

# **"*PERMISSION TO PLAY*"**

## **Creativity in Mind – Phase 1**

### **Evaluation Report**

By Chris Rolls  
Senior Project Manager, 64 Million Artists

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# 1. SUMMARY

This report evaluates the first phase of *Creativity in Mind*, a collaboration between 64 Million Artists and the department of Psychology and Language Sciences at UCL to assess the impact of everyday creativity on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals taking part in WhatsApp peer-support groups.

The purpose of this report is not to duplicate or pre-empt the clinical research findings of the WhatsApp groups' experiences, but to assess the impact on participants of the first phase of the project – *the in-person creativity and wellbeing workshops held over three weeks in London in August 2018*.

As well as assessing the design of these 3 workshops, including the recruitment and involvement of various groups, this report draws out key themes and learnings from the experience based on qualitative data from participant questionnaires. Key themes from this feedback have also been extrapolated.



## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

These findings are based on the participants' and artists' questionnaire responses which are reproduced verbatim after each relevant section below...

- Simple creative activities boosted the participants' mental health and wellbeing
- Both participants and professional artists valued 'permission to play'
- Co-creation of the activities turned participants into active collaborators
- *Play, silliness* and child-like wonder emerged as positive values
- Performance-based activities provoked the most anxiety for participants
- Participants felt that exercises requiring collaboration and co-operation gave them a sense of worth and belonging
- Participants reported that a safe, nurturing, and sensitively-facilitated atmosphere enabled them to be vulnerable and take risks
- Stepping out of their routine and/or comfort zone gave participants a sense of personal achievement
- Some participants went on to set up their own meet-up group to do creative challenges after the workshops ended. Most signed up for the month-long online groups

## **3. KEY NUMBERS**

### **Phase 1:**

- 12 workshops participants experiencing low mood and/or anxiety engaged in 3 workshops
- 4 professional artists engaged
- 7.5 hours of creativity and wellbeing workshops delivered
- 12 participants attended a Christmas Sharing Event
- 2 clinical psychologists involved in project

### **Phase 2:**

- 65 online participants experiencing low mood and/or depression engaged in 30-day WhatsApp peer-support groups
- 65 online participants completing quantitative clinical data questionnaires
- 18 participants engaged in semi-structured interviews for qualitative data thematic analysis

## **4. PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS**

Three professional artists were chosen to be co-facilitators in the challenge creation workshops and were chosen according to a number of criteria. Artists were sought from a range of disciplines and cultural backgrounds. In practice, the ratio of 1 artist to 4 participants gave individuals interpersonal contact time with artists, and the consensus feedback from participants was that they didn't feel overwhelmed or outnumbered by professionals in the room.

One of the artists in our original ACE application, Andrea Foà (unconfirmed) was unable to attend, and was replaced by theatre designer and maker, Kirsty Harris. This meant all three artists were female. Two self-identify as gender-queer and one identifies as Asian/ Anglo-Indian; two as white British. The lead facilitator, Chris Rolls, is a white British male. He self-identifies as a queer man.

Artists were also chosen for their sensitivity to the mental health experiences of the individuals in the workshops. Deborah Coughlin, particularly, has a personal and professional interest in mental health and has written articles on the topic in various publications, including *The Guardian*.

### **Bishi – Musician, Singer and DJ**

*Bishi, born Bishnu Priya is a British singer, musician and DJ. She is a London-based multi-instrumentalist strongly influenced by annual visits to the Ravi Shankar School in Delhi. Bishi was first recognised in 2001 as the central DJ and 'face' of London's experimental nightclub, Kash Point.*

### **Deborah Coughlin – Writer and Artistic Director**

*Deborah is former Feminist Times editor and founder of Gaggle, a punk feminist choir which has seen great success since 2009 working in opera, live art, pop video, apps, immersive theatre and comedy. Her work has been commissioned by the Southbank Centre, National Gallery, Royal Albert Hall, ICA, Women's Library and Almeida Theatre to name but a few.*

### **Kirsty Harris – Visual Artists, Designer and Maker**

*Kirsty is an artist, designer and maker specialising in installation and performative works. She makes immersive worlds and experiences in found environments, landscapes and theatres. She has made work for babies aged 6 months and all the ages that come after. Kirsty has collaborated with some of the UK's leading performing arts companies.*

The artists were all involved closely in the planning of the workshops and worked cooperatively towards their intended outcomes. All three artists had some experience of running participation or outreach projects with non-professionals. Within their brief of running 20-minute creative activities, they were all also encouraged to try things themselves, and perhaps try an activity or exercise they hadn't run before.

Feedback from participants concerning the artists was overwhelmingly positive. A number of respondents picked up on the empathic personal qualities of the artists and how these contributed to the atmosphere of openness and sharing which ultimately made the sessions feel safe and inclusive.

## Feedback from Participants

### How did you find the artists and their creative input?

- *I thought all the artists were equally as good as one another. Creatively I found Deborah and Kirsty's workshops more active and explorative, which I preferred.*
- *Interesting. Lots of good ideas.*
- *The artists seemed to understand their role in proceedings well. They gave themselves to the activities, but without personally becoming the focus of the group. They let the participants take the activities and run with them. They each brought something very different, creatively, which was nice.*
- *Great variety ... think I answered it in the above! But loved their energy and approachability.*
- *Kirsty, Deborah and Bishi were all wonderfully warm and inspiring. I liked the fact that their creative exercises were quite simple yet carefully designed to take us out of our comfort zones and build our confidence.*
- *The artists were excellent. They all had different attributes which combined to create a varied and exciting programme to engage with.*
- *So generous and encouraging. Bishi improvising that music for us whilst we all delved into our own fantasy worlds at the end was astonishing and magical – we were very privileged to have worked with such skilled and imaginative creative professionals who all shared their sincere desire to nurture and support creativity in others.*

## Key Themes

*Right balance of presence / Allowed participants to develop / Unique talents / Variety / Energy / Inspiring / Confidence building / Generous / Imaginative / Nurture & support*



## **Feedback from the Artists**

A week after the workshops, all three artists were asked for their thoughts about their experiences of the workshops. All three responded positively, saying how much they got out of the workshops personally, and how the experience had also affirmed their professional artistic practice.

### **Bishi**

"I had a wonderful time as a facilitator in these creative workshops. I was very moved by how open and receptive the participants were to the challenges, combined with the wonderful results they would come up with in such short spaces of time. They were often thrown into situations they had no previous experience with and their results were stunning.

Most of the participants had huge doubts over their creative capabilities which was contradicted by what was produced in the creative challenges, week after week. It makes me realise how important these workshops are for non-practicing artists and for people to be able to connect with themselves.

The ability & permission to slow down, create and play with no specific result in mind was a great reminder to me as a professional artist, why creativity is important in the first place. Professional artists are just as bogged down by professional targets of one sort or another. In conclusion, the creative workshop programmes are beneficial for both participants and facilitators. Thank you for having me."

### **Deborah Coughlin**

"Thanks to everyone involved - loved it.

Giving people permission to spend time playing is hugely important.

What I think is equally, if not more important, is getting people in a room together. A whatsapp group will have some affect, but I think it's 'in the room' work, like our sessions, that give the greatest benefit - and could be organised by groups.

Groups could also crowd fund to get workshop leaders to join them - there are new arts universities doing just that. Students club together to fund a year of workshops - it's cheaper than uni!"

### **Kirsty Harris**

"Thank you so much for inviting me into the project, it was such privilege to share a space with you and all the participants and practitioners.

It was humbling to take part in the workshops, to share a space with people willing to take a risk, be open, vulnerable and play.

It's always a challenge to be the first, the experimenters, it was inspiring to see the

group step into the unknown.

It's easy to forget, working in the arts, how this kind of activity and discussion forum isn't accessible or freely permitted by most parts of the society. And yet it is so vital, that much is clear. There is no one force we can blame for this lack of permission. Perhaps there is more work to be done around these questions, they are certainly running around my mind still!

Who says we can't play? Who says we can speak deeply about our mental health through the mediums of creative activity?

Who stops us being *silly*?

I loved Nathan's suggestion to keep going in some way, he fought back at the palpable feelings of loss at the end of the session. What a brilliant radical act! I think this shows a hopeful future for the sustainability of creative shared spaces being part of everyone's lives.

I suppose more time is always something to wish for, a bit of breathing space in between activities. Maybe the opportunity to ask the group if they had any ideas for what kind of practitioner-led activities they would be interested in doing the following week."

## Key Themes

*Participants overcoming their own doubts / People reconnecting with themselves / Permission to play / Personal contact / Peer-support / Risk & vulnerability / Stepping into the unknown / Sustainability / Creative shared spaces / More time / Participant-led activities*



## 5. FACILITATION

As lead facilitator, I was able to oversee the project design from inception through to delivery – as well as collate feedback from participants and artists. Obviously, as facilitator, my take on *Creativity in Mind* is highly subjective, but participants' views on the workshop facilitation are included below. My key tasks included: designing the agenda and curating the content for each workshop; making sure the key outputs were arrived at (30 creative challenges); and being responsible for holding the timekeeping and administrative boundaries of the workshops, (e.g. expense payments, clarity of information, etc.).

My background in the performing arts, as a theatre director, opera director and community arts practitioner, means I have 20 years experience running group artistic activities in various settings. As a trainee psychotherapist (second year MSc at Metanoia Institute) I am also interested in the power dynamics of group experiences, group creativity, and individuals' inter-subjective experiences in groups.

The key principles I aimed to hold in these workshops were:

- **Facilitator as holder of the space** (not forcibly leading, 'nannying' or interpreting)
- **Maintaining clear and mutually-agreed boundaries** (establishing a contract with the group for how we were going to work and 'be' together)
- **Modelling vulnerability** (not being an expert, knowing, or being right)
- **Accepting all forms of participation as valid** (not privileging certain participants or their views)
- **Encouraging** (sensing when support is appropriate for less confident or more introverted participants)

I thoroughly enjoyed my role in these workshops and felt I gained an enormous amount, both personally and professionally, from the experience. I hope I managed to create a warm and inclusive atmosphere, establishing mutual trust and risk taking. Knowing when to push and when to step back, when to foreground the individual and when to prioritise the group as a whole, is, in my experience, a highly intuitive process.

### Feedback from Participants

How did you find the facilitation of the workshops?

- *I thought the facilitation of the workshops was fun. Not knowing what was going to happen was an experience, and one I grew to trust and enjoy as the course progressed.*
- *Good. Important to have a good introduction.*
- *Excellent. Chris wasn't intrusive but kept the sessions running smoothly and efficiently. In groups like this, it's easy for some participants to dominate the time and the discussions, so I think a good facilitator is key.*
- *Amazing variety of relaxed, friendly yet structured sessions. Great that other people shared their mental health journey with the group and enabled others to be open.*

- *I thought that Chris's gentle, supportive and open style of facilitation was really important in creating the positive ethos of the workshops and in shaping the group dynamic. I appreciated it when he and the artists showed that it was okay to be vulnerable and take risks. So often, we feel that we have to put up a façade, so it was refreshing to have more open interactions with each other.*
- *Excellent.*
- *Brave and clever and inclusive.*

## Key Themes

*Fun / The Unexpected / Unobtrusive / Equality / Variety / Gentle, Supportive Style / Vulnerability / Risk-taking / Openness / Inclusive*



## 6. WORKSHOP DESIGN

All three professional artists were invited to run one, 20 minute artistic activity in each of the three workshops. Their brief was to provide participants with a creative experience, preferably (but not necessarily) related to their own area of artistic practice.

Following the 64 Million Artists methodology of *Do, Think, Share*, they were asked to facilitate participants *doing* an activity, *thinking* about how the experience made them feel, and *sharing* feedback and discussion.

### The Artists' Exercises

<b>Bishi</b>  <i>Session 1</i>	<b>'Missing You' Letters</b>  Write a letter to someone or something that you miss. It could be a person, place, animal or object... it's up to you. If you feel you'd like to, share your letters with the group. What was the experience of reading your letter aloud like? What thoughts or feelings were stirred by others' Missing You letters?
<b>Deborah Coughlin</b>  <i>Session 1</i>	<b>Slow Motion Experiences</b>  Participants were offered a wide selection of objects, some with a practical application, and invited to engage in an activity related to the object <i>as slowly as possible</i> . Objects included: an orange (to be peeled); shoes with laces (to be tied); a bag of wool (to be unravelled); bottle of juice (to be drunk), etc., etc. What was the experience of slowing down and paying attention like? What did you notice?
<b>Kirsty Harris</b>  <i>Session 1</i>	<b>Emotional Chair</b>  Each participant is given a slip of paper with a different emotion written on it, e.g. <i>joy, anxiety, fear, worry, awe, frustration, fascination</i> , etc. Using coloured pens and paper, design a chair that would make the person sitting in it experience that emotion. Think about engaging all the senses. Share your chair design with the group. Can the others guess the emotion it embodies? How did each participant approach this exercise?
<b>Bishi</b>  <i>Session 2</i>	<b>Musical Loops</b>  Bishi will do a live looping with a mixing deck to create a magical soundscape with each member of the group adding their own noise or noises. What collective soundscapes can we create together? <i>A forest? An urban environment? A tribal ceremony? A weather system?</i> What was it like being part of a collective, live, audio experience?

<b>Deborah Coughlin</b>  <i>Session 2</i>	<b>Blindfold Sensory Writing</b>  Wearing blindfolds, and holding pens and clipboards with paper, participants are invited to move carefully around the room and write about anything they encounter. Once they have finished writing about something, they can move on their way until they encounter another sound or object and write about that. After ten minutes, participants are invited to share their stories with the group? How was your imagination stirred or released by being kept in the dark?
<b>Kirsty Harris</b>  <i>Session 2</i>	<b>Carwash</b>  In small groups, imagine the sort of <i>car</i> that you are, or would like to be. <i>Rolls-Royce? Mini? Vintage Jaguar? Old banger?</i> The task of the group is to gather around you and give you a full service. Check your oil, check under your bonnet, pump up your tyres, give you a bubble wash... How can you be pampered/serviced according to what type of car you are? How did you experience this imaginative role-play as a car? As part of the service team?
<b>Bishi</b>  <i>Session 3</i>	<b>Maps to a Soundtrack</b>  Bishi will create some live music using a mixing desk. Using pens and paper, participants are invited to draw an imaginary map that comes to their minds, influenced and inspired by the music. Let your imagination run free. What sort of place do you hear? What are its features? Share your map with the group.
<b>Deborah Coughlin</b>  <i>Session 3</i>	<b>Mirror Singing</b>  In pairs, one person starts to sing a note. Their partner tries to match the sound. The couple then try to mirror each other and try to keep the sound passing 'back and forth' between each other as they co-create a strange sort of song/music/sound art. What sort of harmony did you co-create with your partner?
<b>Kirsty Harris</b>  <i>Session 3</i>	<b>A Little Piece of Fluff</b>  Going to your own area of the room with pens and paper, find a very small feature (e.g. little piece of fluff, mark on the wall, a knot in the table wood, etc.) and see if you can turn it into a character. Draw that character. What sort of personality does it have? Can you create a mini-biography for it? Find a partner and introduce your character to their character. What scenario might have brought them both together? Can you collaborate on a mini story that might have transpired between the two? Share your stories and drawings with the group.

As well as these artist-led activities, the key hard outputs required from the workshops were the 30 creative challenges for the WhatsApp peer-support groups to be clinically researched. The collaborative process for creating these challenges with the group involved a process of:

1. Group discussion about different sorts of activities that make them feel good. sorting these into categories
2. Coming up with as many creative challenges as possible under each category
3. Voting on our favourite activities in each category to arrive at the final 30

For steps 1 and 2 above, participants worked in small sub-groups, writing one idea on separate Post-Its. These were then sorted into different themes.

## **What activities make us feel good?**

Among the group, the following 15 categories emerged:

Connecting with friends	Being around animals
Dancing	Swimming
Cooking / food	Singing
Yoga / stretching	Art
Meditation / mindfulness	Learning a new skill
Creative writing	Writing a diary / Journal
Walking	Colouring
Drawing	"Having a big cry"
Laughing	Tea
Being in nature	Cinema / Movies
Moving / exercising	Skype
Water	Reading
Music	Gardening
Craft	Listening to a podcast
Playing a game	Going to a talk

DAY	TITLE	INTRO	DO	THINK	SHARE
1	<b>Magical Creatures</b>	Welcome Challengers! We're really excited to kick off 30 days of fun creative challenges with you. We invite you to have a go at as many of the activities as you feel able to. Don't worry about being good or perfect: this is a safe space to have a go, give new things a try and see what happens.	To accompany you on your adventure, we'd like you to create a magical monster or friend. Think of them as a guardian who will travel with you for the next 30 days. Create your creature in any way you like. Let your imagination fly. You can do a drawing, a sculpture or maybe there's some other way of making your magical being?	What qualities does your creation have? What things might help you as you go on your creative journey for the next 30 days? How did you feel, completing your first challenge?	If you like, share your creations with group. Perhaps you can support others and let them know if you like their guardian beings.
2	<b>It's the Little Things</b>	We can always do with an unexpected pick-me-up. We may not know it at the time but a kind word can make our day.	Write a compliment or encouraging message on a Post-It (or paper and tape) and leave it somewhere for someone to find. Decorate or embellish as you wish.	How did you find this challenge? Did you like being anonymous or not? Did you imagine the person reading your note and how they may feel? How did this influence your mood?	If you want to, take a picture of your Post-It and where you left it to share with the group. If you'd prefer, just share your reflections on the challenge.
3	<b>Recipe for Friendship</b>	We all have favourite foods and some of us love to cook. Today we'd like you to share a favourite recipe with a friend.	Is there a creative way you can share the recipe? Perhaps you'd like to draw it, design it, or think of a novel way of sharing. Don't worry if you're not a superchef - you could find a recipe online or in a cookbook for a food you like.	How did you approach the challenge? Do you like sharing recipes already? What original way could you think of for sharing?	Let the group know how you got on. Did the challenge raise any particular thoughts or feelings about food and friends? Share the recipe if you like.
4	<b>The Tree of Life</b>	Nature is all around us. Sometimes we take time to appreciate it, sometimes we get absorbed in the urban world and forget. Today we'd like you to acknowledge and cherish it.	Find a tree. Appreciate it. Talk to it. Touch it. Enjoy the moment and give it your full attention. Try not to worry about the other things happening around you.	How did getting in touch with nature influence your mood? Did you manage to totally commit to the challenge? If not, what were the barriers stopping you?	Share your experience with the group. If you didn't manage to do the challenge - don't worry. You could always just share how you feel.
5	<b>Broken &amp; Fixed</b>	Sometimes in life things get broken, but they can always be put back together. And sometimes the new thing is better than the old one.	Break something and then put it back together. Find something that you can break (nothing valuable!) and then see if you can restore it. You can repair it if you like, or you can find a more creative way to bring it back to life.	What thoughts or feelings did this task inspire in you? What sort of thing did you choose to break? Was it easy or hard? What do you associate with the words and actions of breaking and mending?	Share your experience with the group. What ruptures and repairs do you feel like sharing?
6	<b>Poem of the Day</b>	From one day to the next, our experience of life changes. We see different things, people and objects.	Write a poem about a person or an object that you encounter today. It could be your morning cereal bowl, someone you saw on	Did you enjoy writing poetry? Did you think of your subject immediately or did it take some time? Do you think you would	If you'd like to, please share your poem with us. Don't worry about it being perfect - just

		We encounter new and familiar smells, sounds, textures and tastes. What makes today different from yesterday?	the way to work, or maybe even an interesting conversation that caught you by surprise.	have reflected on this moment without the challenge?	give it a go.
7	<b>Mood Doodle</b>	Moods come and go. One minute we're up, the next we're blue. They're a bit like the British weather!	Today, we'd like you to find some quiet time to draw your current mood. It doesn't have to be a masterpiece - just relax, reflect and see where the mood takes you. Your drawing can be figurative or completely abstract. Use a pencil, crayons, felt tips, paints - anything you have to hand.	How did you find the experience? Did you find it easy to turn off your critical thinking brain and get more in touch with your feelings? What shapes and colours emerged? Were you surprised?	Feel free to share your mood pictures with the group if you feel comfortable doing so. We're all different, there are no right and wrongs and, as we all know, moods change :)
8	<b>Listen Up</b>	Cats, cooking or crochet? Trees, trampolining or texting? Everyone has something they love doing or feel passionate about but how often do they get asked about it? Be curious and keep your ears open today...	Get someone to tell you something they're passionate about for 3 minutes and find a creative way of sharing what they've told you.	How did you approach this challenge? Did you think of someone specific to ask or did you open it up for people to come forward? How was it hearing about their passion? How well do you think you listened?	Please do share your challenge with the group in whatever way you'd like to. What have other people in the group posted? How does yours differ or compare?
9	<b>Autumn Leaves</b>	"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, close bosom friend of the maturing sun..." John Keats. It feels like autumn is just around the corner.	Today's challenge is quite specific. We'd like you to collect five leaves, arrange them in any way you like, and take a snap of them. The leaves can be any five of your choosing. Interpret the challenge as you wish.	How did you interpret this challenge? What choices did you make? What do you think about autumn? Do you love it, like the poet John Keats, or do you hanker for summer and brighter evenings?	Share your leaf pictures and your autumnal reflections. What thoughts and feelings have come up for you?
10	<b>Creative Cocktails</b>	You sit down and reach for the drinks menu. What do you look for? Sweet or sour? Strong or subtle? Classic or something with a twist? Awaken your taste buds and be a mixologist for the day.	Invent a new cocktail (alcoholic or non-alcoholic). What flavours would you choose? As well as the taste, think about the whole experience - what would it look and smell like? What would you name it? If you'd prefer you could always add a little magic in there. Does it also help you see in the dark?	What did you think when you read this challenge? Were you excited to get involved or did it take some time to approach it? How do you feel about your finished drink? Was it fun to get creative in this way? May you actually make your cocktail in real life?	Share a description or an illustration of your cocktail/mocktail. It would be great to hear your reflections on the challenge too. How did it make you feel?

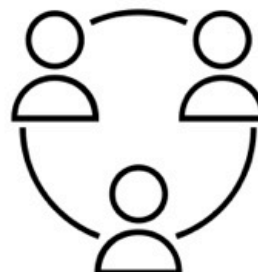
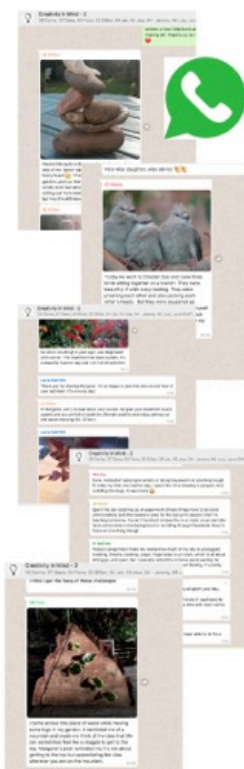
11	<b>Balance Sculpture</b>	"In the end, it's all a question of balance." Rohinton Mistry	Today's all about balance. We'd like you to create a balance sculpture. Be as simple or as ambitious as you like. (Just be safe!) Take it at your own pace. Balance often takes time...	How did this challenge make you feel? Was it relaxing or a bit stressful? Did you find it quick and easy or did you relish taking a bit of time to balance things out?	Share your sculptures with the group. Do you like what others have come up with? What was it like finding perfect balance?
12	<b>Fruit Bowl Orchestra</b>	Ok so this is where we go a little off the beaten track and invite you to try something you've probably never thought about doing before (or maybe you have!) It's a bit of fun and hopefully will create a few silly moments for you and anyone fortunate enough to be in the room...	Make a noise with a fruit or vegetable. Get creative and see what sounds you can make. It may take some experimenting.	Did you have fun with this challenge or did it feel a bit silly? Did you invite an audience or did you perform alone? Could this be something you do again as a way of lightening the mood/ having fun?	If you can, share your noise with the group. You can record on WhatsApp if you'd like to. Maybe we could even try and guess the fruit or vegetable.
13	<b>Animal Spirits</b>	Some cultures honour people's spirit animals - the essence of our personality symbolised by a creature from the natural world. Today's challenge is respectfully inspired by these cultures.	If you were an animal what would you be? Find a picture or symbol... maybe you could create your own.	Do you find it easy to identify with the qualities of a particular creature? What are its behaviours or traits that you identify with? Would others agree, do you think?	Show the group your animal side! What do you think about the other group members' animal spirits?
14	<b>Off the Grid</b>	As we come up to the half way mark of these challenges, we'd like you to take a quick time out - a moment of silence and calm to clear your mind and feel some space. Relax, be free, find peace...	Go offline for a short period. Do something purely for yourself. Nothing more, nothing less. Listen to your mind and body and just 'be'.	How did you find getting away from technology? Did you find it easy or hard? What feelings came up for you?	Share your reflections whenever you can throughout the day. Don't rush - take it at your own pace and check in with the group when it feels right for you.
15	<b>Dance Off</b>	We're half way through, Challengers. Congratulations! Let's mark your achievement with a bit of celebratory silliness. Today's all about letting go, having fun and moving your body.	We'd like you to create a bold new dance move, or (if you're feeling brave) a mini routine! It's time to release your inner Strictly finalist!	How did you find creating a new dance move? Stupid? Fun? Challenging? Liberating? Do you find it easy to let your hair down? Do you like to boogie or do you prefer to leave that to others?	It's time to take to the floor! No need for sequins, but this is your time to shine. If you're feeling really brave, share a clip of yourself getting on down. Or just share how you got on.
16	<b>Ten Word Journal</b>	"I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train." Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest	Write a 10 word journal entry for you day. (Drat, that's only 9 words..!) Anyway, your mission is to sum up your day in just 10 words.	See, not as easy as you might think. What inventive way did you come up with to summarise? Did you play strictly by the rules or did your inner rebel turn up?	Share your micro journals with the group. Have you conveyed the day's essence? What do others' ten-word opuses sound like?

17	<b>A Visual Sandwich</b>	If you could do anything for the day, what would you choose? A pampering paradise of self care? Something adrenaline-fuelled for the thrill seeker in you? A trip to Mars...?	Create a 'visual sandwich' of your ideal day. What ingredients would you put in as your filling? There are no rules to this... interpret 'sandwich' any way you want, and 'ideal day' in your own unique style. Draw, paint, sculpt, sketch, dream, write...It's your call.	What qualities make an ideal day for you? Do you know what's good for you? How did you feel about creating a visual sandwich? Do you get enough of your ideal 'fillings'?	Share your fantasy snacks with the group. (Maybe over lunch.) What could you put more of into your real life day-to-day? What could you encourage others to do?
18	<b>Phone a Friend</b>	The title may give this challenge away a little or may just remind you of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Luckily today there's no game show or tricky question...	Phone a friend you haven't spoken to for a while. You may have someone that springs straight to mind or you could have a scroll through your phone contacts to see who comes up. You might want to go even further and somehow randomly select a lucky person!	How was your phone call received? How did you feel afterwards having caught up? Could you try call more regularly? What do you think stopped you calling earlier?	Share a few thoughts or what you spoke about on your call. Don't ever feel like you have to share too much - just as much as feels comfortable for you.
19	<b>New from Old</b>	"Stay open minded. Things aren't always what they seem to be." Anon	Today we'd like you to create a new use for a familiar object you have at home. Anything you like. Can you find an old bottle that is actually a rocket ship? Maybe you could grow cress in that odd sock? We'd like you to be as inventive and imaginative as the mood takes.	What object or objects got your imagination fired up? Did something leap out at you or did you really have to think about this one? Do you have the sort of imagination that finds this sort of thing easy? Maybe you put pressure on yourself?	Share your re-purposed objects with the group. Don't worry whether it's 'good enough'. It is! This is a safe space to share your experiences and thoughts. Do you like the other members' re-inventions?
20	<b>Naming Nature</b>	Today we're inviting you to a day of 64 Million Artists forest school... a combination of nature, learning and maybe discovery. It could take you outdoors but it could also take you online or to a book.	Learn the name of a tree or flower you like and then create an illustration of it. Get technical and create a diagram or focus on colour or texture. Whatever way you'd like to get creative with today's challenge.	Did you find this challenge easy or hard? Why do you think that was? Do you think you'll share your new learning with others?	If you'd like to, share your illustrations with us. It doesn't have to look like it's come straight out of a book or look exactly like your flower or tree - just give it a go and see.
21	<b>Mindful Reading</b>	When we slow down, we notice things differently. We get in touch with different parts of our selves. Our perceptions can subtly shift. Today is about mindfulness.	We'd like you to find a book and a quiet few minutes in a place you know you won't be disturbed. The book can be one you're currently reading, an old favourite, or just one you have to hand. Your challenge is to read a single page of that book through three times - slowly and mindfully.	In normal life we often do everything at speed. When we read, for example, we're often just skimming for content. What was it like, slowing down and really noticing? Did repeating the experience three times have any effects? Did anything unexpected emerge?	Let the group know how you got on with this challenge. If you found it hard, that's OK too. Share whatever you feel comfortable with. There are no rights or wrongs.

22	<b>Double Take</b>	When we look at things, how closely do we actually look? With all the different things going on around us, sometimes it's hard to take it all in. This challenge might help.	Draw an object with your eyes closed. Repeat with your eyes open. From your first glance at the object to draw it from memory with your eyes closed to then drawing it freely with your eyes open, what new things did you discover? Was there something blindingly obvious that just didn't jump out to you the first time? Or are your drawings pretty much identical?	What do your drawings say about you and how you take in the world around you? Do you think you might start looking closer at things? Which details do you think really matter?	We would love (as I'm sure the group would) to see both of your drawings. We could play spot the difference!
23	<b>Feel the Beat</b>	1, 2, 3, 4 / 1, 2, 3, 4...	Let's mix it up a bit today. Your challenge is to do an everyday task... to a beat! Brushing your teeth? Ironing a shirt? Making a cup of tea? Give it some bass. You can put on your favourite track to accompany you of course, or find your own inner pulse. Be bold with your rhythm or keep it simple and steady.	How did you find this challenge? Do you think you've got excellent natural rhythm or do you find it challenging to keep time? Did the task make you experience your usual routine in a new light?	For the brave beat boxes among you, share a clip or image of you in full flow! But don't worry about looking silly... you could always just share your experiences or reflections.
24	<b>Story Time</b>	Once upon a time... we were constantly hearing and telling stories. From starting the day by recalling a vivid, seemingly unforgettable, dream to intently listening to someone read a soothing bedtime story last thing at night. How often do we still do these things? How can we encourage more storytelling in our lives?	In the group, everyone write one line of a story. How can we carry on from one another? What twists and turns can we create? Can we complete a story by the end?	How do you think today's challenge went? Did you enjoy doing the challenge with others in the group? How did this activity differ from the others, did you like it more or less? Why do you think that is?	Follow the group and share your line when you feel ready or want to jump in. Let's see how far we get with it!
25	<b>Feeling Shapes</b>	Feelings are something we feel in our bodies. Where do you feel your feelings?	Your challenge today is to create 5 separate poses with your body that represent 5 different emotions. Really try to experience the emotion and express it through your entire body. (Look after yourselves... make sure you choose some positive emotions to express!)	What was it like paying attention to the physical expression of emotions? Did some of these poses feel easier to find and access than others? What do you think about the mind/body connection?	If you feel comfortable, share some of your poses with the group. Maybe others could even try to guess which emotion your depicting. Remember, though, that this isn't a competition. Simply share your reflections if you prefer.

26	<b>Sacred Space</b>	Do you have somewhere in your house, your garden or maybe the wider world that makes you feel peaceful? Somewhere you can simply be for a few moments? A place that holds meaning for you?	Today we'd like you to make your own altar / sacred space. Create somewhere as Joseph Campbell describes as "a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen." Your space doesn't have to be related to religion - just somewhere for you and what you need right now.	What was your initial reaction to this challenge? How did you approach it? Did it take some thinking about or did you already have a place in mind? May you use this space again?	Share a picture or written description of your altar / sacred space. What did it feel like to be in this space? If you'd like to, please share your thoughts with us and the group.
27	<b>Fantastic Machines</b>	"Necessity is the mother of all invention." Albert Einstein	We invite you to design or create a fantastical machine to solve a problem. Any problem. Draw, sketch, sculpt, write... it's up to you. Your new invention doesn't have to have any basis in reality... in fact, the more bizarre, weird and 'out there' the better. It might have many moving parts, or it could be simplicity itself. You are the inventor!	What problem did you identify, and what fantastical means did you find to solve it? Did you draw or sketch your blueprint? Was this challenge a real stretch for you, or did you find it easy to free your madcap inventor?	We'd love to see your fantastical inventions! Post your machines in the group, or maybe describe a brief outline of them. How did you get on with this challenge? Any ideas worth patenting?
28	<b>Waxing Lyrical</b>	You know that feeling when your favourite song comes on the radio? It's a quick dash to the volume button and off we go... signing our hearts out at the top of our lungs. If you're anything like us, you've heard it a million times. Today we're inviting you to reinvent it a little, make it a bit more personalised...	Sing your favourite song but change the lyrics to suit your mood. Are there key words that would be easy to swap or could you replace the whole sentence? Engage your emotions, mix up the words and see what comes out. Who knows, it could be a number 1 hit!	Was it hard to change your favourite song or did you enjoy making it your own? How do both versions compare? Did it help your wellbeing at all to express your emotions in this way?	If you're feeling confident maybe you could share your rendition. If not it would be great to hear a before and after on your lyrics. It doesn't have to be a whole verse or chorus, just as much as you can do today.
29	<b>Over to You!</b>	We're so very near the end! If you've made it this far, we salute you! Not only has there been amazing creativity on display, there's been real support, acceptance and courage. We couldn't be more proud.	To celebrate YOU, we'd like you all to set your own creative challenge today. Reflecting on the last 28 days, what could you ask the other group members to do? Your second task, of course, is to complete another group members challenge!	Did any of the previous challenges inspire you to set your own? How does your challenge reflect yourself - your own traits and interests? And what does it feel like to be the challenge setter for a change?	Post your challenges in the group. Remember: keep them quick, simple and accessible for all members. Use our format, DO, THINK, SHARE if you like.

30	<b>Future Perfect</b>	YOU MADE IT! 30 days of creative challenges. You are absolutely awesome. Take a moment to mark your achievement - no matter how much you managed to complete.	Today's final challenge is to write a journal entry for yourself for one year from today. Where are you and what are you doing? Chilling out on a beach? Running your own multinational? Keeping bees on the Moon? Who are you with? It's your future and it be whatever you want it to be. What would a perfect day one year from now look like?	When you think about your perfect future day, what do you think of? People? Places? Things? There are no rules or rights or wrongs for this. We're all unique and all want different things.	If you feel comfortable, share your journals, or just part of them with the group. Who knows... your dreams might come true :)
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## Feedback from Participants

### How did you find the choice of creative activities?

- *I thought all the choices were really good, and I liked the variety, which I thought was important.*
- *Good.*
- *Unfortunately I could only attend two of the three workshops, but I felt the activities covered a good range and challenged us individually.*
- *I found these activities challenging and thought provoking - something I hadn't thought about and challenged my comfort zone.*
- *I loved the mix of drawing, writing and performing, and the opportunity to try out new, creative forms such as sound art. The activities were also well balanced in terms of individual, paired and group work, allowing time for individual absorption as well as interaction.*
- *Very good.*
- *Inspired and inspiring. I especially liked the activities aimed at 'tricking' us to get past our social inhibitions - these really helped overcome creative block. Was nice to discover stories exist *\*everywhere\** and that our imaginations just need the tiniest bit of coaxing to emerge from hiding. The activities were all designed to prove this and to help us experience this together, collaboratively as a group. That was powerful.*

## Key Themes

*Variety / Challenge / Thought provoking / Opportunity to try something new / Well-balanced / Interaction / Inspiring / Overcoming blocks / Coaxing / Collaboration*

## Feedback from Participants

### What was your favourite activity or exercise and why?

- *My favourite activity was the blind story writing - week 2, I think. The reason why was because, I never realised I could write, and so I was not only surprised but chuffed too in what I achieved.*
- *I think they gradually became more energetic and creative. Singing in pairs was most memorable, but slightly uncomfortable. Blind storytelling was very interesting.*
- *It's hard to choose a favourite, as I found some easy but immensely enjoyable, and others were not at all enjoyable but pushed me out of my comfort zone, which was ultimately more rewarding.*
- *Little piece of fluff- or car wash...seeing things differently/connecting with one another and thinking about what you need in that moment.*
- *My favourite was Bishi's final exercise, since I loved the fact that she used Yoko Ono's poem to inspire us, and her singing was incredibly beautiful - I found this made the creative task quite a meditative one, and I was completely absorbed in it.*
- *The dual singing activity as it made me less inhibited stretched my mind and was fun. A good icebreaker too.*
- *The creating a character and introducing it to your partner's character. This was my favourite because it was firstly about noticing the world around us*

*and its overlooked details. It brought in a chance to discover how to rapidly generate a narrative (timed challenge) and it was collaborative and social when we got to introduce our characters to our partner's. Then we started co-creating whole new stories. This was surprising, delightful and very funny. My favourite thing was how cleverly multi-layered this was as an exercise. The paired singing exercise was also very clever & powerful for similar reasons.*

## **Favourite Exercises**

*Blind story writing / Singing in pairs / Out of my comfort zone / Little Piece of Fluff / Carwash / Maps to a soundtrack*



## **7. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING**

As a clinical research project approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee, the overall approach to advertising and recruiting participants for the workshops was agreed in collaboration with Rachel Tribe, trainee clinical psychologist at UCL, and her supervisor, lecturer in clinical psychology Dr Vyv Huddy.

The language around mental health in our communications was discussed at length in these meetings. It was felt important that we did not want to pathologise or stigmatise mental health symptoms in our communications, whilst also making it clear that this was a research project into people experiencing low-level mental health symptoms (low mood and anxiety).

A fuller discussion around depression, anxiety and other common mental disorders (CMD) being researched by Creativity in Mind, can be found in the original UCL research application as well as the final research paper due to be published by Rachel Tribe in June 2019 (UCL Division of Psychology and Language Sciences).

Participants for the workshops were recruited using a number of channels, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) as well as the 64 Million Artists' website and in the June 2018 newsletter to our subscribers (n= c.1,350). A page with information about the project was published in August 2018:

<https://64millionartists.com/our-work/creativity-in-mind/>

This included a link to a fuller information sheet Pdf:

<https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UCL-Participant-Information-Sheet-for-ONLINE-R.pdf>

A blog was written on 64millionartists.com with a link to the a Pdf flier:

[https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM\\_workshops\\_flyer\\_v3.pdf](https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM_workshops_flyer_v3.pdf)

Respondents interested in taking part in three “mental health and creativity workshops” were asked to: “Please send an email to [hello@64millionartists.com](mailto:hello@64millionartists.com) telling us very briefly why you are interested in creativity and mental health.”

In all, we received 20 applications. Applicants with mental disorders or psychiatric diagnoses were excluded on ethical grounds. As were participants who could not attend all three workshops.

The initial contact from applicants revealed a real appetite for a ‘creative wellbeing’ experience and we were impressed by their willingness to share their own vulnerabilities concerning mental health. The initial emails are revealing and are reproduced (anonymously) here:

1	<p>Hi there.</p> <p>I've just seen your post on Instagram for the creativity in mind workshops.</p> <p>I'd love to come and join you if possible! I think health and well-being is massively important and being creative helps so much.</p> <p>I've battled with my own mental well-being, received counselling but have taken up your challenges when possible.</p> <p>I'm also an occupational therapist for an eating disorders unit and run a creative projects group to encourage patients to explore their creativity.</p> <p>I would love to be considered for the workshops. I work and live in sunny Bournemouth but travel shouldn't be a problem!</p> <p>Thanks n happy Wednesday.</p>
2	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I'm really interested in attending the creativity and mental health workshops.</p> <p>I experience anxiety that will often result in low mood. I'm still finding what works to support this but I have found currently a mixture of self care, compassion and journaling are helping to maintain a balance.</p> <p>I find creativity helpful for my wellbeing. In school I carried the belief that I wasn't good at art, and therefore wasn't creative. It is only recently that I am exploring how I can incorporate creativity into my life. I love the ethos of 64 million artists, that anyone can be creative and that there is so much joy to be had in creating!</p> <p>I also work within mental health - at a recovery day centre. The centre hosts a variety of creative sessions and I'm interested in exploring the effect that creativity has on mental health, especially when sharing it in a group of peers.</p> <p>I love the 64 million artists project and have really enjoyed taking part when I can, as well as sharing it with friends and clients. It has also inspired me to start weekly creative challenges with a friend who also has experience of MH difficulties. The latest one being to depict a creature defeating your unkind thoughts!</p> <p>Would love to be a part of the workshops - but if not, thanks for the great work you're doing! I'll continue to look forward to your emails and share with people in my life.</p> <p>Kindest (creativest!) regards,</p>
3	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I have been inspired by your projects before. Though not managed a whole month. I'm interested in your project and can be available on the dates in August. I have had low mood lapses since I was young and was aware of it. Only in the past few years have I realised I also experience anxiety. It comes and goes and I have been finding ways of managing it through present moment awareness, though sometimes it can be stronger and takes over. Learning to identify triggers has helped.</p> <p>Creativity is such a gift in exploration, play, imagination, possibility and curiosity. I find its more difficult to allow myself to make time when I am on my own. I have lived alone for many years and at times isolated. Sometimes it can be hard to reach out to friends in a low mood, not wanting to be a bother, not knowing who will accept where I am at, as well as fear of no one available and rejection/ abandonment - one of my key triggers. However when creative opportunities are with others, in company, I find it is easier to flow with spontaneity.</p> <p>Anyhow, that's a brief introduction, do let me know if you need any more info, look forward to hearing from you.</p> <p>With warmth</p>
4	<p>"Hello 64 Million Artists,</p> <p>I read Chris' Facebook post about the creativity workshops at St. Luke's in August, and I'd very much like to take part.</p> <p>A bit about me.</p> <p>I'm a 46 year old gay married man who lives in Essex. Up until December last year I worked for 18 years at a company that provides 'talent' (keynote, motivational and after dinner speakers, conference presenters, awards hosts and cabaret) for corporate, industry and public sector events.</p> <p>I left as for a number of years I had not been happy there, felt drained and uninspired by the relentless volume of work - which mainly felt unsupported, leaving me feeling under valued, isolated, and simply on an ever increasingly bigger corporate hamster wheel that was just getting faster and faster. I finally chose to get off.</p> <p>This year for me so far has been a reflective one, and one in which I have essentially wanted to get back in touch with who I really am, what supports me in my life (creatively and physically). The journey this year has been an interesting one where I have been looking at my identity (who I am), exploring and getting back in touch with my creativity, and having fun.</p>

	<p>Back in February I started swimming most week days, doing yoga classes three times a week and a meditation class once a week too. Currently I'm on a 5 week Indian Head Massage course on Mondays and take part in a life drawing class on Tuesdays, both of which I'm loving.</p> <p>I used to sing with The London Gay Men's Chorus, an organisation I am still a member of, however now as a non singer.</p> <p>Mental health (in confidents): Many moons ago I use to have anxiety / panic attacks, and as with many people or my age and friends, my doctor at the time suggested going on prozac. I decided that wasn't a route I wanted to go down, and so I explored other ways to deal with what was going on for me at the time. One of the most successful things I did was to meditate daily, and I also found walking helped me a great deal too. I continue to work on myself, gaining support through what was called The ISA Experience, now know as the Waking Up Weekend. I also have a counsellor who I speak to on an add hock basis (as and when needed her), who I generally speak to monthly, as I have done so for the last 15 years.</p> <p>With such a big change (leaving work) I'm currently challenging myself to simply to notice what is going on for me at the moment, rather than judge myself, which at times is a tall order, however it's fun too.</p> <p>I love the exploratory sound of the creativity workshops at St. Luke's, and I'm available for all three evenings.</p> <p>If there is anything else that you would like to know about me, please do let me know. My contact details are below.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing from you.</p> <p>With kind regards,</p> <p>Jeremy</p> <p>Nb. I have know Chris Rolls for approx. 18 years. We used to share a house and from that time we have always been good friends.</p> <p>PS. I am dyslexic, so excuse any poor spelling / grammar.</p> <p>"</p>
5	<p>Hello,</p> <p>My name is Susie Williams and I am emailing because I would be interested in taking part in your creativity workshops. I am 52 and have suffered with anxiety for quite a long time, most recently for a year since I lost my job last year. I am interested in the project because I have found that painting is one if the things that regulates my mood. I discovered that by accident really, my GP prescribed medication and offered CBT but there wasn't any discussion of other things that could help me feel better. I work in education and know that in schools creativity is being side-lined, particularly in the early years, and I think that it's potential benefits are being lost. I will be available for the workshops and am moving to Kent next week so travel isn't a problem. I hope that's enough information and look forward to hearing from you</p> <p>Kind regards,</p>
6	<p>Hi there,</p> <p>Id love the opportunity to take part of in the workshops.</p> <p>I'm a creative working in Brand Communication and would like to facilitate a similar session with an Organisation I worked with in South Africa last year focused on innovative education in the creative industries. Working as a mentor to young adults, this was an all too familiar theme crippling daily lives and wellbeing - with creatively viewed as a luxury.</p> <p>As someone who has suffered with depression and a survivor of an attempted suicide, this is a space I have avoided. I would like to be apart of a facilitated and guided space looking to unpack this.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing more about the programme.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
7	<p>"Hello 64 million artists</p> <p>I'm interested in joining the creativity and wellbeing study at St Luke's next month.</p> <p>I've studied psychology, worked in mental health, and am now working in a creative industry - so there are a lot of aspects of the study I find interesting. I've also worked in a private school, developing a new curriculum and exploring creativity and motivation. I'm pretty sure that everyone has experienced anxiety or depressed mood to some extent, and I've known many people who have used art, music or performance as a way of coping with, or expressing, personal struggles.</p> <p>The 3 dates for the workshops are all do-able. Please let me know if i'm selected and I'll put it in my diary.</p>

	Best regards
8	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I saw your post on LinkedIn and would be interested in participating in the creativity and mental health workshops.  <a href="https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM_workshops_flyer_v1.pdf">https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM_workshops_flyer_v1.pdf</a></p> <p>I have a lot of anxiety. I've spoken to a therapist and a doctor about this in the past, but have never taken any medication. I read self-help books and try my best to stay on top of it.</p> <p>I work in central London and am available for all three sessions. I work as a writer and editor - just thought I'd mention this in case you specifically don't want people who have creative jobs.</p>
9	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am currently a trainee mental health practitioner, studying part-time at UCL, and doing an NHS clinical placement working with patients.</p> <p>Additionally I am a part-time Digital Arts lecturer and have lived experience of low mood and anxiety alongside a long-standing interest in how creativity can improve mental health.</p> <p>I would love to participate in your forthcoming workshop series, both to as a means to further investigate my own wellbeing and also to have a chance to consider new perspectives as a practitioner. I would be available for the advertised dates.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing from you.</p>
10	<p>I saw your creativity and wellbeing workshop call for participants-</p> <p><a href="https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM_workshops_flyer_v2.pdf">https://64millionartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CIM_workshops_flyer_v2.pdf</a></p> <p>Wednesday 1st August, 6 - 8.30 pm • Wednesday 8th August, 6 - 8.30 pm • Wednesday 15th August, 6 - 8.30 pm</p> <p>and wondered whether I would qualify to take part as although I am a member of the public I also have a recent BA and MA Fine Art.</p> <p>I graduated in 2016 and have put my art on hold to try and get a paid part time work. I have mental health difficulties-anxiety and depression and mobility difficulties too. I want to get back into making art and am considering helping artists in facilitating art with members of the public.</p> <p>Please let me know if I would be someone you might consider of the project?</p> <p>Thank you</p> <p>Kind Regards</p>
11	<p>Hello,</p> <p>My name is Dana and I am interested in the workshops you are organizing.  I have 1:1 sessions with children that present with different mental health issues, from mild to severe. I also organise various workshops within the school that explore mental health throughout different forms of art.</p> <p>I would like to participate in your workshops so I can learn more about other approaches.</p> <p>Please let me know if you have any available spaces left and any necessary information.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
12	<p>Dear 64 millionartists,</p> <p>I am interested to participate in the workshop in August.</p> <p>I thought I knew about mental illness. I grew up in a country where people who suffered from mental illness were grouped as crazy people. As crazy people, they are shunned by the society and even in some communities were put in hiding in a room at the back of the house and some times being put in a shackles.</p> <p>There is no help available nor understanding of mental health.</p> <p>I am interested in the well being of older people. Some older people ( including me ) have less confidence in themselves, feeling that the world goes by and one can not follow the progress of the young but also of colleagues for those who are still in work force.</p> <p>I work as volunteer in many events from researching at Coventry University faculty of life science, Coventry older voices and participate in writing and devising a theatre piece working with the over 55 age group telling stories and performing , over coming our anxiety problems.</p>

	<p>I would like to participate in this workshop to gain knowledge on how simple art and creativity can be offered to reduce this anxiety</p> <p>Best regards,</p>
13	<p>Hello</p> <p>I would love to join the creativity in mind workshops. As a long-time sufferer of anxiety and depression, I have always considered myself to be a "non-artist"...a person that can't draw, can't paint, can't sing, can't write, can't create!!</p> <p>However, through trial and error, I have discovered the powerful benefits of creating art in different forms. It has helped with my anxiety and low mood, often distracting me from ruminations, giving me space to be more mindful, helping me find a common ground with other people when i have attended an art group, and making new discoveries in the arts.</p> <p>Mainly this has been different visual arts and crafts, but recently I attended a mental health and poetry workshop which I found very therapeutic as well as a creative way to explore emotions.</p> <p>Through this journey I have discovered that there is no such thing as a non-creative person. I am keen to use my experiences in this group as well as explore new art forms with a group of like-minded people.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing from you.</p> <p>Best wishes</p>
14	<p>Dear Sir or Madam,</p> <p>Apologies that I missed your deadline for applications, but I have only just read about your fascinating Creativity in Mind project and I would love to participate in your August workshops if you have any spaces left please.</p> <p>I am a writer and arts educator working mainly with young people in the charity and heritage sectors, but I would like to become more involved with writing for wellbeing. This month I will be running a workshop called 'The Writing Cure: Words and Wellbeing' as part of the Wellcome Collection's Open Platform scheme to engage visitors in discussions and activities on this topic. I have experienced depression and anxiety in the past as a teenager and as an adult, and I found that engaging with poetry and creative tasks was a crucial part of my recovery.</p> <p>I would love to learn more about your project and to contribute to its success.</p> <p>Kind regards,</p>



## Feedback from Participants

### How did you hear about the workshops

- Facebook
- Facebook wall - via a friend
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- I saw the flier on the 64 Million Artists website
- On your website
- Twitter

## Feedback from Participants

### Did you find that attending the workshops affected your mood or wellbeing? Please describe.

- *The space (with the group) was a real sanctuary / haven to just be. Having the autonomy to just 'be me' in the safe environment created a sense of personal acceptance, and in turn helped me accept to others there too. Having time out (from life) being on the course, felt a luxury, and a privilege too. To stop, reflect and communicated just for those couple of hours a week felt very special and hugely nurturing.*
- *Yes. I felt more open and positive afterwards. Seeing other people open up was quite powerful. But also doing things I wouldn't usually do. Most importantly just setting aside time to do something non-functional.*
- *I don't think the workshops went on long enough to have a noticeable effect on my mood or wellbeing, but I feel that they would do, in time.*
- *I think I was on a rollercoaster of emotions throughout the course from anxiety to calm to laughter and excitement. I mostly enjoyed meeting others with something in common and not being defined by my job role or profession just me... here. I feel it has improved my wellbeing and helped give me that nudge that I can do it and be creative.*
- *I have been having a difficult few weeks in terms of feeling very anxious and emotional, so I found the workshops really therapeutic as a space to open up within an supportive group and to enjoy the playfulness of creation. I looked forward to coming each week.*

## Key Themes

*Feeling of sanctuary / Being authentic / Self acceptance / Time out / Nurturing / Positive Feelings / Needing longer to feel benefits / Emotional rollercoaster / Creative nudge / Therapeutic / Supportive group / Something to look forward to*

## 8. THE SHARING EVENT

After the end of the three online groups, in December 2018, participants of the workshops and online programmes (n=75) were invited to a Christmas 'Sharing Event' at St Luke's Community Centre. The event was advertised to participants as a light-touch way for people to meet up, celebrate what had been achieved and put faces to names. As well as refreshments, 64 Million Artists provided crafts activities for people to take part in, including Christmas card making, tree decorations and spoon puppet making!

Due to Christmas commitments, only 8 participants were able to attend and, revealingly, all of these were participants who had taken part in the original in-person workshops at St Luke's – although 6 of these had taken part in one of the online groups. The reason for this bias is uncertain; it's possible that the workshop participants felt like they already had a personal connection with each other and the Creativity in Mind project, and perhaps they felt less intimidated about meeting strangers compared to the online-only participants.

### Participants were asked whether there were any other thoughts or reflections they would like to share with us

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

- *I thought Chris's skill, particularly on the first evening – getting everyone to open up and share was fantastic. In my opinion, the skill and the way Chris facilitated the group created the space and helped the workshops be the success they were.*
- *It would be great if you did schools outreach lessons in high schools. I'd like to make this kind of creativity and flexible thinking part of popular education.*
- *I think there was quite a strong focus on performance in the workshops. That's not necessarily a criticism; just an observation. I feel very uncomfortable with anything that involves performing, so I found that more challenging. However, it's still a way of being creative, so I didn't feel it was inappropriate to include these types of activities. I guess you can be mindful of the mix and make sure that the activities within one session are ticking different boxes. I found out about the workshops because of a talk Jo gave through my employer. One of the main things I took from her talk was about being creative for the sake of enjoyment and the benefit we get from it, rather than for any kind of judgement or an output (seeking perfection). This was also something that we discussed in the first session. In each session we did a creative activity and then showed the group and talked then through our thinking. At times I felt this had the potential to become competitive and more about the output than the process, but I appreciate that other members of the group found it interesting and insightful. I think it could go either way and it probably depends on the group and their individual personalities. Again, not a criticism; just an observation.*
- *Be great to have a 'hands dirty' creative task. But I've really enjoyed it and wish the course was longer... more workshops required! Maybe a series and an ending session?*
- *I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone at 64 Million Artists for this fantastic set of workshops, and especially to Chris, Kirsty, Deborah and Bishi.*

- *I got a really positive buzz out of engaging with the project – doing new things, taking risks, interacting with other people, which has made me more confident in other areas of my life and inspires me to be more creative. Thank you all for the fabulous time. It was lovely to meet you all and have such fun participating in the project.*
- *Thank you for allowing me to take part in such a genuinely wondrous and life-affirming experience. I feel it has sown a seed which will flourish over time in many areas of my life personally and professionally and I'm now even more excited to discover where making space for radical creativity can take us as humans as well. Thanks again to everyone involved. Would love to hear the outcome of the research eventually. I'm confident the quantitative findings will echo our subjective experiences as a pilot group. As someone who works in mental health I can also appreciate the urgent need to establish a solid evidence base for the link between brief creative interventions and wellbeing - the implications for future mental health provision are truly massive!*

## **Key Themes**

*Skilful facilitation / Everyday creativity in schools / Performance anxiety / Non-judgment / Non-competitive / Messy activities / Positive buzz / Interactions / Risk taking / Life-affirming experience / Inspired and inspiring / Radical creativity / Sown a seed*

