvian traditions in therapy.

Expansion of art therapy programs for vulnerable groups, such as refugees.

Growing grassroots movements and community-led creative clubs, which—though non-professional—help spread therapeutic art practices among youth.



SUMMARY TABLE

Category	Cyprus	Poland	Latvia
Associations	Cyprus Art Therapy Association	Multiple associations (e.g. PSTS, Kajros, Artevitas)	4 specialized associations + Union of Latvian Associations of Arts Therapy
Education	No formal training; only workshops	BA, MA, and postgrad programs under disciplines like pedagogy, psychology, arts	State-accredited MA in Art Therapy at Riga Stradins University and Liepaja University
Recognition	No state recognition	Not officially recognized but listed in national occupation classification	Fully recognized as a health care profession
Employment	Limited awareness; mainly NGOs, private practice	Broad practice in hospitals, schools, social institutions	Strong presence in health, social, and educational institutions

Key Insights:

- All three countries use diverse art forms (visual arts, music, drama, etc.).
- Efforts are made to improve accessibility and integrate art therapy into health or education.
- Professional associations exist in each country, promoting awareness and development.

Differences:

- Cyprus: Early-stage development, identity-focused, largely NGO-based.
- Poland: Growing field with broad applications; music therapy is a key focus.
- Latvia: Most advanced – formal education, state recognition, specialization, and regulation.

Challenges:

- Limited public understanding in Cyprus and Latvia.
- Accessibility and mental health stigma in Poland.
- Underrepresentation in schools (especially Latvia and Cyprus).

Potential Areas for Collaboration:

- Best Practice Exchange: Latvia’s structured approach, Poland’s music therapy, Cyprus’s identity-focused methods.
- Joint Support for Refugees: Especially relevant due to sizable Ukrainian refugee populations.
- Collaborative Research & Training: Cross-border workshops, shared curricula, and comparative studies.
- Public Awareness & Advocacy: Coordinated campaigns to promote understanding and policy inclusion.

Cross-Country Comparison: Academic Insights on the Role of Creative Arts in Youth Work Across Cyprus, Poland, and Latvia

The academic research conducted under the CREATIYOK project offers a valuable comparative lens into the status, structures, and strategic development of creative arts as therapeutic tools in youth work across Cyprus, Poland, and Latvia. Each country presents a distinct institutional landscape shaped by its historical, cultural, and policy context—yet united by a growing recognition of the importance of integrating creative practices into youth support systems.

In Cyprus, the research reveals a vibrant but fragmented landscape. Creative arts in youth work are primarily led by NGOs, private initiatives, and grassroots cultural organizations. While youth engagement in visual arts, dance, theater, and photography is active and emotionally impactful, there is a lack of formal educational pathways and state recognition for art therapy as a discipline. The absence of consistent integration into schools and youth services limits the long-term reach and institutional sustainability of such programs. However, the country excels in using art to explore identity, build intercultural understanding, and support inclusive practices in both urban and rural settings.

Poland, by contrast, is experiencing structured growth in the field of creative arts therapy. The country has a rich ecosystem of professional associations, research-driven initiatives, and training programs—particularly in music therapy and inclusive education. Institutions such as PSTS and projects like Playing with Art underscore a national effort to formalize and legitimize the field. However, challenges persist, especially regarding societal stigma around therapy, uneven access for marginalized groups, and the absence of official state recognition for art therapy as a distinct profession. The academic contributions in Poland are particularly strong, offering a solid theoretical foundation and documenting practical innovations in education and therapeutic contexts.

Latvia stands out as the most advanced among the three, with art therapy fully recognized as a healthcare profession and integrated into higher education systems. The country offers accredited MA programs, clear professional pathways, and a multidisciplinary approach that bridges healthcare, education, and social services. Latvian art therapists specialize in visual-plastic arts, dance/movement therapy, music therapy, and drama therapy—demonstrating a comprehensive and culturally grounded model. Despite this progress, public understanding remains limited, and art therapy is still underrepresented in mainstream education, pointing to the need for continued public education and intersectoral collaboration.

Cross-Country Comparison: Academic Insights on the Role of Creative Arts in Youth Work Across Cyprus, Poland, and Latvia

From a comparative academic perspective, the key takeaway is that formalization, recognition, and cross-sector integration are critical to unlocking the full potential of creative arts in youth development. Latvia's success highlights the benefits of structured policy support and academic rigor, while Poland's momentum shows the power of grassroots initiatives combined with scholarly inquiry. Cyprus's case reveals the creative adaptability of NGOs and community-based actors in the absence of formal structures.

The research underscores that while creative expression is a universal youth need, the mechanisms to support it must be contextually adapted, institutionally supported, and professionally developed. To advance the field across Europe, efforts should focus on:

- Establishing standardized training and certification across countries.
- Enhancing public awareness through evidence-based advocacy.
- Embedding creative arts therapy in both formal education and national mental health strategies.
- Fostering research that links creative practice to measurable psychosocial outcomes.

This academic component of CREATIYOK provides not only a snapshot of the current landscape but a roadmap for future progress. By learning from each country's strengths and addressing common barriers, stakeholders can work toward a more inclusive, resilient, and creativity-driven approach to youth well-being.

Conclusion

While the development of art therapy varies widely—early-stage in Cyprus, growing in Poland, and well-established in Latvia—all three countries share a commitment to enhancing mental health through creative means. Their differences present valuable opportunities for collaboration, learning, and mutual support across borders.

Section 3: Quantitative Research



“Art Therapy As a Tool”

The combined research across Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia paints a compelling picture of the positive impact of creative arts on youth well-being, while also revealing significant areas for improvement in accessibility and program delivery.

CREative Arts as Therapy tools In YOuth Work (CREATIYOK)

Combined Research: The Role of Creative Arts in Youth Well-being

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Erasmus+ project, surveys were conducted in Poland, Cyprus and Latvia to explore how young people and youth workers perceive and experience the impact of creative arts on emotional-environmental development.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Over 80% of respondents reported engaging in creative arts such as painting, music, theater, and dance
- 92% agreed that creative arts have a *positive* impact on emotional-wellbeing
- Fewer than half had participated in art-based therapy sessions
- A majority considered creative arts very important for personal development
- More than 60% faced challenges accessing arts activities due to limited availability and cost barriers
- Over 70% showed interest in future organized creative arts programs

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the widespread embrace and as valuable tools for youth-well-being—and development—but attests a need for inclusive and accessible programs that will assist structural barriers to address structural barriers for youth wellbeing and development.

UNIT 1: Creative Arts as Therapy Tools In Youth Work

A majority of respondents—over 80%—reported engaging in creative activities such as painting, music, theater, and dance, often informally or as hobbies. A remarkable 92% of participants agreed that creative arts play a positive role in supporting emotional well-being, highlighting their value as tools for coping with stress and enhancing mood.

However, structured experiences like art-based therapy sessions remain underutilized, with fewer than half of the participants having had access to such formats. This suggests a gap between informal creative engagement and more formalized, therapeutic applications of the arts.

In terms of personal development, the vast majority of respondents considered creative arts to be “very important” for self-expression, growth, and identity formation, particularly among youth living in urban and semi-urban areas. Still, barriers to participation remain prominent—over 60% of youth from Cyprus and Latvia reported challenges in accessing arts activities, citing issues such as limited local availability, financial constraints, and lack of awareness.

When asked about preferred forms of engagement, participants expressed a strong interest in group activities and workshops, while also valuing flexibility and individual sessions. There was clear enthusiasm for future programs: more than 70% indicated they would be interested in joining organized creative arts initiatives for youth development.

Importantly, this research underscores the need to enhance access to creative opportunities, especially in rural and underserved communities, by supporting free or low-cost initiatives, increasing school and community partnerships, and promoting awareness about the benefits of art for mental health and youth empowerment.

The Role of Creative Arts in Youth Well-being (Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia)

As part of the Erasmus+ KA210-YOU project “CREative Arts as Therapy tools In YOutH Work (CREATIYOK)”, this combined research explores the role of creative arts in enhancing youth well-being in three diverse European contexts: Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia. Recognizing the growing need for emotional support, mental health awareness, and tools for self-expression among young people, the project sought to investigate how youth and youth workers interact with creative arts as a therapeutic and developmental tool.

Through a carefully designed online survey, responses were collected from 260 participants, including youth, youth workers, and potential participants in art-based programs. The research focused on key themes such as emotional impact, accessibility of creative activities, perceived benefits for stress management and mood enhancement, and preferences regarding art formats and delivery methods. The initiative aligns with the broader objectives of the Erasmus+ program: to promote innovation in youth work, improve inclusion, and enhance personal and social development through non-formal education tools.

By understanding how creative arts are perceived and experienced, especially across different cultural and geographical settings, the research provides valuable insights that will guide the design of future workshops and activities in the CREATIYOK project and beyond.



The Role of Creative Arts in Youth Well-being (Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia)

The audience included youth, youth workers, and potential workshop participants, with data collected via online questionnaires consisting of up to 16 questions, covering both quantitative and qualitative aspects Annex 01

Key Research Findings by Question:

Demographics (Questions 1–4):

Respondents came from a wide age range and a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. The largest groups in the international survey were from Latvia (40%) and Cyprus (36%), with additional responses from other EU countries. In Poland, the data was broken down by gender and living area, showing broad participation across women (71), men (22), city dwellers (48), and those from villages and towns.



UNIT 2: Experience with Creative Arts

Question 5: Have you personally engaged in creative arts activities (e.g., drawing, music, theater, or dance)?

- 81.4% in Cyprus/Latvia responded “Yes,” showing strong engagement.
- In Poland, most women (65/71) and men (16/22) had participated, especially those from cities and villages.
- This affirms that creative arts are already a part of many young people’s lives.

Question 6: Do you believe creative arts can positively impact emotional well-being?

- An overwhelming 92.8% in Cyprus/Latvia said yes.
- Polish responses similarly showed high belief in emotional benefits.
- This consensus confirms the perceived therapeutic power of creativity.

Question 7: Have you ever participated in art-based therapy sessions?

- Only 45.5% in Cyprus/Latvia had participated; 46.1% had not.
- In Poland, even fewer had this experience (only 12/93 total).
- While engagement in informal arts is high, structured therapy remains underutilized.



UNIT 3: Perception of Personal Development

Question 8: How important are creative arts for youth personal development and self-expression?

- 74.9% in Cyprus/Latvia chose “very important.”
- In Poland, most women and city dwellers rated importance highly (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale).
- This reflects broad recognition of arts as a tool for personal growth.

Question 9: How has engaging in creative arts affected your mood and well-being?

- 89.2% in Cyprus/Latvia reported a positive impact.
- Polish respondents were slightly more diverse in answers, but still mostly positive (e.g., 43 women and 28 city youth rated “1”).
- This confirms the emotional benefits of regular creative engagement.

Question 10: Do you think creative arts can help manage stress or difficult emotions?

- 93.4% in Cyprus/Latvia agreed.
- Polish respondents showed similar confidence, supported by other wellness-related questions.



UNIT 4: Preferences in Arts Engagement

Question 11: Which form of creative arts do you find most enjoyable or effective?

In Cyprus/Latvia, top choices were:

- Painting (31.1%)
- Music (22.2%)
- Theater (16.8%)
- Dance (16.2%)

In Poland, answers included ceramics, photography, poetry, writing, and even horse riding, showing broad creative preferences.

Question 12: Preferred format for engaging in arts?

- Group activities (40.1%), workshops (31.1%), and individual sessions (28.7%) in Cyprus/Latvia.
- In Poland, responses were more evenly split, with workshops slightly favored among women and village respondents.
- This suggests flexibility and variety in delivery formats is essential.



UNIT 5: Accessibility and Support

Question 13: Do you face challenges accessing arts activities or resources?

- 61.1% in Cyprus/Latvia said yes.
- Polish data also pointed to similar access limitations, especially outside urban areas.
- Barriers include lack of local programs, affordability, and information.

Question 14: What can be done to improve access to creative arts for youth?

Top suggestions in both groups:

1. More programs
 2. Reduced cost barriers
 3. Increased awareness
- Respondents emphasized the need for school partnerships, free community workshops, and better promotion of available opportunities.



UNIT 6: Future Outlook

Question 15: Would you be interested in organized creative arts programs for youth development?

- 70.1% in Cyprus/Latvia said yes.
- In Poland, interest varied but was also high, with many answering “yes” or “maybe.”
- This indicates strong potential for youth engagement if programs are well-designed and accessible.

Question 16: How do you see creative arts supporting your future personal growth and well-being?

- 70.7% in Cyprus/Latvia expect a very positive role, and 27.5% a somewhat positive one.
- In Poland, most respondents also anticipated continued or increased impact, especially women and village residents.



Final Conclusion

Across Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia, the findings clearly show that creative arts are widely practiced, deeply valued, and seen as a powerful tool for personal and emotional development. Participants not only appreciate the role of arts in self-expression and mental health, but also express a strong interest in structured programs that make these experiences more accessible. However, barriers such as cost, access, and program availability remain significant, especially in non-urban areas.

This research confirms that creative arts are not only widely embraced by youth but also recognized as powerful tools for emotional well-being, self-expression, and personal growth. While enthusiasm is high, structural barriers—such as limited access and affordability—still prevent many young people from fully benefiting from arts-based activities. The findings highlight a strong need for inclusive, accessible, and well-promoted creative programs across Europe, particularly in rural areas. Empowering youth through the arts is not just a cultural investment—it is a pathway to healthier, more connected, and resilient communities.



SECTION 4: Qualitative Research



Creative arts have increasingly become a cornerstone in youth work and therapy, especially in societies experiencing the aftermath of political unrest, economic instability, and social fragmentation. In Latvia, Poland, and Cyprus, professionals and volunteers are working to integrate artistic practices into therapeutic and educational frameworks. These countries, while differing in history and policy, share a common concern for the mental health of their youth. Art therapy serves not only as a means of emotional release but also as a mechanism for communication, identity formation, and resilience building. This report presents a narrative synthesis of interviews with practitioners using methods such as music therapy, drawing, dance, theater, and meditative writing. It highlights how these diverse techniques are being used to provide young people with tools to confront trauma, build social bonds, and rediscover joy in expression.

CHALLENGES

-  **Institutional Resistance and Stigma**
-  **Lack of Funding and Accreditation**
-  **Limited Access in Rural or Underfunded Areas**
-  **Misunderstanding of the Value of Creative Therapies**

Methods and Modalities in Creative Arts Therapy



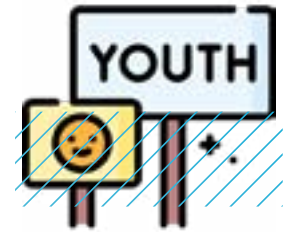
Creative arts therapy encompasses a wide range of practices, each tailored to specific therapeutic goals and participant needs. In Poland, music therapist Gabriela Cybuch (Poland) works primarily with children on the autism spectrum. Her sessions involve rhythmic exercises using drums, collaborative group singing, and music improvisation. These activities help improve verbal communication, emotional regulation, and social interaction. She emphasizes the importance of using familiar songs - often Disney tracks - as a comfort tool that encourages participation.

In Latvia, practitioners such as Darja Ivanova and Natalia Petrova use visual arts—drawing, painting, and collage—to support mental health. Natalia Petrova describes how even silent drawing can help participants externalize internal conflict and engage in gentle self-reflection. Darja Ivanova, focusing on adolescent therapy, points out the power of non-verbal expression in uncovering deeply buried emotions, especially those tied to body image and self-esteem issues.

Cyprus presents a unique model combining cultural preservation with therapeutic objectives. Vikie Kouyoumdjian, who leads a choir for Armenian-Cypriot youth, blends cultural identity with emotional expression. Singing becomes both a method of healing and a tool for community building. Similarly, dance therapist Andria Papanikolaou uses movement to help refugee youth reconnect with their bodies, fostering a sense of empowerment and emotional resilience. She explains that dance creates a non-verbal language for those who have experienced trauma, allowing them to move from survival to self-expression. In all cases, the choice of artistic medium—be it music, movement, or visual creation—depends on the participants' needs, cultural context, and emotional state.



Therapeutic Impact on Youth



The therapeutic benefits of creative arts are profound and multifaceted. Interviewees consistently reported positive outcomes ranging from immediate mood improvement to long-term behavioral changes. Gabriela Cybuch (Poland) shares how children with limited verbal skills begin forming words through song and show increased willingness to engage with peers. For many children on the spectrum, music becomes a channel through which they can make eye contact, follow social cues, and express preferences.

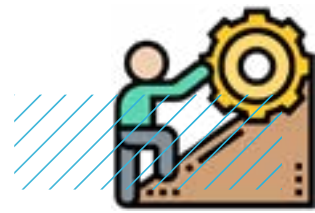
In Latvia, art therapists report significant shifts in emotional well-being after even short drawing or collage sessions. Natalia Petrova recounts a case where a seemingly positive drawing revealed hidden feelings of isolation and led to important discussions about belonging and connection. Darja Ivanova has noted that after a few sessions, adolescents begin to feel more comfortable in their own bodies, reducing anxiety and improving body image—a key concern during teenage years.

In Cyprus, creative practices serve not only therapeutic but also integrative functions. Vikie's choir offers a safe space for youth coping with external stressors, such as news of conflict in their homeland. Singing helps them reclaim agency and find collective solace. Similarly, Nanar Khachadourian use of hands-on creative games in scout groups supports emotional growth by fostering peer collaboration, especially for youth with attention or behavioral challenges.

Eirini Christofi, working across different artistic disciplines, shared a transformative case of an 18-year-old with severe agoraphobia and depression. Through theater and dance, the young woman gradually overcame her fear of social interaction, ultimately reintegrating into group settings with confidence and emotional openness. This type of result, though gradual, underscores the deep, lasting effects of creative engagement on psychological resilience.



Challenges and Solutions in Practice



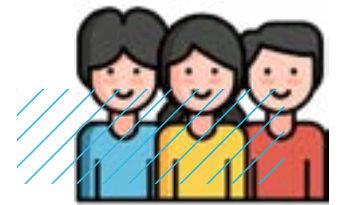
Despite its promise, art therapy faces significant challenges, including institutional resistance, public misunderstanding, and logistical constraints. In smaller towns and underfunded regions, such as rural Poland and parts of Latvia, there is limited access to qualified therapists and a general lack of awareness about the value of creative arts. Practitioners like Aliona Vdovtsova speak to the frustration of working within rigid educational systems where administrators dismiss art-based approaches as trivial or frivolous.

To counteract youth resistance, therapists adopt adaptive and participatory strategies. For instance, Vikie found success by restructuring her choir to suit the preferences of her students, using more upbeat songs and simplifying vocal arrangements into first and second voices to boost confidence. Nanar Khachadourian (Cyprus) uses playful competition and group rituals to hold attention and encourage engagement, even among the most impulsive participants. Darja Ivanova (Latvia) and Eirini stress the importance of building trust before introducing any artistic task, particularly in vulnerable youth populations.

Funding is a recurring theme. Many therapists operate voluntarily or with minimal support. They call for systemic investment in creative therapies—not only in therapeutic institutions but also in schools, refugee centers, and community clubs. The need for professional training programs and accreditation systems was also highlighted by several interviewees who felt that informal initiatives, while impactful, lack sustainability without structural support.



Future Visions for Creative Arts in Youth Development



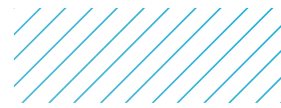
Practitioners envision a future where creative arts are fully integrated into public education, healthcare, and community well-being strategies. They imagine schools with dedicated art therapists on staff, state-sponsored creative therapy centers, and educational policies that recognize the arts as essential to youth development. Formal accreditation and funding mechanisms would ensure that skilled practitioners can work long-term with youth in need.

Many envision creative hubs or cultural centers where workshops, exhibitions, performances, and therapy sessions intersect. Such spaces could offer inclusive programming for children from all backgrounds, including those with disabilities, from refugee families, or living in economically disadvantaged areas. Cross-sector collaboration—with psychologists, educators, social workers, and community leaders—is seen as key to success.

Several interviewees, including Shevchenko and Papanikolaou, emphasize the need to preserve and build on local cultural practices. For instance, incorporating folk songs, traditional dances, and community storytelling strengthens both individual identity and group cohesion. The idea is not only to heal but also to empower—to create new forms of civic and emotional literacy among youth.

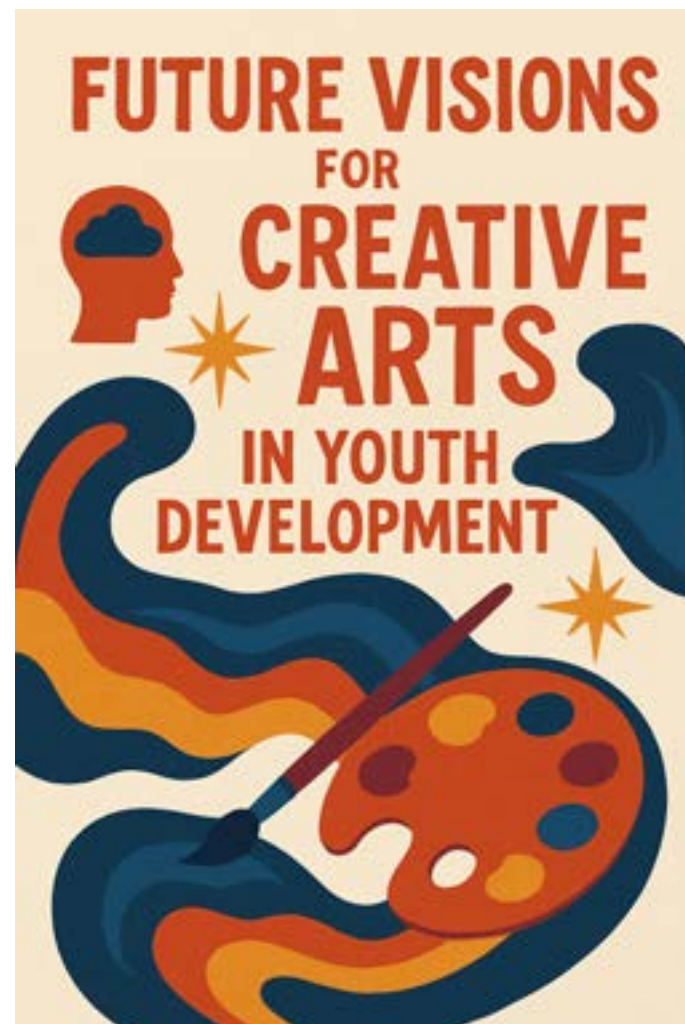


Conclusion



In Latvia, Poland, and Cyprus, the creative arts are emerging as vital pathways to healing, growth, and empowerment for young people. This report demonstrates that while methods vary—from drum circles to expressive writing—the underlying goal remains the same: to help youth find their voice, reclaim agency, and build resilience. Across regions, practitioners advocate for the expansion of these programs through better funding, institutional recognition, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Creative arts therapy stands at the intersection of psychology, education, and community. It acknowledges the whole person—not just as a student or patient, but as an individual with emotions, stories, and potential. In places where conventional therapy may be inaccessible or ineffective, creative expression offers an alternative. One that is intuitive, inclusive, and deeply human. By investing in these approaches, societies not only support their youth—they also nurture the artists, leaders, and empathetic citizens of tomorrow.



SECTION 5: General Results

“Art Therapy As a Tool”

Based on the comprehensive research conducted through the CREATIYOK project across Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia, a clear narrative emerges: creative arts play a vital and increasingly recognized role in enhancing youth well-being. From visual arts and music to dance, theater, and photography, creative practices are widely embraced by young people and professionals alike. The qualitative interviews, academic comparisons, and survey responses collectively show that these artistic methods support emotional expression, stress management, identity exploration, and social inclusion—particularly among marginalized groups such as refugees, youth with disabilities, and those in rural areas.



GENERAL RESULTS



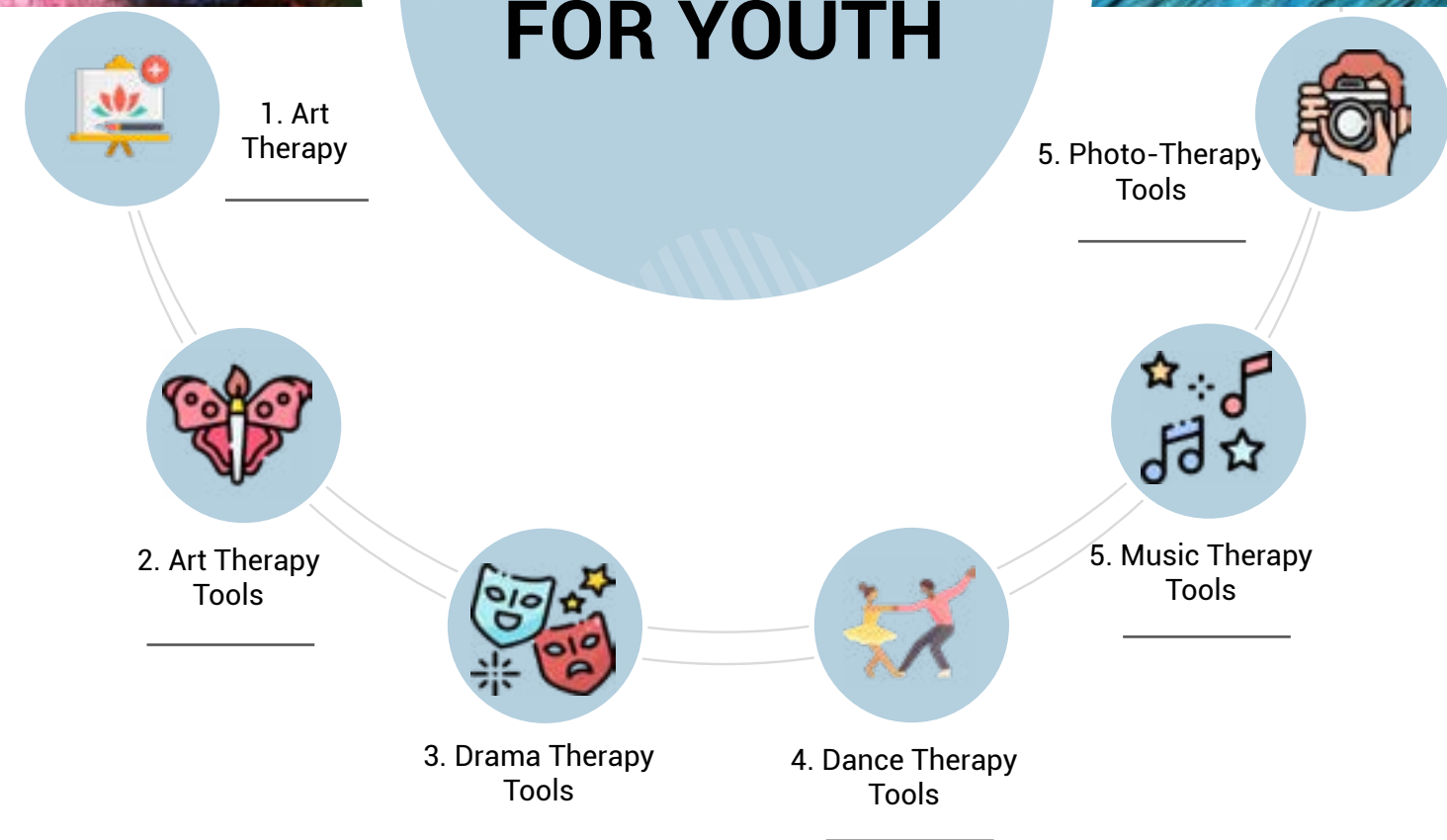
While the therapeutic and developmental benefits of creative arts are overwhelmingly supported—over 90% of surveyed youth agreed on their emotional value—the formal integration of these tools into public systems varies significantly by country. Latvia leads with state-recognized art therapy education and practice, while Poland is expanding through grassroots movements and academic research. Cyprus, though rich in grassroots and NGO-led efforts, still lacks formal structures and broad institutional recognition. Across all three, youth prefer flexible, engaging formats like group workshops, and they consistently call for more accessible, affordable, and inclusive opportunities.

Key challenges remain, including limited access in rural and underserved areas, lack of awareness, insufficient funding, and professional recognition. For instance, while over 80% of youth engage informally with creative arts, fewer than half have access to structured therapy or guided programs. This gap highlights the urgent need for systemic investment in creative youth development, such as formal training for facilitators, school partnerships, and nationwide awareness campaigns.

Ultimately, the findings affirm that creative arts are not just extracurricular pastimes—they are essential tools for healing, resilience, and personal growth. By embedding these practices into education, health, and community systems, and ensuring they are accessible to all youth regardless of background or geography, Europe can foster a new generation that is not only expressive and empathetic but also better equipped to face personal and social challenges with confidence and creativity.



ART AS THERAPY FOR YOUTH



Section 1.0: What is Art Therapy?



"Art therapy is a dynamic and accessible therapeutic tool that allows young people to explore, express, and transform their inner experiences through creative processes. Especially for youth — who may find it difficult to articulate complex emotions verbally — art provides a safe, nonverbal pathway for communication and healing."

Art therapy involves using various forms of visual arts — such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and collage — in a therapeutic setting to promote emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. A trained art therapist guides the process, but the focus is not on creating "good" or "beautiful" art. Instead, the emphasis is on personal expression and emotional exploration.

Benefits of Art Therapy for Youth:

- **Emotional Expression:** Young people often lack the words to express fear, anger, sadness, or trauma. Art offers a language of color, form, and texture for emotional release.
- **Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Completing a creative project gives youth a sense of accomplishment and ownership over their work, building positive self-image.
- **Stress and Anxiety Reduction:** The tactile and sensory experience of working with art materials can calm the nervous system and reduce feelings of anxiety.
- **Processing Trauma:** For youth who have experienced violence, neglect, or loss, art therapy creates a safe distance to explore painful memories without direct confrontation.
- **Problem-Solving and Flexibility:** Engaging in creative decision-making fosters adaptive thinking and resilience.

Key Methods in Youth Art Therapy:

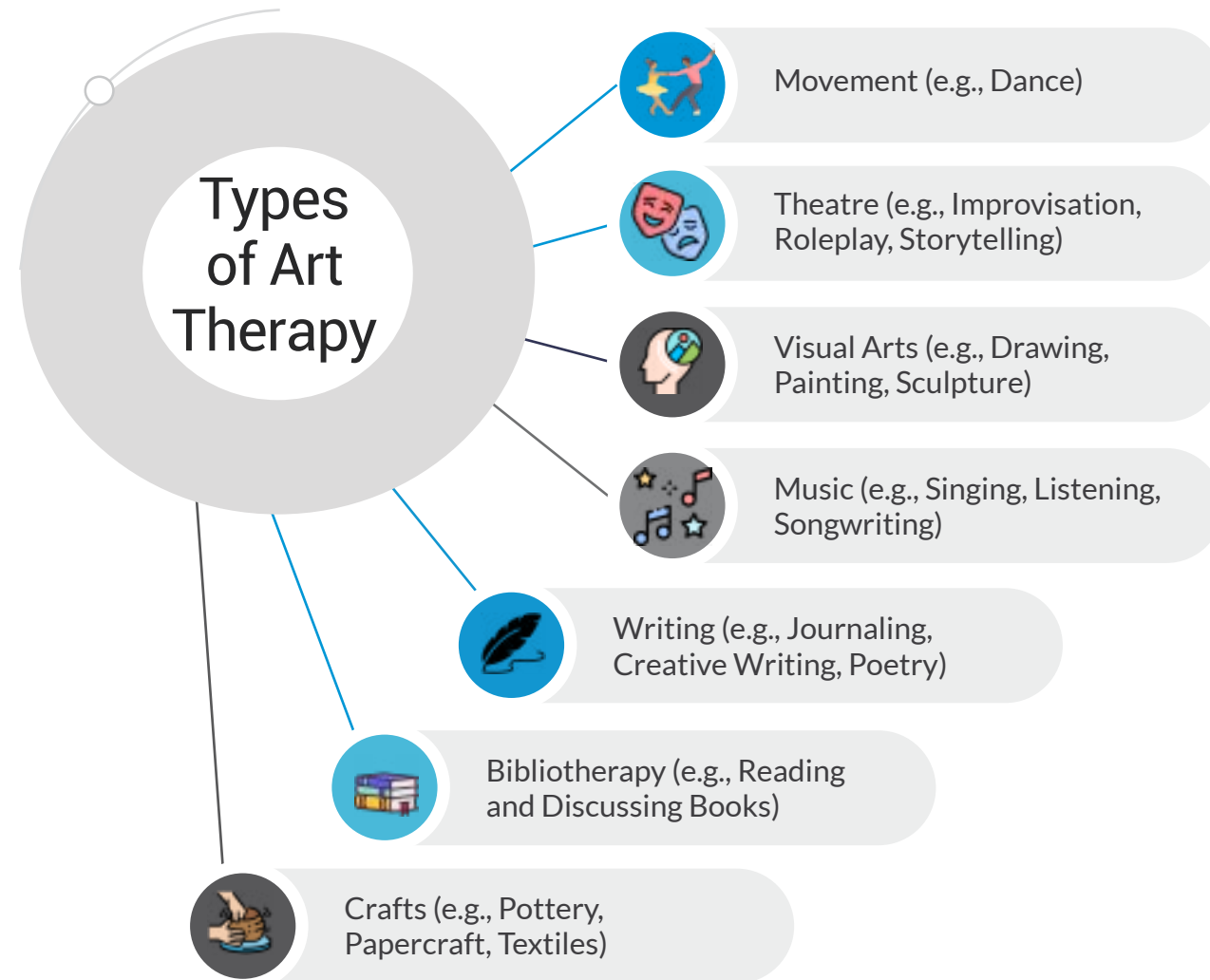


- **Free Drawing or Painting:** Spontaneous art-making that reflects unconscious thoughts or feelings.
- **Themed Projects:** Guided prompts such as "Draw your safe place" or "Create your superhero self" allow for structured exploration of important topics.
- **Mask Making:** Exploring identity, public versus private self, or hidden emotions.
- **Clay or Sculpture:** Engaging the body and hands in three-dimensional creation, connecting physical movement to emotional processing.

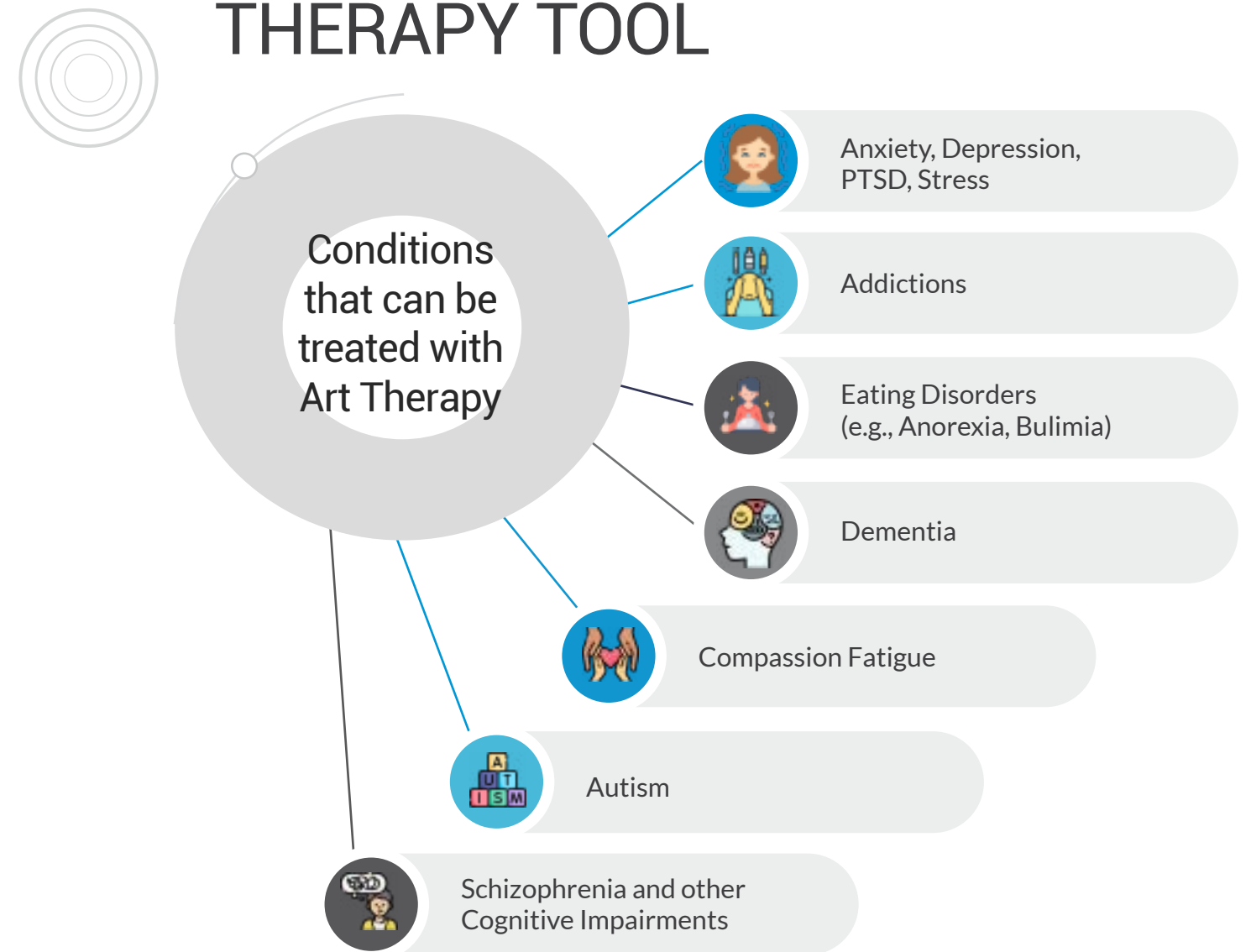
Why It Works for Youth:

Art therapy meets young people where they are — in imagination, exploration, and emotional honesty. It empowers youth to tell their stories without fear of judgment and offers a way to see themselves and their experiences from new perspectives. In a world where young people often feel unheard, art becomes a

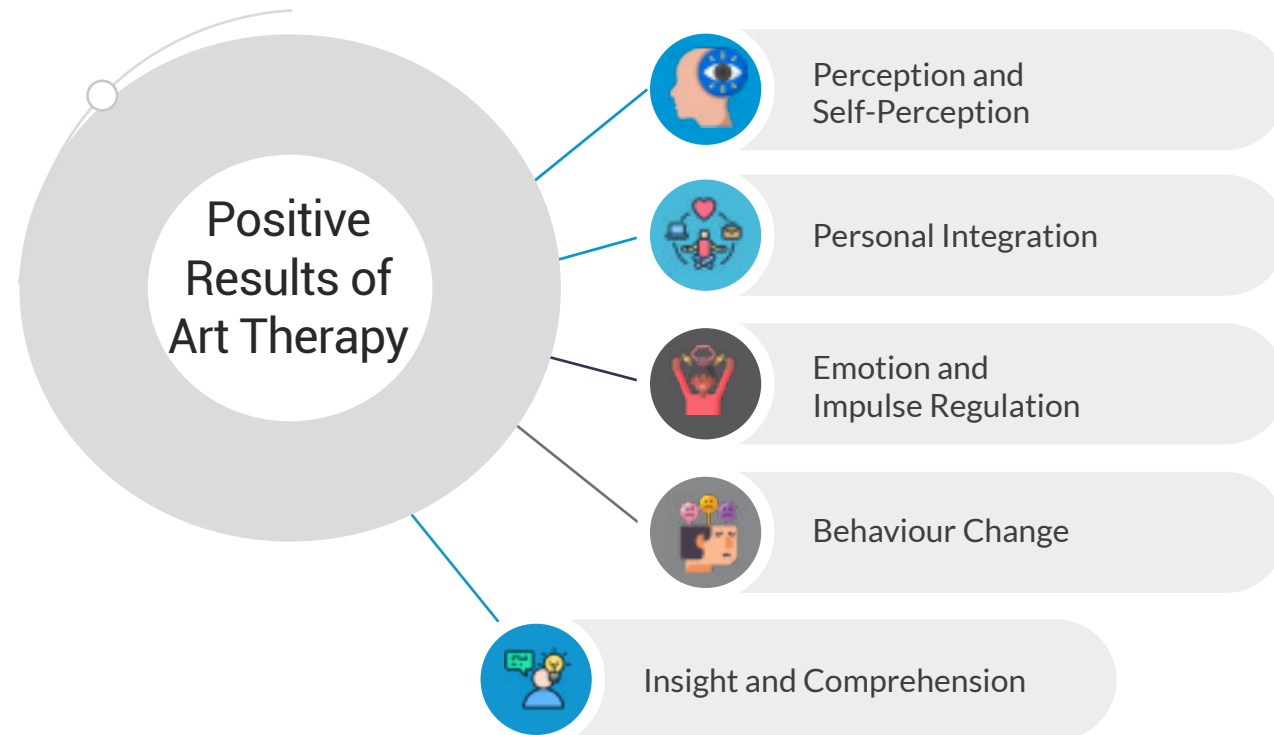
ART THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



ART THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



ART THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



SECTION 2.0: ART THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL

Special Remarks on Art Therapy in Youth Work



The World Health Organization highlights that depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders are leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents, with long-term consequences affecting their physical and mental health into adulthood. In youth work, art therapy programs should be designed with narratives that empower rather than label young people as “problems” or “victims.” Instead of being remedial, these programs should inspire and support self-expression, experimentation, and identity formation. Additionally, they should be responsive to young people’s interests and needs while offering accreditation opportunities, such as certificates that aid in further education or career advancement.

Current State of Creative Arts as Therapy Tool in Youth Work



Art therapy in youth work is a powerful approach that leverages creative expression to support young people’s mental, emotional, and social well-being, particularly those who struggle with verbal communication. It provides a safe space for identity exploration, stress management, and emotional processing while fostering resilience, self-esteem, and social connections. Though art therapy has strong roots in countries like the U.S., UK, Canada, Australia, and Sweden, global research on its development in youth work remains limited. This study aims to address this gap by exploring art therapy’s role in youth work in Poland, Cyprus, and Latvia, focusing on academic research and insights from young people and practitioners.



TOOL 1: EXPLORING MATERIALS AND CREATIVITY

01 - Objective



This activity invites participants to explore diverse art materials through a free, process-oriented experience. By focusing on play and exploration without specific outcomes, participants can tap into their creativity, express emotions, and experience the therapeutic benefits of art-making.

02 - Time Required



30–45 minutes (flexible depending on group size and pace)

03 - Target Group



All ages and skill levels. Perfect for anyone curious about creativity and self-expression.

04 - Materials Needed



- Various papers and cardboards (different sizes, colors, textures)
- Scissors (optional)
- Glue sticks, tape
- Markers, crayons, oil pastels
- Optional: Fabric scraps, yarn, textured items
- Optional: Scented markers or small sensory objects



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



- Welcome participants warmly.
- Emphasize: **“No right or wrong way to create — only exploration!”**
- Invite participants to approach the materials with curiosity and openness.

02 - Exploration Phase (15–30 minutes)



- Arrange materials visibly and accessibly on tables.
- Encourage participants to:
 - ◊ Touch, tear, cut, crumple, layer materials.
 - ◊ Explore textures, colors, sounds (crinkling paper, snapping cardboard).
 - ◊ Combine elements however they wish — no goal, just play!
- Remind everyone to let go of judgment and stay present with the process.

Optional Transition:

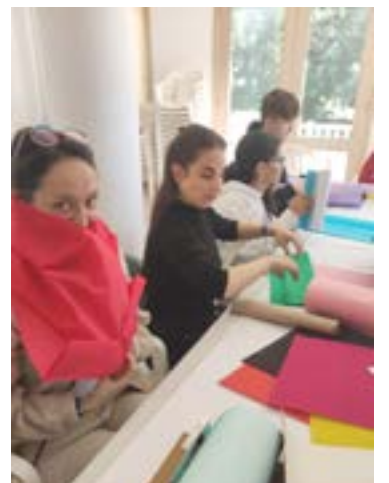
Invite participants to pick one material that “called to them” and hold it during a brief moment of silent reflection before moving to sharing.

03 - Sharing and Reflection (15–30 minutes)



Gather in a circle or small groups. Use guiding questions:

- How did you feel while exploring different materials?
- Which material or technique stood out for you?
- What surprised you about your creative process?
- How might this approach to creativity support you in other areas of life?



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations & Extensions:



- **Sensory Expansion:** Add scents (aromatic papers, essential oils nearby) for multisensory exploration.
- **Collaborative Creation:** Create a communal collage from everyone’s experiments.
- **Prompted Play:** Offer optional prompts like “Chaos,” “Balance,” or “Wholeness” to inspire exploration.

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Normalize all forms of participation — touching, observing, resting, creating.
- Make sure materials are safe and non-toxic for all age groups.
- Offer adaptive tools if needed (larger scissors, textured grip pens).
- Remind participants: Taking breaks, being still, or stepping out briefly is okay.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



- Options for closing the session:
- Share a word, color, or gesture representing today’s experience.
- Quiet journaling prompt:
- “What material spoke to me today?”
- “How can I nurture my creativity in daily life?”



TOOL 2: FINGER PAINTING EXPLORATION

01 - Objective



This activity invites participants to engage with the tactile experience of finger painting, allowing them to express emotions and creativity freely through touch, color, and movement. The reflection session helps deepen emotional awareness and personal insight.

02 - Time Required



60–90 minutes (depending on group size and reflection depth)

03 - Target Group



Participants of all ages — ideal for anyone open to exploring creativity and emotion through tactile, sensory art-making.

04 - Materials Needed



- Finger paint (various colors)
- Large sheets of paper or canvas
 - Protective coverings for tables and floors
 - Towels, wipes, or easy access to handwashing



TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



Welcome participants and introduce the session:

“Today is about exploring paint with our fingers — no brushes, no goals, just sensation and expression!” Emphasize there’s no right or wrong way to create.

02 - Exploration Phase (15–30 minutes)



Distribute materials to each participant.

Invite participants to:

- Use their fingers, palms, and even the backs of hands to explore the paint.
- Notice the sensations — temperature, texture, slipperiness.
- Let the movement guide the art, rather than aiming to create specific images.

Option: Allow music to play softly in the background to support flow and movement.

Optional Transition: Invite participants to pause halfway and look at their hands — observe color mixing, tactile experience — then continue.

03 - Reflection and Discussion (10–20 minutes)



Gather participants in a comfortable circle or small groups.

Use open-ended prompts to invite sharing:

- How did you feel during the finger painting?
- What physical sensations or emotions stood out for you?
- Did any memories or thoughts arise?
- Were there patterns, shapes, or movements that surprised you?
- How was this different from other ways you’ve made art?



TOOL 3: BLIND SELF-PORTRAIT

01 - Objective



This activity invites participants to connect with their inner selves by creating a self-portrait with eyes closed. The focus is on **self-reflection, emotional expression, and understanding self-image beyond appearance.**

02 - Time Required



45–60 minutes (depending on group size and depth of discussion)

03 - Target Group



Participants of all ages interested in exploring inner self-perception and creative introspection.

04 - Materials Needed



- Large sheets of paper or canvas
- Drawing materials (pencils, markers, crayons)
- **Optional:** Protective covering for tables
- **Optional:** Towels or wipes for clean-up



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



- Welcome participants and introduce the purpose:
“Today we’ll create a self-portrait — but with closed eyes! The goal is to express your inner qualities, not your external appearance.”
- Emphasize there’s no right or wrong outcome.

02 - Preparation (5 minutes)



- Distribute drawing materials and paper/canvas.
- Protect surfaces if needed.
- Invite participants to take a few calming breaths before beginning.

03 - Blind Self-Portrait Creation (20–30 minutes)



Instruct participants to:

- Close their eyes and visualize themselves — thoughts, feelings, energy — not just physical features.
- Move their hands freely, trusting their instincts.
- Focus on **inner experiences** rather than precision or accuracy.
- Remind them: Creativity over realism!

Optional Transition:

- Midway, invite participants to pause briefly, feel the movement of their hand, and reconnect with their emotions before continuing.
- How was this different from other ways you’ve made art?



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

Reflection and Discussion (10–15 minutes)



Bring the group together for a reflective circle. Guide the discussion with open prompts:

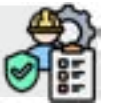
- What thoughts or feelings came up as you created your portrait?
- How did it feel to create without seeing?
- How does this self-portrait represent who you are inside?

Variations and Extensions



- **Material Play:** Experiment with different textures (charcoal, soft pastels) to enhance sensory experience.
- **Journaling Integration:** Invite pre- and post-painting journaling to deepen insight.
- **Gallery Walk:** Create a casual “exhibit” where participants view all portraits without labels, celebrating unique inner expressions.

Safety Considerations



- Ensure drawing tools are safe and suitable for all participants.
- Provide gentle guidance for using sharp pencils or other materials when eyes are closed.
- Normalize asking for help or pausing if needed.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



Options to close the session:

- Each participant shares one word or emotion they connected with.

Quiet journaling prompt:

- “What does my blind self-portrait teach me about how I see myself?”
- “What inner qualities did I honor today?”

TOOL 4: PLAYING WITH CLAY

01 - Objectives



This playful, hands-on activity helps participants release tension and stimulate creativity by engaging freely with clay, emphasizing joy and spontaneous expression.

02 - Time Required



30–60 minutes (depending on group size and engagement)

03 - Target Group



Participants of all ages looking for **fun**, **stress relief**, and **creative exploration**.

04 - Materials Needed



- Clay (soft, air-dry or regular)
- Protective covering for floors/walls
- Towels or wipes for cleaning hands and surfaces



TOOL 4: PLAYING WITH CLAY

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



Introduce the idea:

“Today’s activity is about **play, freedom, and laughter** — there are no rules!”

Emphasize: Focus on the **experience**, not technique or perfection.

02 - Preparation (5 minutes)



- Distribute clay to each participant or small group.
- Cover floors or walls to manage any potential mess.
- Designate a target wall or throwing area.

03 - Playful Clay Throwing (20–40 minutes)



- Invite participants to:
 - ◇ Stand a few steps away from the target.
 - ◇ Throw pieces of clay at the wall and observe how it sticks.
 - ◇ Experiment with different throws, heights, and shapes.
 - ◇ Encourage laughter, experimentation, and silliness!
 - ◇ Remind participants to stay aware of others’ space for safety.

03 - Cleanup and Reflection (5–10 minutes)



- Provide wipes/towels for hand cleaning.
- Quickly tidy up the space.

Gather for a reflection circle. Suggested questions:

- How did you feel while throwing clay?
- What moments brought you the most joy?



TOOL 4: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations & Extensions:



Creative Targets:

- Aim for specific heights or shapes.
- Compete in a “splat pattern” challenge.

Storytelling Twist:

Create quick sculptures or characters, then joyfully throw them against the wall.

Decorate Before Throwing:

Use paint or markers to personalize clay blobs before throwing.

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Remind participants not to throw clay at each other.
- Keep the activity area spacious and ventilated.
- Supervise closely if working with younger participants or firmer clay types.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



- ◇ Invite each participant to mime “throwing away” a stress or worry into an imaginary wall — symbolizing letting go and embracing lightness.



TOOL 5: EXPRESS YOURSELF WITH CLAY

01 - Objectives



Aim: Invite participants to engage in personal creative expression through sculpting, connecting with inner emotions, imagination, and self-awareness.

Learning Objectives:

- Foster **self-awareness** and **personal expression** through art.
- Stimulate **sensory** and **spatial creativity**.
- Encourage **interpretation** of emotional or abstract themes into visual form.

02 - Time Required



45–60 minutes

03 - Target Group



Any size (ideal for 8–20 participants)

04 - Materials Needed



- Modeling clay (various colors/textures)
- Sculpting tools (optional)
- Table covers or mats (optional)
- Wipes or towels for cleanup



TOOL 5: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



Welcome participants

Emphasize:

“This is about **exploring**, not achieving perfection. There are no wrong creations.”

02 - Theme Presentation (2 minutes)



Offer an optional guiding theme. Examples:

“My Inner Landscape”

“A Dream I Once Had”

“What Freedom Looks Like to Me”

03 - Creative Time (30–40 minutes)



Participants sculpt individually based on the theme.

Encourage play, experimentation, and improvisation:

-Explore shapes, textures, layers.

- Let the hands guide the imagination.

03 - Sharing Circle (10–15 minutes)



Participants may choose to share their sculpture and its meaning (optional and supportive)

Reflection Questions:

- What inspired your piece?
- How did it feel to work with your hands?
- What surprised you during the process?



TOOL 5: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations & Extensions:



- **Theme Tweaks:**

Offer alternative themes (e.g., “My Happy Place,” “A Symbol of Strength”).

- **Medium Switches:**

Try papier-mâché, recycled materials, or natural elements.

- **Format Changes:**

Pair work or rotating collaboration (everyone adds to each piece).

- **Interdisciplinary Crossovers:**

Combine with storytelling, movement, or music elements.

- **Cultural Layer:**

Integrate local symbols, traditions, or group identity motifs.

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- **Clean-up Readiness:**

◇ Provide wipes or access to water for easy hand/surface cleaning.

- **Physical Setup:**

◇ Ensure seating and table height accommodate different mobility needs.

- **Sensory Sensitivity:**

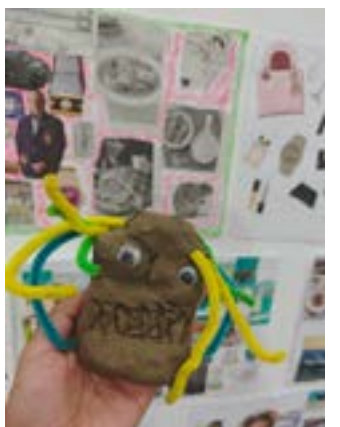
◇ Offer gloves or alternate materials for those sensitive to clay textures.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



- Invite each participant to quietly reflect:

◇ “If your sculpture could whisper one word to you, what would it say?”



TOOL 6: COLLABORATIVE CLAY SCULPTURE

01 - Objectives



Objective: Provide participants an opportunity to **explore individual creativity** with clay, then transition into **collaborative creation**, experiencing the benefits of **teamwork** and **collective art-making**.

Learning Focus:

- Encourage **free play** and **personal artistic exploration**.
- Foster **collaboration, communication**, and **shared vision**.
- Reflect on the dynamics of **working together creatively**.
- Encourage **interpretation** of emotional or abstract themes into visual form.

02 - Time Required



Approximately 60–90 minutes

03 - Target Group



Participants of all ages (ideal for youth groups, community workshops, team-building settings).

04 - Materials Needed



- Modeling clay (various types or colors)
- Sculpting tools (optional)
- Protective covering for work surfaces (optional)
- Towels or wipes for cleaning up (optional)



TOOL 6: ACTIVITY FLOW :::::

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



Explain:

“First, explore freely with clay. Then, work together to create something shared.”

Emphasize **play, experimentation**, and **non-judgment**.

02 - Theme + Planning (10–15 minutes)



Introduce a guiding theme:

- “**The world we want to live in**”
- “**A symbol of unity**”
- “**The future of our community**”

In small groups, participants discuss:

- Ideas and visions
- How to blend their styles into a single piece
- Optionally sketch a rough plan

03 - Collaborative Creation (30–45 minutes)



Groups collaboratively sculpt.

Encourage:

- Active listening
- Role-sharing (switching between leading, supporting)
- Flexibility and openness to others' ideas

Facilitators can step in to support positive group dynamics if needed.



TOOL 6: ACTIVITY FLOW

Group Presentations & Reflection (10–15 minutes)



- Each group presents their final sculpture.
- Share insights about the process and meaning of the piece.

Reflection Questions:

- How did you feel during your individual clay exploration?
- What was surprising or challenging during collaboration?
- How did working together shape the final sculpture?
- What does your sculpture represent for you as a group?

Variations & Extensions



- **Theme Flexibility:**
 - ◇ Change prompts (e.g., “Our Secret Garden,” “Dream Cities,” “Heroes of the Future”).
- **Storytelling Fusion:**
 - ◇ Invite groups to create a short narrative or legend around their sculpture.
- **Technique Mix:**
 - ◇ Incorporate painting, textures, or different sculpting methods.
- **Natural Materials:**
 - ◇ Integrate leaves, sticks, stones for eco-art variations.



TOOL 6: ACTIVITY FLOW

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Tool Safety:**
- ◇ Remind careful handling of sculpting tools.
- Ventilation:**
- ◇ Ensure good airflow if using clay that needs drying, baking, or firing.
- Cleanup Support:**
- ◇ Provide easy-access wipes, water basins, and bins for quick cleanup.
- Accessibility:**
- ◇ Set up working spaces accommodating different mobility needs.

Closure (Optional 5 Minutes)



- ◇ Invite participants to share one word describing their experience today:
- “What one word captures your feeling about creating together?”*



SECTION 3.0: DRAMA THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



Drama therapy uses role-play, improvisation, storytelling, and performance to help young people explore emotions, relationships, and life experiences. Acting out situations — real or imagined — provides a powerful way to:

- Practice coping strategies.
- Build empathy and communication skills.

- Process difficult memories or feelings.
- Develop a stronger sense of agency and confidence.

For youth, drama therapy often feels less like “therapy” and more like **play** — a natural mode of learning and healing. The playful, imaginative elements make it easier for young people to confront fears, explore dreams, and rehearse new ways of being in the world.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Developed by Brazilian director **Augusto Boal**, Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a **powerful tool for empowerment, activism, and healing**, especially for marginalized youth. Instead of passive audiences, TO invites participants to become “spect-actors” — active agents who rehearse taking action in oppressive situations.

Key features of TO for youth:

- **Forum Theatre:** Act out real-life challenges and rehearse different strategies for change.
- **Image Theatre:** Create living sculptures with their bodies to express feelings, ideas, or social issues
- **Invisible Theatre:** Perform unscripted scenes in public spaces to raise awareness about injustice.

TO helps young people:

- Recognize and articulate the injustices they face.
- Build solidarity and collective strength.
- Develop creative problem-solving skills.
- Feel empowered to become change-makers in their communities.



In essence, TO is therapy, education, and activism rolled into one — giving youth the tools to rewrite their own narratives.

TOOL 1: SCULPTOR AND CLAY

01 - Objective



The activity aims to deepen participants’ understanding of physical storytelling and nonverbal communication through the roles of “sculptor” and “clay.” Participants will learn how movement alone can convey complex emotions, narratives, and character dynamics.

02 - Time Required



30–60 minutes

03 - Target Group

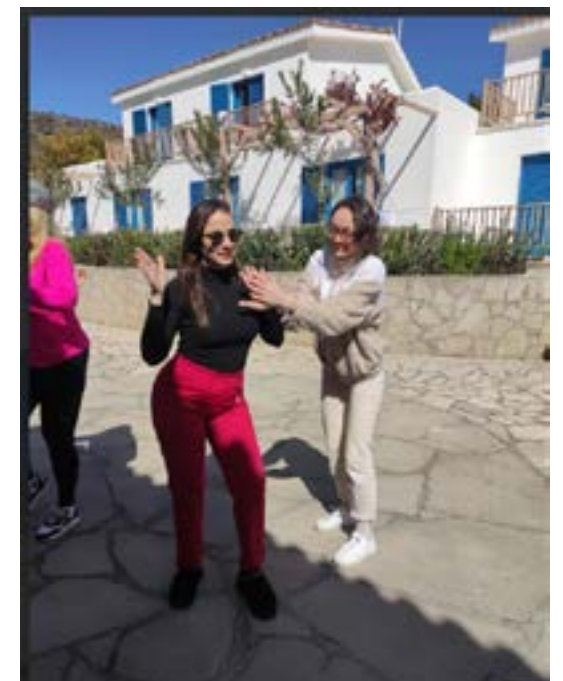


Performers, actors, youth workers, or anyone interested in exploring physical expression and nonverbal storytelling.

04 - Materials Needed



- Open space for movement
- (Optional) Props or costume accessories



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (10 minutes)



Introduce the concept of physical storytelling. Emphasize that body language and movement can powerfully communicate without using words.

02 - Warm-up (10 minutes)



Guide participants through stretching, breathing, and gentle movement exercises to prepare for full-body expression.

03 - Explanation of Roles (5 minutes)



Explain the roles of sculptor and clay:

- The sculptor shapes the clay (another participant) with their hands and body.
- The clay remains passive and responds fluidly to the sculptor's movements.

04 - Pairing Participants (5 minutes)



Pair participants up, with one as the sculptor and the other as clay. After a set time, they will switch roles.

05 - Exploration Phase (10–20 minutes)



Participants explore different characters, emotions, and scenarios, all expressed through movement. Encourage storytelling without words.



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

06 - Discussion and Reflection (10 minutes)



Gather the group to reflect:

- What emotions or ideas did you explore through your movements?
- What challenges did you face in nonverbal storytelling?
- How did trust and communication shape your experience?

Reflection Questions:

- How did it feel to be the sculptor or the clay?
- What was the hardest part about using only physical movement to express yourself?
- What moments were the most surprising or moving?

Variations & Extensions



- Explore specific scenarios (conflict, love, celebration).
- Incorporate improvisation to deepen storytelling.
- Build a group sculpture that incorporates multiple stories.

Safety Considerations



- Emphasize gentle, respectful touch.
- Ensure a clear, obstacle-free space for movement.



TOOL 2: FOLLOW MY HAND

01 - Objective



To build empathy and connection by observing and mimicking each other's hand movements. This helps participants communicate nonverbally and develop stronger group cohesion

02 - Time Required



20–30 minutes

03 - Target Group



Ideal for all ages and backgrounds, especially for groups needing to foster connection and teamwork.

04 - Materials Needed



- Open space for movement



TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 minutes)



Explain that the activity builds empathy and connection through nonverbal communication. Encourage everyone to engage with an open mind.

02 - Demonstration (5 minutes)



Model the exercise by making simple hand movements. A volunteer mimics them as accurately as possible. Start with slow, deliberate movements.

03 - Group Participation (15–20 minutes)



- Pair up participants. One is the leader, the other the follower.
- Leaders make hand movements, and followers mimic them.
- Switch roles after a few minutes.

04 - Reflection and Discussion (5–10 minutes)



After completing the activity, discuss:

- How did it feel to lead vs. follow?
- What strategies helped you stay connected?
- How can you apply this level of attention to your daily life?

Reflection Questions:

- What emotions or thoughts came up while participating?
- What challenges did you face in mimicking others?
- Did you notice any patterns in how people communicate nonverbally?
- How might these skills improve your everyday communication?



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

05 - Discussion and Reflection (10–20 minutes)



Discuss the experience:

- How did you feel during the transition from oppression to freedom?
- How did physical movements convey power dynamics?
- How can these experiences inform social activism or advocacy?

Reflection Questions:

- What emotions did you explore through your body movements?
- How did the shift from oppression to freedom affect your emotional expression?
- What did you learn about social structures and their impacts on people through this activity?

Variations and Extensions



- Explore different themes, like environmental justice or gender equality.
- Introduce elements of improvisation to deepen the narrative.
- Collaborate to create a group performance highlighting these themes.

Safety Considerations



- Ensure emotional safety, especially when engaging with sensitive topics.
- Respect personal boundaries when exploring themes of oppression and freedom.



TOOL 4: FORUM THEATRE - EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

01 - Objective



To empower youth by providing a creative platform to explore and address social issues such as racism, classism, sexism, etc. Through role-playing and dialogue, participants develop critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of civic responsibility.

02 - Time Required



90–120 minutes

03 - Target Group



Youth, particularly adolescents and young adults, who are interested in exploring social issues and enacting positive change.

04 - Materials Needed



- Open space for performance
- (Optional) Props or costumes



TOOL 4: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (10 minutes)



Introduce Forum Theatre as a tool for exploring and addressing social issues through interactive performance. Explain that it encourages critical thinking, empathy, and activism.

02 - Topic Selection (10 minutes)



Divide participants into three groups and assign each a social issue to explore (racism, classism, sexism). Provide background on each topic to spark discussion.

03 - Play Preparation (20 minutes)



Groups will brainstorm and prepare short skits on their assigned topic. They should develop dynamic characters and situations that represent different perspectives within the issue.

04 - Initial Performances (30 minutes)



Groups perform their skits for the rest of the participants. Encourage the audience to pay attention to key moments and issues depicted.

05 - Interactive Forum (30–40 minutes)



Audience members (spect-actors) can stop the performance at any point to suggest alternative actions or dialogue, actively reshaping the outcome. This interactive dialogue allows for exploring different solutions and perspectives on the social issue.



TOOL 4: ACTIVITY FLOW

06 - Discussion and Reflection (10–20 minutes)



Conclude with a reflection on the experience. Discuss:

- How did participating in Forum Theatre affect your understanding of social issues?
- How did the interactive format change your perspective on the topic?
- How can you apply these skills to foster social change in your community?

Reflection Questions:

- How did this activity enhance your understanding of social issues?
- What did you learn by interacting with the performances?
- How can you use this format to address social issues in real life?

Variations and Extensions



- Tackle different issues each time.
- Invite guest speakers or experts for context before or after performances.
- Collaborate with community organizations for public performances.

Safety Considerations



- Ensure emotional support is available, especially when discussing sensitive topics.
- Foster a respectful, inclusive environment where all voices are heard.



TOOL 5: THE MASK WE WEAR – EXPLORING SELF-PERCEPTION THROUGH ART

01 - Objective



To creatively explore the dual layers of identity — how we are perceived by the outside world and how we see ourselves from within.

Using a mask as both a symbol and a medium, participants will reflect on authenticity, self-image, and the contrast between public and private selves. This activity invites self-awareness, emotional expression, and meaningful conversation through art.

02 - Time Required



60–90 minutes (depending on group size)

03 - Target Group



Youth and adults (ages 13+), particularly suitable for groups exploring themes of identity, self-esteem, emotional awareness, or community building.

04 - Materials Needed



- Blank face masks (paper, plastic, or fabric)
- Paint, markers, colored pencils
- Feathers, glitter, sequins, magazine cutouts
- Glue, scissors, fabric scraps
- Protective table covering (optional)
- Reflection journals or paper



TOOL 5: ACTIVITY FLOW

03 - Part II: Internal Perception (20–30 minutes)



Participants now decorate the inside/back of the mask — a space rarely seen — to express how they see and feel about themselves.

Invite them to reflect on:

- What are the truths I carry quietly?
- How do I experience myself emotionally or spiritually?
- What parts of me remain hidden, vulnerable, or misunderstood?

They can use words, symbols, textures, or images that hold personal meaning. This side can be abstract, tender, raw, or joyful — there are no rules.

04 - Sharing & Group Reflection (10–20 minutes)



Create a supportive circle for participants to show and share their masks (if they feel comfortable).

Discussion prompts:

- What did you notice or learn during this process?
- How different are your inner and outer selves?
- Were there any surprises while creating either side of your mask?
- How might you bring these two sides of yourself into better balance?
- Offer the option of journaling privately for those who prefer to process in writing.

Reflection Questions (individual or group):

- What did you discover about yourself through this creative process?
- Which side of the mask was easier or harder to make — and why?
- How does this activity connect with your daily experiences or relationships?
- What does authenticity mean to you after this experience?



TOOL 5: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations & Extensions



- **Reflective Journaling:** Ask participants to write a “letter to self” after completing the mask.
- **Theme-Based Masks:** Focus on topics like cultural identity, future self, or emotional states.
- **Guided Visualization:** Before starting, lead a short mindfulness journey to connect with inner self.
- **Partner Dialogue:** Pair up to share and ask reflective questions about each other’s masks.

Facilitator Tips & Safety Considerations



- Emphasize that all expressions are valid — there is no right or wrong way to decorate a mask.
- Check in gently with participants who seem overwhelmed or emotionally affected.
- Provide quiet, low-sensory spaces for reflection if needed.
- Foster a judgment-free and confidential environment to promote authenticity and openness.
- Remind participants to work at their own pace and opt out of sharing if they wish.
- What does authenticity mean to you after this experience?

Closure (5–10 minutes)



End with a grounding ritual — perhaps a closing circle, a collective breath, or a silent gesture of appreciation for each other’s honesty.

Optional final prompt:

“What’s one thing from the inside of your mask that you’d like to bring a little more into the outside world?”



SECTION 4.0: DANCE AS THERAPY



Dance as therapy, often called Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), is a powerful approach that uses movement and dance to support emotional, cognitive, physical, and social integration. It is based on the idea that the body, mind, and emotions are deeply interconnected, and that movement can express and release feelings that words sometimes cannot.

In dance therapy, participants are encouraged to move freely, exploring their inner worlds through creative expression. The emphasis is not on technical skill or performance, but rather on the authentic experience of movement and the personal meanings it holds.

Dance Therapy

This form of therapy can help individuals:

- Process emotions and trauma
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Build body awareness and self-confidence
- Strengthen communication and social connections
- Foster a sense of joy, freedom, and vitality

Dance therapy can be practiced individually or in groups, and it welcomes all bodies, abilities, and experiences. Whether through structured exercises or free improvisation, participants learn to listen to their bodies, trust their instincts, and reconnect with their true selves.



TOOL 1: BODY AS A “CONTAINER” – A DANCE & MOVEMENT EXPLORATION

01 - Objective



This dance therapy activity invites participants to explore the concept of the body as a container — holding experiences, emotions, and sensory input — while also reflecting on the group as a container that supports empathy, attunement, and shared expression. Through movement, sound, and reflection, participants deepen their self-awareness and connection with others.

02 - Time Required



90–120 minutes (adaptable based on group size and facilitation style)

03 - Target Group



Youth and adults (ages 15+). Suitable for beginners and experienced movers alike.

04 - Materials Needed



- Speakers and audio player
- 3 contrasting soundtracks or music tracks (1–2 minutes each)
- Paper and pens or journals for participant reflections
- Comfortable, open space for movement



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Warm-Up & Embodiment (15–20 minutes)



Create a safe and grounded start with the following warm-up sequence:

- **Breath Awareness** – Invite participants to center themselves with deep, mindful breathing.
- **Body Tapping** – Gently tap from head to toe to awaken body awareness.
- **Shaking** – Encourage loose, rhythmic shaking to release tension.
- **Twisting & Flow** – Guide participants in gentle torso twists and breathing-based movements.
- **Moving Through Space** – Invite free exploration: walking, swaying, spinning, crawling – whatever feels natural.
- **Name with Movement Circle** – In a circle, each person says their name with a gesture or movement. The group repeats it three times, reinforcing presence and playfulness.
- **Transition:** Invite participants to retrieve their earlier reflections or brainstorm a few words around the concepts “Body as a Container / Group as a Container.” Use this to set the emotional tone for the session.

02 - Sound Stimuli Exploration (15–20 minutes)



- Participants spread out in the room, standing or seated.
- Play 3 distinct soundtracks (1–2 minutes each).
- After each, participants move freely, letting the sound guide their bodies.

After each movement experience, pause for journaling:

- What emotions or sensations did this evoke?
- What did the movement feel like?
- If this movement had a name or title, what would it be?



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

03 - Movement Exchange in Pairs (30–40 minutes)



- Participants form pairs (A & B).
- For each sound:
 - ◇ A moves first, letting music guide them.
 - ◇ B observes, then responds with their own movement.
- Music may continue throughout, or be paused between turns.
- Switch roles after each track or at the halfway point.

04 - Pair Reflection (10 minutes per pair)



- A shares while B listens (5 minutes), then switch.

Discuss:

- ◇ What did you feel as a mover and as a witness?
- ◇ What patterns, sensations, or connections emerged?

05 - Group Reflection & Integration (15–25 minutes)



Bring the group together in a circle or seated arrangement.

Suggested Reflection Questions:

- How did sound influence your movement and internal experience?
- What did it feel like to be “contained” — either by yourself or by the group/witness?
- How did the process affect your sense of connection and empathy?



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations & Extensions



- **Nonverbal Version:** Remove verbal communication entirely to deepen body-based expression.
- **Solo Journaling Emphasis:** Extend silent journaling after the pair exchange for deeper personal insight.
- **Thematic Movement Prompts:** Use themes such as seasons, growth, emotions, or transformation.
- **Group Improvisation:** Let the group collectively respond to a single soundtrack, exploring shared rhythm, mirroring, and attunement.

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Encourage participants to honor their physical and emotional limits — there is no “right” way to move.
- Normalize rest and stillness as valid forms of expression.
- If needed, offer visual alternatives for sound-based work or gentler options for those with sensory sensitivities.
- Create and reaffirm group agreements around confidentiality, non-judgment, and consent.
- Remind everyone to move with awareness of the space and others.

Closure (5–10 minutes):



End with a grounding ritual. Options include:

- Sharing one word or gesture representing what they’re taking away.
- Quiet journaling on:
 - ◇ “What did I learn about myself as a container today?”
 - ◇ “What did I receive from the group?”

TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW

04 - Personal Reflection (5–10 minutes)



Invite participants to take a few moments in silence to journal or draw their experience. Prompt them with questions like:

- What did I feel while inside the parachute?
- How did I feel about offering containment to others?
- Which role felt more natural or more vulnerable?

05 - Group Sharing & Discussion (15–30 minutes)



Gather the group in a circle for verbal sharing (popcorn style or talking piece format).

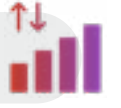
Suggested Reflection Questions:

- What emotions surfaced during the experience?
- How did the group dynamic change your movement or emotional state?
- In what ways did you feel supported or challenged by the container?
- How do these dynamics relate to real-life experiences of being held or holding space for others?



TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations and Extensions



- **Symbolic Themes:** Introduce themes like trust, transformation, unity, emotional waves, or seasons of change to guide the parachute movement.
- **Silent Container:** Try a full round without speaking or music, focusing solely on the sound of fabric, breath, and group rhythm.
- **Art Integration:** After movement, allow participants to create a drawing or sculpture representing their experience of being “inside” vs. “outside” the container.
- **Writing Prompt:** “When I am held by others, I feel...” / “When I hold space for others, I am...”

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Ensure clear ground with no obstacles or slippery surfaces.
- Allow participants to opt out of going under the parachute if they are claustrophobic or uncomfortable.
- Encourage gentle, coordinated movement — no sudden tugs or pulls.
- Be mindful of sensory sensitivities (light, noise, touch).
- Ensure emotional safety by affirming the space is non-judgmental and supportive.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



Close with a **grounding exercise**, such as:

- Group breathwork (inhaling together, exhaling with sound).
- Silent circle with hand over heart or gentle touch on the parachute.
- Sharing one word that represents their takeaway from the session.



TOOL 3: EXPRESSIVE PAINT DANCE – MOVEMENT AS ART

01 - Objective



This activity invites participants to explore creativity, emotion, and embodiment through movement and visual expression. By using their bodies as paintbrushes on large paper canvases, participants create bold, abstract art while deepening their connection to their intuition, emotions, and physical expression. The focus is on letting go of inhibitions, embracing spontaneity, and enjoying the fusion of dance and visual art.

02 - Time Required



60–90 minutes (can be adapted based on group size and depth of reflection)

03 - Target Group



Open to all ages and backgrounds (ideal for youth and adults ages 12+). No prior experience in dance or art is required.

04 - Materials Needed



- Large rolls or sheets of paper (butcher paper or craft paper)
- Washable, non-toxic paint (variety of colors)
- **Optional:** Paintbrushes or sponges for hand/foot detail
- Music player and speakers
- Protective plastic sheets/tarps for the floor
- Aprons or old clothes for participants
- Wet wipes or access to cleaning materials and water



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Preparation (10 minutes)



- Cover the floor with plastic sheets or tarps to protect surfaces.
- Tape large sheets of paper on top to create your movement canvas.
- Pour out different paint colors directly onto the paper in splashes or blobs.
- Ensure space between canvases if multiple participants will move simultaneously.

02 - Warm-Up & Introduction (10 minutes)



Guide participants through a brief warm-up:

- Gentle stretching, shaking, and breath-based movements
- Invite playfulness and release — helping participants loosen up physically and mentally.

Introduce the concept:

"In this activity, we'll use movement and our bodies to create art. The paint is your medium, but your body is the brush. There is no right or wrong — only honest expression."

03 - Expressive Paint Dance (30–45 minutes)



- Play dynamic, rhythmic music to inspire creative movement.
- Invite participants onto the paper to move freely — rolling, stepping, sliding, stamping, crawling.
- Encourage the use of different body parts — hands, feet, elbows, knees — and varying speeds, levels (low/high), and qualities (fluid/staccato).
- Emphasize presence and letting the body guide the process rather than focusing on the visual result.
- **Optional:** Dance in shifts if space is limited, or use group vs. solo rounds.

TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

04 - Reflection & Group Discussion (10–20 minutes)



After the dance, invite participants to walk around and observe the painted canvases like an art gallery. Then gather for group reflection.

Suggested Questions:

- How did it feel to dance on the paper and paint with your body?
- What emotions or sensations came up during the experience?
- Are there specific movements or moments that stood out to you?
- What do you notice in the visual outcome? Does it reflect how you felt?
- How can this experience relate to other areas of your life or creativity?

05 - Group Sharing & Discussion (15–30 minutes)



Gather the group in a circle for verbal sharing (popcorn style or talking piece format).

Suggested Reflection Questions:

- What emotions surfaced during the experience?
- How did the group dynamic change your movement or emotional state?
- In what ways did you feel supported or challenged by the container?
- How do these dynamics relate to real-life experiences of being held or holding space for others?



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

Variations and Extensions



- **Collaborative Creation:** Participants work in pairs or trios, creating shared pieces and exploring communication through co-movement.
- **Themed Expression:** Use themes like “transformation,” “storm,” “freedom,” or “inner child” to guide the emotional quality of the movement.
- **Mixed Media Integration:** Add fabric strips, string, feathers, or other tactile elements to the canvas for texture.
- **Guided Reflection or Journaling:** After the activity, offer time for solo journaling or a body scan meditation for deeper personal insight.

Safety & Accessibility Considerations



- Ensure **paint is non-toxic and washable**.
- Check that the floor is not slippery or overly saturated.
- Encourage participants to **move mindfully** and respect others' space.
- Offer **alternative roles** for those who may not wish to dance — such as observing, painting with hands only, or contributing music.
- Keep **clean-up** stations available: towels, water buckets, or wipes.

Closure (5–10 minutes)



- Invite participants to sit in a circle and take a **few deep breaths** together.
- Offer a final question:

"If your artwork had a title, what would it be?"

- Each person can share one word, one movement, or a closing gesture.



TOOL 4: BODY MAPPING – VISUALIZING THE INNER LANDSCAPE

01 - Objective



This activity invites participants to explore the connection between **body, mind, and emotions** by creating life-sized visual representations of themselves. Through intuitive expression, symbolic imagery, and reflection, participants increase their **self-awareness**, recognize **embodied emotions**, and gain **insight into their personal experiences**. Body Mapping promotes emotional release, empowerment, and holistic understanding of one's internal world.

02 - Time Required



60–90 minutes total

(Time may vary based on group size and depth of reflection)

03 - Target Group



Appropriate for all ages (recommended 14+). Ideal for individuals or groups seeking **creative self-reflection, body-based awareness, and emotional expression**. No artistic skill is required.

04 - Materials Needed



- Large sheets of paper or poster board (big enough for body outlines)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Tape or painter's adhesive (to secure paper to floor/walls)
- **Optional:** Magazines, scissors, glue (for collage elements)
- **Optional:** Soothing background music



TOOL 4: ACTIVITY FLOW :::::

01 - Preparation (10 minutes)



- Set up the creative space: lay out large paper sheets on the floor or tape them to walls.
- Distribute drawing materials around the space for accessibility.
- Briefly introduce the activity:

"This is a creative process to explore the stories, emotions, and sensations your body holds. Through this visual journey, we'll reflect on who we are — not just on the outside, but from within."

02 - Body Mapping (30–45 minutes)



1. Tracing the Body: Participants lie on the paper and trace their bodies (alone or with a partner, if comfortable).

2. Filling the Map: Inside the outline, participants illustrate their current internal landscape using:

- **Colours** to represent emotional states or energy.
- **Shapes** to symbolize feelings, pain, joy, or memories.
- **Words** or affirmations.
- **Collage** elements (optional) for layered meaning.

3. Encourage participants to **trust their intuition**, allowing images and symbols to emerge spontaneously.

Optional Prompt Examples:

- Where in your body do you feel joy, stress, tension, or calm?
- What parts of you feel strong or tender?
- What memories are held in different areas of your body?



SECTION 5.0: MUSIC THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



Music therapy uses rhythm, melody, lyrics, and movement to help young people explore emotions, build skills, and process life experiences. Whether through listening, singing, songwriting, or playing instruments, music becomes a safe and expressive outlet to:

- Regulate emotions and reduce anxiety.
- Strengthen self-expression and communication.

- Reconnect with memories and make meaning from them.
- Foster a sense of identity, connection, and joy.

For youth, music therapy often feels more like a jam session or a shared playlist than a clinical intervention. It taps into a universal language — one many young people already use to cope, connect, and create — making it an accessible and powerful path to healing.

Music Therapy

Tools commonly used in music therapy for youth include:

- **Songwriting:** Crafting original lyrics and melodies to process emotions or tell personal stories.
- **Lyric Analysis:** Reflecting on favorite songs to uncover deeper emotional truths.
- **Improvisation and Drumming:** Releasing tension and practicing communication through rhythm and spontaneous sound.
- **Guided Listening:** Using curated playlists to explore mood, identity, and memory.

Music therapy helps young people:

Recognize and articulate the injustices they face.

- Feel heard and understood.
- Channel emotions into creative expression.
- Build social connection and group cohesion.
- Strengthen resilience and inner harmony.



At its heart, music therapy meets youth where they are — in sound, in story, and in rhythm — offering them tools not just to survive, but to thrive.

TOOL 1: PLAYING IN ONE RHYTHM

01 - Objective



The activity creates a sense security, belonging to a group, group cohesion, for group members to feel each other and warm-up.

02 - Time Required



Total time required (can include breakdown if needed). Example: 60 minutes (15 min intro, 30 min creation, 15 min sharing).
Depending on the size of the group 15-20 min

03 - Target Group



Recommended number of participants and ideal group size if divided into smaller teams.
Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed



A bullet-point list of all materials and tools required (e.g., clay, markers, paper, tools, protective table covers, etc.).

- 2 sticks for each participant
- Comfortable seating arrangement in a circle



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Begin by explaining the purpose of the activity and the importance of group cohesion, for group members to feel each other, for group's warm-up. The main thing is not to be afraid, because here it is impossible to make a mistake, to do something wrong.

02 - Main Activity (10-15 min)



Group leader shows different rhythms, and the group follows the leader. Then a group participant is offered the role of the leader. The leaders change by a circle, one behind the other. The leaders pass the baton to the next one with a nod or a glance. Then the group comes to the most complicated point when the leading role is assumed by the members of the group independently, freely by choice, according to their feelings.

03 - Reflection (10–15 min)



Provide 3–5 questions to guide discussion or journaling after the activity.

Example:

- How did you feel while engaging in the activity?
- What did you like more, being the leader of the group, being the leader or following the group?
- What feelings took over when the moment of being the leader of the group approached?
- In what ways can you use the skills and perspectives gained from this activity to address social issues in your community?



TOOL 2: MUSICAL DIALOGUE

01 - Objective



To promote communication, emotional expression, and interpersonal connections among participants through interactive musical dialogue, fostering a supportive and collaborative therapeutic environment.

02 - Time Required



Depending on group size 30-50 min

03 - Target Group



Educators

04 - Materials Needed



- A variety of musical instruments (e.g., drums, keyboards, guitars, shakers, sticks...)
- Comfortable seating arrangement in a circle
- A quiet space conducive to music-making



TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW : : : : : : : :

01 - Introduction (5-8 min)



Briefly present the purpose of the activity, which is to promote communication, emotional expression, and interpersonal connections among participants through interactive musical dialogue. Then invite the participants to explore as many musical instruments as they can during 5-8 min.

02 - Main Activity (2-3 min per pair)



Invite the participants to choose the instrument they feel connected. Then facilitator starts an instrumental dialogue with a group member. Then the other pair of participants start their dialogue, and the activity passes from pair to pair. Group leader facilitates the process.

03 - Reflection (5 min per person)



Reflection should take longer than usually, because the participants were silent for a long time and would enjoy speaking. Create a safe space for participants to discuss their experiences. Invite individuals to express how they felt during the musical dialogue, the emotions that arose, and any insights gained from the interactions.

Reflection Questions:

- How did it feel to communicate through music rather than words?
- What emotions did you experience during the musical dialogue with others?
- Were there moments of connection or surprise during the interactions?
- What was your favorite part of the musical dialogue session?
- How can you apply the experiences from this session to your everyday interactions?



TOOL 3: MUSICAL IMPROVISATION

01 - Objective



To foster group cohesion, enhance emotional expression, and promote social interaction through collaborative musical improvisation, allowing participants to explore their feelings and thoughts in a supportive and inclusive environment.

02 - Time Required



Depending on group size 30-50 min

03 - Target Group



All Levels

04 - Materials Needed



- A variety of musical instruments (e.g., drums, keyboards, guitars, shakers, sticks...)
- Comfortable seating arrangement in a circle
- A quiet space conducive to music-making



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Explain the purpose of musical improvisation in therapy. Emphasize that the focus is on expression and collaboration rather than performance. Encourage an open mindset, reminding participants that there are no right or wrong ways to create music.

02 - Main Activity (2-3 min per pair)



The group together choose a name of improvisation. The group plays together, each member of the group plays the pre-selected theme on his musical instrument according to his feelings. Usually at the beginning of an improvisation, each participant plays alone, individually, as if by himself, but at some point, he starts to play with other members of the group, and it is possible that at some point the whole group will manage to play together. If, however, the group fails to come to a common improvisation, then the leader of the group assumes the leading role and tries to bring the group together, to play a specific rhythm, so that the group gradually joins a common rhythmic, common improvisation. But usually, the group itself manages to play together for a short while.

03 - Reflection (5 min per person)



After the improvisation, create a safe space for participants to share their experiences as a group. Invite individuals to express how they felt during the improvisation, what emotions emerged, and any insights gained from the experience.

Reflection Questions:

- What emotions did you collectively experience while improvising as a group?
- How did it feel to create music spontaneously with others?
- Were there moments during the improvisation that surprised you or your group?
- What was your favorite part of the group improvisation session?
- How can you relate this group musical experience to your daily life or personal challenges?



TOOL 4: GREET WITH MOVEMENT AND SOUND

01 - Objective



To encourage group bonding, enhance self-expression, and promote non-verbal communication through a combination of movement and sound

02 - Time Required



Depending on group size 30-50 min

03 - Target Group



All Levels



TOOL 4: ACTIVITY FLOW : : : : : : : :

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Explain that today's activity is about greeting each other using both movement and sound. Emphasize that it is a fun, improvisational way to express themselves without words

02 - Main Activity (2-3 min per pair)



Invite each participant, one by one, to create a greeting for the group using both a physical movement (e.g., a wave, a jump, or a hand gesture) and a sound with voice. After each greeting, encourage the group to respond by mirroring the movement and sound. Continue until all participants have had a chance to create and share their greetings. This task is first done in a circle, one after the other. The task is repeated at least 2 - 3 times to memorize the movements of other group members as well.

The next step: the task is to perform free entertainment. One group member approaches another group member and shows the movement of that selected group member. If the move is correct, then the two switch places. If there is no proper movement, then the whole group can help. Participants change places. And now the one who approached, the new "game" leader, continues his march.

Continue until all members of the group participated in the task and changed places.

03 - Reflection (5 min per person)



After everyone has shared their greeting, invite the group to sit together and reflect on the activity.

Reflection Questions:

- How did you feel when creating your greeting with movement and sound?
- Was it easy or difficult to express yourself without words? Why?
- How did it feel to see others respond to your greeting?
- Did you notice any emotions or thoughts that came up while doing this activity?
- How could you use this form of expression in your daily life to communicate or connect with others?

TOOL 5: DANCING WITH STICKS

01 - Objective



This activity fosters exploration, communication, and empathy within the group, promoting a deeper sense of connection and understanding among participants and non-verbal communication.

02 - Time Required



Depending on group size 30-50 min

03 - Target Group



All Levels

04 - Materials Needed



- 2 sushi sticks,
- Open place for movement
- Background music



TOOL 5: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Introduce the task to be performed and its rules, namely, performing with eyes closed, in pairs, holding the sticks between their fingertips, one end of the stick pressed by each partner. The participants have to dance, but they can't talk

This task is about mutual trust, non-verbal communication, and cooperation. Explain to the participants that they will be working for this activity. Each pair will hold a sushi stick with one finger together, with one person holding each end. They will then engage in a slow, improvised "dance" while keeping their eyes closed. Emphasize that the focus is on trust, communication through movement, and connection with their partner without the use of sight. The stick serves as a bridge for non-verbal communication.

02 - Main Activity (10-15 min)



Group leader shows different rhythms, and the group follows the leader. Then a group participant is offered the role of the leader. The leaders change by a circle, one behind the other. The leaders pass the baton to the next one with a nod or a glance. Then the group comes to the most complicated point when the leading role is assumed by the members of the group independently, freely by choice, according to their feelings.

03 - Reflection (10-15 min)



After exercise invite the group to sit together and reflect on the activity. Encourage participants to discuss how it felt to express themselves through movement with closed eyes.

Reflection Questions:

- Was it easy to choose a pair?
- How did it feel to lead the movements? Was it easy or challenging?
- Which of the pair was the leader and which was the follower?
- Maybe you both led or followed.
- Maybe you couldn't agree.
- What was it like to move with your eyes closed?
Was it easy or challenging?



TOOL 6: MIRRORING

01 - Objective



To enhance empathy, communication, and body awareness by fostering connection and non-verbal dialogue using movement mirroring in a therapeutic setting..

02 - Time Required



Depending on the size of the group 20-30 min

03 - Target Group



All Levels - Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed:



- Open place for movement
- Background music

TOOL 6: ACTIVITY FLOW : : : : : : : :

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Introducing the concept of mirroring in movement, where one person leads with a movement and the others mirror the movement as closely as possible. This activity promotes connection and attunement between participants, helping them to “speak” and “listen” through body language. Emphasize that the goal is to be attentive and connected to the other person’s movement, rather than to perform perfectly.

02 - Main Activity (10-15 min)



Group members divide into pairs. Ask them to decide who will lead first.

The leader begins with slow, simple movements (e.g., raising arms, swaying side to side, or stepping forward and back), while the partner mirrors these movements as accurately as possible.

After a few minutes, have participants switch roles so that everyone has the chance to both lead and follow.

03 - Reflection (10–15 min)



After exercise invite the group to sit together and reflect on the activity. Encourage participants to discuss how it felt to express themselves on leading and mirroring experience.

Reflection Questions:

- How did it feel to lead the movements? Was it easy or challenging?
- How did it feel to follow and mirror someone else’s movements?
- Did you feel connected to your partner while mirroring their movements? Why or why not?
- What emotions or thoughts came up for you during the activity?

TOOL 7: FLOWERS

01 - Objective



To encourage creative self-expression, enhance body awareness, and foster social interaction and connection through free movement and improvisation with chiffon scarves. This activity promotes emotional expression, non-verbal communication, and collaboration in a playful, supportive environment.

02 - Time Required



Total time required (can include breakdown if needed). Example: 60 minutes (15 min intro, 30 min creation, 15 min sharing).

03 - Target Group



All Levels - Recommended number of participants and ideal group size if divided into smaller teams. Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed:



- Open place for movement
- Background music
- Colorful chiffon scarves



TOOL 7: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5-7 min)



Provide each participant with a light, colourful chiffon scarf. Explain that they are free to explore movement using the scarves in any way they wish. Encourage participants to let their imaginations guide their movements.

02 - Main Activity (5-7 min)



Invite participants to start moving freely with the scarves. They can wave them in the air, create swirling motions, or toss them gently. Encourage them to experiment with different speeds, shapes, and gestures, using the scarves as an extension of their bodies. Suggest they form shapes with the scarves like flowers, and offer them to others as a gesture of connection. This can be done individually or in pairs, fostering interaction and playfulness. Encourage participants to move alone or with others, freely improvising based on how the scarves inspire them. They can exchange scarves with others, dance together, or simply observe how the scarves move in response to their own body movements.

03 - Reflection (10–15 min)



After exercise invite the group to sit together and reflect on the activity.

Reflection Questions:

- How did it feel to move freely with the chiffon scarves? Did the scarves influence the way you moved?
- What emotions or thoughts came up for you during the activity?
- How did it feel to create shapes like flowers and share them with others?
- Did you prefer moving alone, or did you enjoy interacting with others during the activity? Why?
- How did exchanging scarves or dancing together with someone else affect your experience?
- Were there any moments when you felt particularly connected to the group or to a partner? What created that feeling?

SECTION 6.0: PHOTO-THERAPY AS A THERAPY TOOL



Photo therapy uses photography — taking, viewing, or discussing images — to help young people explore their identity, emotions, relationships, and life stories. Through the lens of a camera or the frame of a photograph, youth can reflect on their world and reframe their experiences in meaningful ways.

- Express thoughts and feelings that may be hard to put into words
- Explore identity, culture, and self-perception.
- Process trauma or change from a

safe distance.

- Build self-esteem, storytelling skills, and personal insight.
- For many young people, photo therapy doesn't feel like "therapy" at all — it feels like documenting life, capturing moments, or sharing their point of view. With smartphones and cameras already central to youth culture, this creative approach makes therapeutic work more familiar, engaging, and personal.

Photo-Therapy

Common tools in photo therapy for youth include:

- **Self-Portrait Projects:** Explore identity, emotion, and self-image through creative self-representation.
- **Photo Journaling:** Combine daily photos with reflections to track mood, growth, or change.
- **Found Image Collages:** Use magazines or printed photos to express feelings or construct visual metaphors.
- **Narrative Photography:** Tell a story through a series of images — real or imagined — to process events or envision new paths.

Music therapy helps young people:

Photo therapy helps young people:

- See their lives from new perspectives.
- Gain control over how they represent themselves.
- Discover meaning in their experiences.
- Build confidence in their voice and vision.

In essence, photo therapy invites youth to become both the observer and the storyteller — turning the lens on their lives to find clarity, healing, and hope.



TOOL 1: PROJECTION

01 - Objective



Encourages participants to express their feelings indirectly through images, which can be less intimidating than verbal expression.

02 - Time Required



Total time required (can include breakdown if needed). Example: 60 minutes (15 min intro, 30 min creation, 15 min sharing). 60 min (5 minutes choosing the image, 5 minutes discussion per person.)

03 - Target Group



Educators - Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed:



- Cut out photographs from magazines which resemble different topics, 2 per person.



TOOL 1: ACTIVITY FLOW

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Briefly present the activity and purpose.

02 - Main Activity (5-7 min)



Instruct participants to carefully observe the photographs presented on the table, then select a photograph that resembles themselves, their identity, personality.

03 - Presentation / Sharing (optional) (5 min per person)



- Participants present the photo and reflect on their choice

04 - Reflection (10–15 min)



Reflection Questions:

Provide 3–5 questions to guide discussion or journaling after the activity.

Example:

- What did you discover about yourself or others during this activity?
- What was challenging or surprising about the process?
- How did the theme influence your creative choices?



TOOL 2: PROJECTION + ART THERAPY

01 - Objective



Encourage participants to express their feelings indirectly through images, which can be less intimidating than verbal expression. Combining photography with art therapy can deepen the exploration of emotions and self-expression. By adding artistic elements around a chosen image, participants can further express their feelings and thoughts.

02 - Time Required



60-90 min (5 minutes instructing, 5 minutes choosing the image, 30 minutes for collage making, 5 minutes per person reflection.)

03 - Target Group



Educators - Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed:



- Cut out photographs from magazines which resemble different topics,
- A3 paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Markers
- Crayons and/or pencils
- Magazines



TOOL 2: ACTIVITY FLOW :::::

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Briefly present the activity and purpose.

02 - Main Activity (5-7 min)



Participants carefully observe the photographs presented on the table, then select a photograph. Paste it on the A3 paper and create an environment around the image using the given art materials.

03 - Presentation / Sharing (optional) (5 min per person)



- Participants present the photo tacking it on the wall

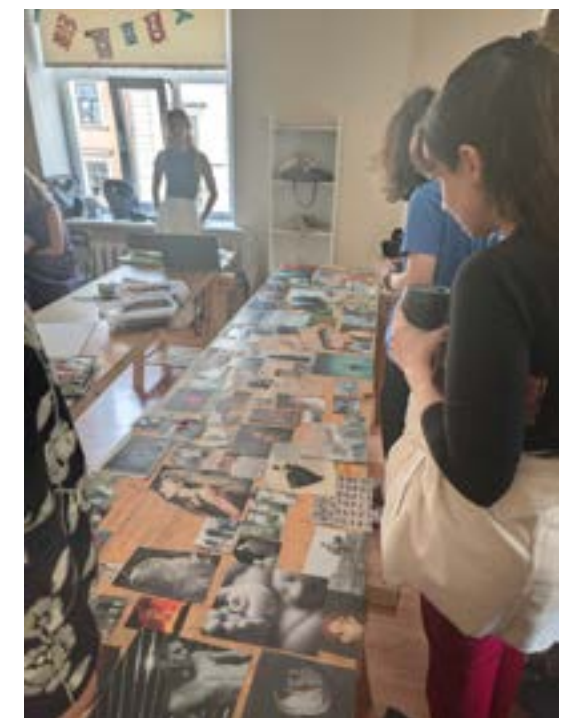
04 - Reflection (10–15 min)



Each participant reflects on their collage.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you add around the image?
- How does this enhance or change the meaning of the original photo?
- How did it feel to share your creation?
- Did your partner notice something you hadn't seen in your artwork?



TOOL 3: TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH

01 - Objective



Encourages to reflect on the experiences and express emotions creatively. To use photography to express abstract concepts or emotions..

02 - Time Required



Depends on the environment - small room - around 15 minutes, outdoors can be even an hour.

03 - Target Group



All levels - Min 10 max 20 people

04 - Materials Needed:



- Smartphones with cameras



TOOL 3: ACTIVITY FLOW :::::

01 - Introduction (5 min)



Briefly present the activity and purpose.

02 - Main Activity (15-60 min)



Instruct participants to think of an emotion or concept that is difficult to express with words, such as fear, hope, growth, loneliness, freedom, power, love, playfulness, disgust, eternity, piece, surrender, or courage. Then to take a photo or several that symbolize this emotion or concept

03 - Presentation / Sharing (optional) (5 min per person)



- Participants present the photo and reflect on their choice

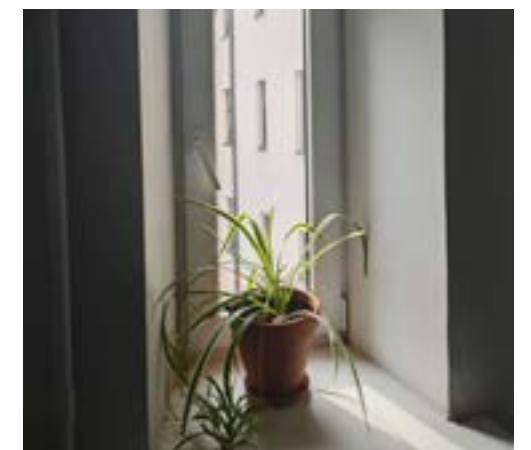
04 - Reflection (10–15 min)



Each participant reflects on their collage.

Reflection Questions:

- What story does this photo tell?
- How does it relate to your current feelings or experiences?
- Did the act of taking this photo change your perspective on your emotions?



REFLECTION CARDS

1. Ways to Use the Cards

3. Activities

2. Reflection Cards

SECTION 1: WAYS TO USE THE CARDS



1 Daily Reflections

Each participant draws a card at the end of the day and reflects (or shares) how it relates to their experience.

2 Check-in or Check-out Circles

Participants choose a card at the beginning or end of a session to express how they feel or what they're taking with them.

3 Storytelling Prompts

Use the card as inspiration to share a personal story related to its word, image, or message.

4 Creative Writing or Journaling

Cards can act as prompts for poems, short texts, or letters.

5 Group Dialogue

Small groups discuss a card and how it connects to the theme of the project or their shared experiences.

6 Walk & Talk

In pairs, participants walk together and discuss a card and what it brings up for them.

7 Mindfulness or Meditation Anchor

Use the card's word or image as a focus for a short meditation, visualization, or breathing exercise.





Danger



Broken



Explosion



Flying



Erma's Angel



Door



Friends



Friends 2

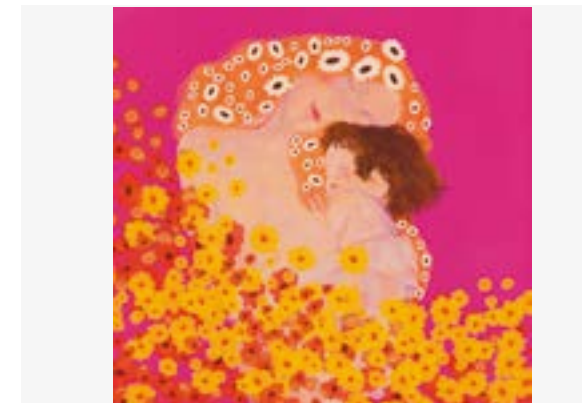




Free



Grass Field



Love



Play

Home is Where the
Heart Is

Lady Moon



Primal BnW



Primal BnW2

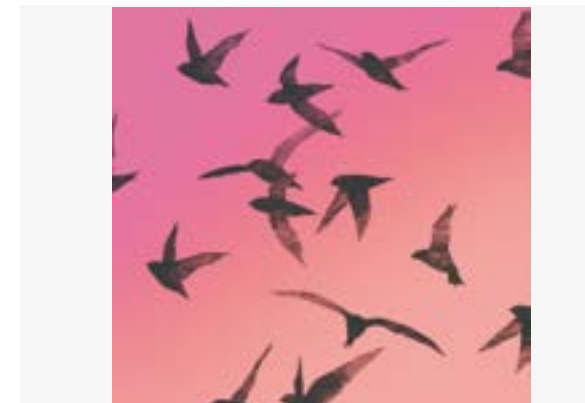




Primal BnW3



Primal Colour



Sky



Sinking



Primal Colour 2



Primal Colour 3



Star



Sun



ACTIVITY 1: WALK WITH A WORD

01 - Objective



To encourage deeper reflection and connection between participants using movement and conversation inspired by the card prompts.

02 - Time Required



30–45 minutes

03 - Materials Needed:



- One card per pair or participant (can include a word, image, or question)
- Optional: Journals or notebooks



ACTIVITY 1 FLOW



01 - Instructions



1. **Pair up** the participants randomly.
2. Each pair draws **one card** from the deck.
3. Explain the activity: “You’re going on a short reflective walk with your partner. Your task is to talk about whatever comes up for you when you look at the card. You can share personal stories, memories, thoughts, or emotions related to it. You can also talk about how it connects to your current experience in the project.”
4. Go for a **10–15 minute walk** in or around your location while discussing the card.
5. After returning, give each participant **5–10 minutes** to write in their journal or reflect quietly.
6. Regroup in a circle. Invite **voluntary sharing** of insights, feelings, or experiences that came up during the walk.

02 - Variations



- Do the walk in **trios** instead of pairs.
- Use the activity as a **morning energizer** or **evening closing**.
- If you’re using visual cards (images), allow participants to interpret them freely without explanation.



ACTIVITY 2: STORIES FROM THE CARD

01 - Objective



To promote self-expression, empathy, and group connection through personal storytelling inspired by the cards.

02 - Time Required



30–60 minutes (depending on group size and depth)

03 - Materials Needed:



- A deck of cards (each with a word, image, or question).
- A calm space for sharing (circle format if possible).



ACTIVITY 2 FLOW



01 - Instructions



1. Ask each participant to **draw one card** randomly from the deck.
2. Give them **5–10 minutes** to reflect on the card silently and think about a **personal story** or memory that the card brings to mind.
3. You can ask:
 - “What does this card remind you of?”
 - “When have you felt this way?”
 - “Is there a time in your life connected to this word/image?”
4. Once everyone is ready, form a sharing circle.
5. Invite participants to share their stories one by one, using the card as a starting point. Emphasize active listening and no interruptions.
6. Optionally, after each story, others can reflect back what they heard or how it resonated (if time and group safety allow).

02 - Variations



- If participants are shy, they can write the story first, then read it out loud.
- Use thematic storytelling (e.g. “resilience,” “growth,” “change”) and let participants choose cards related to the theme.
- For creative groups, participants can act out or draw a part of their story.

03 - Why It Works:



Storytelling helps build trust, reveal shared human experiences, and create a sense of belonging. The cards act as gentle prompts that bypass overthinking and invite emotional truth.

ACTIVITY 3: CARD CLUSTERS (GROUP MAPPING)

01 - Objective



Explore shared themes, emotions, or values within the group.

02 - Time Required

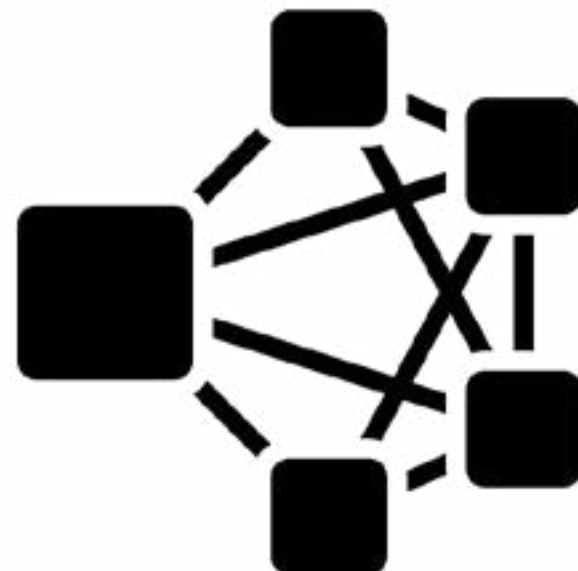


30–45 minutes

03 - Materials Needed:



- Full deck of cards, large floor/table space

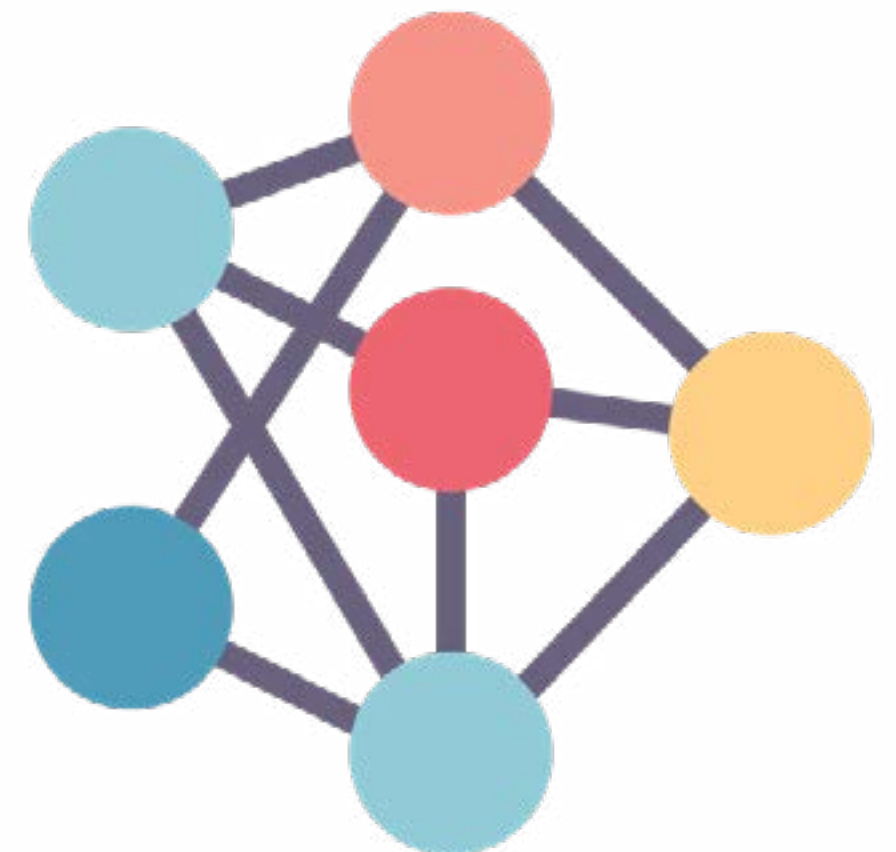


ACTIVITY 3 FLOW : : : : : : : : :

01 - Instructions



1. Spread all cards face up.
2. Participants walk around and choose one that resonates with how they feel or what they need.
3. In silence, each person places their card in the center next to others they feel are connected.
4. Observe and name the clusters forming.
5. Facilitate a group reflection:
 - What do the clusters represent?
 - Why did you choose your card and place it there?
 - What can we learn from the group energy?



ACTIVITY 4: DIALOGUE CARDS (SPEED SHARING)

01 - Objective



Build empathy and connection quickly.

02 - Time Required



30 minutes

03 - Group Size



Even number, ideally 10–20

04 - Materials Needed:



- A deck of cards (each with a word, image, or question).
- A calm space for sharing (circle format if possible).



ACTIVITY 4 FLOW



01 - Instructions



1. Form two concentric circles facing each other.
2. One person in each pair picks a card and asks their partner: “What comes up for you when you see this?”
3. Talk for 2 minutes each.
4. Rotate the outer circle and repeat with a new partner and new card (3–4 rounds).
5. Group reflection:
 - “What surprised you?”
 - “What did you notice about connection?”



ACTIVITY 5: GUIDED MEDITATION WITH A CARD

01 - Objective



Integrate the card's message on a deeper, embodied level.

02 - Time Required



20–30 minutes

03 - Materials Needed:



Cards, quiet space, optional mats or cushions

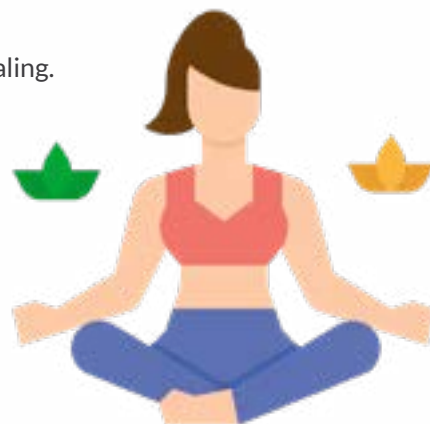
INSTRUCTIONS



1. Participants choose a card.
2. Guide them through a short meditation using the card as an anchor:
 - “Breathe in the word/image. Let it settle in your body.”
 - “Notice any emotions or images that come up.”

After 5–10 minutes of silence, offer 5 minutes for journaling.

Optional: invite gentle sharing in pairs or a circle.



ACTIVITY 6: STORIES FROM THE CARD

01 - Objective



Foster vulnerability, connection, and self-expression.

02 - Duration | Group Size



45–60 minutes | 6–15

03 - Materials Needed:



Cards, optional journals

INSTRUCTIONS



1. Each person draws one card.
 2. Reflect silently (5–10 min) on a real-life experience the card reminds them of.
 3. Sit in a circle and share stories one by one.
- Optional:** invite gentle reflection after each story (e.g. “What touched you?”).
4. Close with a round of gratitude or insights.



ACTIVITY 7: THE CARD'S JOURNEY (GROUP STORY GAME)

01 - Objective



Stimulate creativity and collaborative imagination.

02 - Duration | Group Size



30-40 minutes | 6-15

03 - Materials Needed:



3-5 random cards placed in the center

INSTRUCTIONS



1. Sit in a circle and place a few cards face up in the middle.
2. The first person begins a story using the first card. *"Once upon a time, there was a [card]..."*
3. Go around the circle. Each person adds a part of the story, using the next card.
4. Keep it open and playful (silly or deep).
5. After the story ends, reflect:
 - *"How did we co-create?"*
 - *"What role did each card play?"*
6. Close with a round of gratitude or insights.



Follow-up Activities



1. Poland



3. Latvia



2. Cyprus

POLAND: ART THERAPY WORKSHOP REPORT



Location and Date: Wydział Zarządzania, Białystok | November 14, 2024
Organizer: OPEN SOUL
Association: Regulate emotions and reduce anxiety.

This workshop introduced students to art therapy as a tool for emotional expression and stress management. Through a blend of theory and hands-on painting, participants explored creativity as a means to process feelings and foster mental well-being.

Introduction: The session opened with a theoretical

overview of art therapy—its purpose, benefits, and role in emotional regulation. The facilitator emphasized how art bypasses verbal barriers to access deeper emotions.

Interactive Part:

Creative Expression: Participants selected from varied art materials (paints, pastels, etc.) to create personal works reflecting their emotions.

Guided Focus: The exercise encouraged mindfulness, inviting students to “pause and connect” with their inner states through color, form, and texture.

Summary and Reflection:

- A group discussion followed, where students shared how art offered new perspectives on their emotions. Many noted the value of non-verbal expression, and the safe space strengthened group trust.
- **Strengths:** The combination of theory and practice effectively demystified art therapy. Providing diverse materials accommodated individual preferences.
- **Impact:** Students left with a tangible skill (using art for self-care) and heightened emotional awareness.
- Extend duration to allow more time for reflection.
- Incorporate a brief mindfulness exercise before painting to deepen focus.
- At its heart, music therapy meets youth where they are — in sound, in story, and in rhythm — offering them tools not just to survive, but to thrive.

Author: Maja, CREATYIOK Workshop Facilitator



POLAND: PHOTOTHERAPY CAPTURE THE UNCAPTURED



Location and Date: Wrocław, Poland
 December 6th, 2024

Organizer: OPEN SOUL Association

This therapeutic photography workshop, attended by 10 participants, explored photography as a tool for enhancing self-awareness and perception. Inspired by Judy Weiser’s idea that “photographs are mirrors with a memory,” the session emphasized mindful observation, helping participants see their surroundings with fresh eyes and connect imagery with emotions.

Introduction: The workshop began with a discussion on the power of photography in self-reflection, framed by Weiser’s philosophy. Participants were invited to approach the exercises with curiosity, focusing on how visual details reflect inner experiences.

Interactive Part:

1. “Symbol of Transformation”

- Participants identified a personal symbol representing their emotions or life direction,

then sketched or described it.

- **Purpose:** To bridge abstract feelings with visual representation, fostering mindful observation.
- 2. **“Dialogue of Images”**
 - Pairs selected two photos—one resonant, the other complementary—and analyzed their emotional or narrative connections.
 - **Purpose:** To explore interpretation and perspective, highlighting how images convey layered meanings.
- 3. **“Perspective in My Life”**
 - Participants photographed one object/scene from multiple angles (close-up, distant, etc.), then discussed how perspective altered their perception.
 - **Purpose:** To demonstrate how shifting viewpoints reveal hidden dimensions in the familiar.

The group reflected on how the exercises deepened their environmental awareness and emotional attunement. Many noted newfound appreciation for overlooked details and the value of shared interpretations.

Participants’ Impressions and Feedback

“I never realized how much a single angle change could transform meaning.”

- **Strengths:** The structured yet flexible exercises effectively merged creativity with introspection, fostering both individual and group insights.
- Photography proved accessible and powerful for self-reflection, encouraging participants to “slow down” and observe deliberately.
- Include a brief primer on basic photography techniques for beginners.
- Extend time for group discussions to deepen shared reflections.

Author: Julita, CREATYIOK Workshop Facilitator



CYPRUS: KINESIOLOGY WORKSHOP REPORT



Location and Date: Multicultural Center, Pissouri village, Cyprus – August 18 2024

Organizer: ACPELIA, Active Cypriots and European Learning Into Acceptance

Hosted by both Chrystalla Polydorou and Boghos Avetikian, this workshop gathered youth workers from all over Cyprus during ACPELIA's dissemination events to teach new Kinesiology based methodologies as learned from the first training course of the project.

First, to icebreak, a huge piece of colorful cloth was used, and music played in the background. Participants were asked to move the cloth as they see fit, based on what their interpretations of feelings from the music were. For some it was

angry, for some it was seen as happy. This was followed by a sound stimuli exploration, where participants were asked to jot down their emotions in whatever form this may be, whether its text, prose or a poem.

Afterwards, with different types of instrumental music, participants were paired up, one as the designated mover and the other as the responder. While pausing and transitioning to a different song, the above roles were switches.

Participants reflected on their experience, both as movers and as witnesses and eventual responders. The activity had a nonverbal communication focus, thus focusing on the connection between others, intertwining art and therapy. A reflection session took place afterwards.

Key Takeaways and suggestions:

- **Strengths** of the event included the fact that the activities built up from team-based cloth moving, to literal jotting down feelings, to expressing them as they interpreted audio
- Participants suggested testing out new different types of genres, and not just sticking to instrumental music, to see different reactions, use-cases and emotion building

Author: Boghos Avetikian, co-facilitator at this specific workshop



CYPRUS: MUSIC THERAPY WORKSHOP REPORT



Location and Date: Multicultural Center, Pissouri village, Cyprus – August 18 2024

Organizer: ACPELIA, Active Cypriots and European Learning Into Acceptance

Stathia Michael, who attended both training courses in Cyprus implemented music therapy activities as she learned in Latvia, for an audience of 48 youngsters. Through using homemade built musical instruments, participants explored aspects of non-verbal communication and storytelling using sounds, whether it came from the body, or through different handmade musical instruments

The workshop had 3 key parts.

Part 1 - Youngsters, after receiving different musical instruments, some handmade, but most real

instruments, were tasks with having a dialogue, with only the use of the instruments, some angry, some calming, and so and so forth.

Part 2 - Youngsters, after receiving 2 chopsticks, per pair, were tasked to engage in movement based on music that was playing in the background. 3 different genres of music was used, the first was a classical piece, the second a rock piece by Nirvana, and the last focusing on currently ever popular Lo-Fi genre

Part 3 - For the last part, using the instruments as part 1, youngsters were tasked to create a scene, using said instruments, based on different obtuse prompts. Participants were divided into 4 teams. Bugs, Jungle, Birds, Farm.

Key Takeaways and suggestions:

Strengths: Flexible activity, as in, it can take longer or less time depending on how many types of music you put, or how many teams you make for part 3 of the activity.

The existence of literal homemade objects that make sounds created humorous situations, and this aspect of comedy, which was used as early as part 1 of the activity help bring the point across to participants early

An extended time for group discussions and debriefing is definitely necessary for this set of activities, as the different interpretations of different participants provides different learning opportunities.

Author: Boghos Avetikian, writer, was present at the workshop



LATVIA: FOLLOW MY HAND



Location and Date: Sigulda, Latvia – 07.06.2024

Brief overview: This one-hour workshop brought together 20 young people aged 16–24, including participants with fewer opportunities and from ethnic and linguistic minorities. The goal was to develop empathy, trust, and nonverbal communication through creative movement and reflection on leadership and followership roles.

The activity began with a group warm-up where participants mimicked the facilitator's movements in a playful way to break the ice and build a comfortable atmosphere. This was followed by a short discussion on key concepts such as “What is movement?”, “How do we trust others to guide us?”, and “Should we fully trust leaders?” to introduce the topic and prepare for deeper engagement.

Practical Part

Participants were divided into groups of three using the “hurricane” energiser and assigned rotating roles of leader and follower in the “Follow My Hand” exercise. The followers placed their face close to the palm of the leader and mirrored their movements, switching roles every five minutes. This demanded full attention, empathy, and spatial awareness from both roles.

A group debrief followed with reflective questions about comfort in different roles and what qualities are essential in both leaders and followers. Participants discussed the balance between attentiveness and care from both perspectives, recognising the need for trust, sensitivity, and cooperation.

Later, participants experimented by replacing the hand with an object (e.g. clothing), shifting the dynamic toward imaginative play. This abstract variation inspired creative expression and fantasy-like engagement, deepening emotional exploration and narrative thinking.

In the final stage, participants attempted the same exercise solo, using an object in their own hands as both guide and follower. They were introduced to a conflict dynamic—being pulled up and down by the object—to challenge their imagination and internal dialogue. This acted as a creative and therapeutic projection method, allowing self-exploration through symbolic movement.



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Summary:

The session concluded with a group reflection using simple guiding questions:

- “How did you feel while participating in the activity?”
- “Which was more comfortable — to lead or to follow?”
- “What insights or conclusions did you take from the experience?”

Participants shared varied impressions, noting shifts in self-awareness, emotional connection, and their understanding of leadership and trust.

Key Takeaways:

The session was highly effective in creating emotional depth and awareness through nonverbal, imaginative exercises. The gradual layering—from interpersonal movement to solo symbolic improvisation—provided a meaningful progression of trust and self-expression.

It may be valuable to extend the session time to allow deeper reflection, or introduce visual or audio elements to complement the movement. A follow-up workshop could explore object-based storytelling or include visual arts to expand on the therapeutic aspect.



LATVIA: EXPLORING THROUGH IMAGERY



Location and Date: Young Folks LV office, Riga, Latvia – 03.08.2024

Brief overview: This 100-minute workshop gathered eight young people (aged 15–27) to explore nonverbal communication, trust-building, and emotional expression through sound, movement, and imagery in a therapeutic setting.

The session began in a calm, welcoming space. Participants were introduced to the concept of therapeutic photography and how visual expression can foster emotional connection and self-awareness.

Practical part: The workshop started with a guided visualization exercise, where participants imagined

a safe, empowering space, then described it to a partner. They then shared personal photographs representing their current emotional state and selected one additional image provided by the facilitator that resonated with them. These images sparked discussions on emotional metaphors in visuals.

Later, participants created symbolic self-portraits using everyday objects, reflecting on their present identity and future goals. They presented their creations, discussing the meanings behind them and the personal journeys they signify.



LATVIA: EXPLORING THROUGH IMAGERY



Summary and reflection:

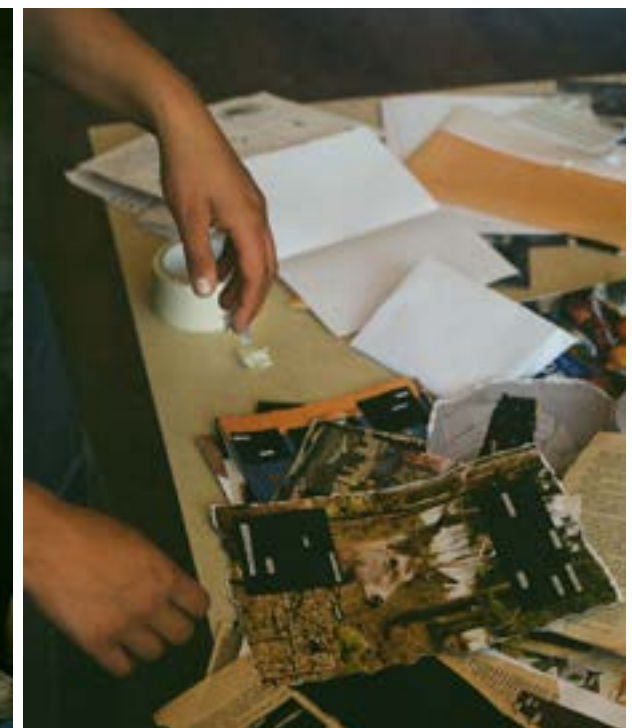
The session concluded with a group discussion, allowing participants to share reflections and emotional insights. A grounding exercise helped participants consolidate their experience by expressing their takeaway in a single word, bringing closure and a heightened sense of self-awareness.

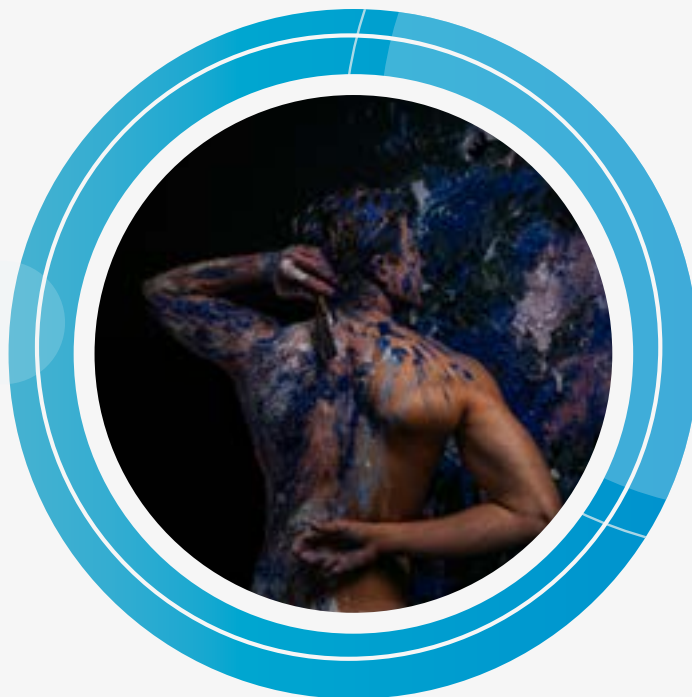
Participants' Impressions:

Participants expressed emotional engagement and openness. Many appreciated the opportunity to connect deeply with their feelings in a non-verbal, creative way. The atmosphere was described as safe and supportive.

Key Takeaways

The workshop successfully created an intimate and reflective environment, enabling participants to explore emotions and identities through imagery. The use of personal photos and symbolic objects was particularly impactful.





Thank You

Applicant Organization: Open Soul, Poland

Partner Organization: Acpelia, Cyprus

Partner Organization: Young Folks, Latvia



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