

WE ARE
ALL
ARTISTS

ART IS A
VEHICLE FOR
CHANGE

Even small changes
can be
transformational!

CREATIVE
WELLBEING
IS ABOUT THE
JOURNEY &
NOT THE
DESTINATION

CREATIVE
WELLBEING
IS FOR
EVERYONE

Confronting health
inequalities &
barriers

CREATIVE
WELLBEING
IS ABOUT
LIVING WELL

The Creative
Wellbeing approach
requires:

INVESTIGATION,
UNDERSTANDING
& LONG-TERM
INVESTMENT

The draft Manifesto has been drawn from the development and delivery of the DG Creative Wellbeing project across community & healthcare settings, and is hugely inspired by our participants' stories and experiences. OutPost Arts invited Heather to reflect on HER personal creative wellbeing journey taking part in Art Journal Project - a creative prescribing initiative...

On paper, the Art Journal Project sounded perfect BUT did it live up to my expectations? My totally honest answer, would have to be: NO, IT DID NOT!!!!

It totally and utterly exceeded all of my expectations and then some!

When I walked into The Bridge that first morning, nothing could have prepared me for how above and beyond my wildest expectations it could have been.

Five years ago, I was diagnosed with a serious mental health condition and had to walk away from my beloved almost thirty-year career as a psychotherapist and personal development lecturer. Since then, I was only able to leave the safe space of my home, maybe twice a month, and only with the help and support of Peter, my husband and full-time carer. So, as you can imagine, attending that first session was the scariest thing I could have done; but, I needn't have worried.

I was welcomed in the most gentle, sensitive, supportive way, by the director, the wellbeing leads, the admin team and all the volunteer mentors. They met me where I was, with no expectations or pressure. They catered to my needs and checked in with me every step of the way. By the end of the day, I felt safe and held, seen and heard, welcomed and accepted, exactly as I was.

I knew it was going to be okay! And, it only got better...

Over the following months, I was welcomed into the safe space of our very own Facebook group where we support and encourage each other, share our work and thoughts and learn to create community. Each weekly Zoom art session was with a caring, professional artist who enthused us all with their passion for their craft and for our development. We went on creative research trips that helped us build friendships and take part in a diverse range of art and culture experiences. All things I never imagined I could do alone.

With sensitivity, I was gently guided along.

Here's what I learned:

- To make space each day to create a regular and consistent creative practice that is now the foundation of my self-care routine.
- I learnt to be non-judgemental - to allow myself to play and play and play.
- To experiment with no other expectation than to observe, with interest, what was happening.
- I learnt to love the big mess that I made and to accept it as part of the process.
- To enjoy the journey and not focus on the outcome.

And as I learned new skills and practises, I started to feel my confidence and self-esteem grow. I started to trust myself and my new community and would share my work with them and in turn, give them feedback. I felt valued, worthy, appreciated.

I'm amazed at how far I've come in such a short space of time and I'm very, very grateful. I started this journey thinking that I might feel more confident about the future. I'm finishing the project with HOPE for the future. I'm already chatting about new opportunities and plans.

I asked Peter what he thought of the project and he said one word: OUTSTANDING! He's so impressed with my wanting to share my work with the world that he has bought me a new website address and is helping me build my creative website.

How important is this project? Having been through it, I am now passionate supporter of the Art Journal Project.

As a psychotherapist and personal development lecturer for almost three decades I know the value of what I've experienced. The whole ethos of enhancing people's wellbeing permeates through the whole organisation - from the director, management, leaders, admin and support staff and the volunteer mentors. There is a deep understanding and/or lived experience of well-being challenges shared by everyone involved with the projects. I have felt held in a safe space in order for me to grow and I now see that my mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health and resilience has been enhanced immeasurably.

I am so thankful that this ground-breaking project is now a big part of my recovery and I'm excited (and scared) about my future creative adventures. Watch this space!!

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have
your
say!



A draft
Creative Wellbeing
MANIFESTO
for
Dumfries & Galloway

