

MAJOR PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Collaborative Exploration of Self-Care: Applied
Theatre as a Tool for Practitioner Self-Care

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Major Project Introduction

The purpose of this portfolio is to evidence and critically reflect upon my major project. It brings together four documents that I have independently researched, designed, structured, and produced, each contributing to the exploration of developing a practice that facilitates self-care for arts and health practitioners in Southwest Wales. The project has enabled the autonomous development, delivery, and evaluation of a major applied theatre project within a health and wellbeing context, positioning my practice at the intersection of personal passion and professional inquiry.

My decision to focus on this community stems from both personal experience and professional observation. Throughout my practice, I have repeatedly witnessed the burnout and fatigue that affect practitioners working at the intersection of arts and health. This awareness has informed my commitment at this stage of my life and practice, to support those who dedicate their work to the wellbeing of others. The issue of practitioner sustainability is an urgent and ongoing discourse within applied theatre, and this project represents my contribution to that conversation. Wales, with its long-standing history as a hub for arts and health practice, provided both a meaningful context and a practical framework for the project. Concentrating on Southwest Wales also offered the opportunity to deepen my network within this community of practice.

This portfolio also demonstrates my ability to develop applied theatre praxis through a sustained, focused, independent piece of work that reflects a systematic and complex understanding of the field. My work is informed by current critical discourse and underpinned by ethical rigour, situating the project firmly within contemporary debates in applied theatre and socially engaged practice. Furthermore, the project has encouraged creative problem-solving, risk-taking, and originality in its approach, particularly in responding to the complex realities of arts and health contexts.

The portfolio is structured around four key documents. The first is the *Major Project Proposal*, which outlines the initial ideas and conceptual framework that shaped the development of the project. The second is a *Critically Reflective Journal*, documenting the three-month process (June–August) and offering an ongoing evaluation of my insights, challenges, and evolving understanding. The third is an *Evidence of Practice* document, which details the facilitation of two six-hour trial sessions with arts and health practitioners representing a wide range of disciplines and levels of engagement with applied theatre. The final component is a

Sustainability Resource, designed to extend the impact of the project and initiate a pathway for its continuation beyond the scope of my individual work.

Together, these documents demonstrate both the process and outcomes of the project, evidencing my practice-as-research while also situating it within wider professional and academic discourse.

Part 1 Major Project Proposal Document

Abstract

This project examines how arts and health practitioners in South West Wales, sustain their wellbeing amid emotionally demanding work with trauma and vulnerability. It challenges the dominant view that self-care is purely an individual duty, advocating for a collective, cultural, and systemic approach, informed by current critical discourse. Using applied theatre praxis—such as process drama, storymaking, and other creative research methods—the study facilitates workshops where practitioners engage in creative risk-taking, reflective problem solving and share inquiry. Data from reflective journals and group activities reveal the complex interplay between personal responsibility, structural factors, and relational dynamics shaping practitioner wellbeing. The project aims to deepen understanding of self-care as an ethical, systemic, and shared responsibility, to demonstrate how applied theatre can support professional reflection, and to provide practical strategies that promote autonomy and sustainability. It also aspires to influence policy by highlighting the emotional labour and ethical awareness required in arts and health work. Ultimately, the research promotes compassionate care models in which practitioner wellbeing is integral to effective practice.

Proposal Introduction

Arts and health practitioners play a vital role in supporting individuals and communities experiencing trauma, illness, grief, and vulnerability (Preston, 2016; Sadeghi-Yekta & Prendergast, 2022; Nicholson, 2014; Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, 2025). Their work is often situated within complex relational and systemic environments that expose people to chronic stress and secondary trauma. In these settings, practitioners are tasked with holding emotional space for others while navigating their own ethical responsibilities, professional identities, and personal sustainability. Despite the growing body of critical discourse recognising the benefits of arts in health, significantly less attention is given to the emotional toll on practitioners themselves—a gap that perpetuates burnout and undermines sector resilience.

This project responds directly to that imbalance by interrogating the systemic structures and cultural narratives that frame self-care as solely an individual responsibility. Instead, it advances a holistic model, grounded in ethical awareness, collective care, and systemic change. It aligns closely with the Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034 (Arts Council of Wales, 2024), which identifies practitioner wellbeing as central to a thriving, sustainable arts sector, and with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales, 2015) Act 2015, which embeds health, equality, and cultural vitality into the nation’s long-term goals. By situating practitioner

care within these policy frameworks, the project recognises wellbeing as both a personal necessity and a societal responsibility.

The inquiry draws on Butler et al.'s (2019) Six Domains of Self-Care—physical, professional, relational, emotional, psychological, and spiritual—which frame self-care as an interdependent system rather than a series of isolated acts. This theoretical foundation underscores the need for practitioner wellbeing strategies that integrate personal resilience with structural change. Focusing on arts and health practitioners in South West Wales, the project examines how cultural, organisational, and systemic conditions shape wellbeing, while also documenting the creative strategies practitioners use to sustain themselves in under-resourced contexts.

Drawing on applied theatre praxis—including process drama (Bowell & Heap, 2001, 2013), storymaking (Gersie & King, 1990), Playback Theatre (The Centre for Playback Theatre, 2022), and Image Theatre (Boal, 1992)—the project creates spaces for reflection, creative risk-taking, and embodied problem solving. By positioning practitioners as co-creators of knowledge, it values autonomy, originality, and relational resilience. This inquiry seeks to reframe self-care as an ethical and systemic practice, expanding applied theatre's potential as a transformative research method in arts and health.

Aims & Objectives

This project explores how arts and health practitioners in South West Wales sustain their wellbeing while supporting others in emotionally demanding contexts. Practitioners often operate within complex relational and systemic environments that significantly shape their capacity for resilience, self-care, and ethical practice.

The key objectives are:

- to investigate the lived experiences of practitioner wellbeing, including how cultural, organisational, and structural factors influence their sense of purpose, professional identity, and personal sustainability
- to explore individual and collective self-care practices that demonstrate autonomy, creativity, and ethical awareness while acknowledging the challenges of working in under-resourced or precarious settings
- to apply theatre praxis and critical facilitation to a project that enable reflection, embodied understanding, and shared problem solving among practitioners. These creative methods will

support participants to reimagine self-care as an active, relational process rather than an isolated responsibility

- to analyse how systemic inequalities, funding structures, and current critical discourse shape attitudes to practitioner care and wellbeing
- to generate knowledge that promotes more sustainable and ethically grounded models of practice that prioritise the wellbeing of practitioners alongside the communities they support

By embedding self-care within applied theatre praxis, this project reframes it as a collective and creative endeavour. It aims to show how participatory methods can foster resilience, mutual support, and critical reflection in ways that challenge dominant narratives of individual responsibility. Ultimately, the project will contribute to more compassionate, sustainable professional cultures where practitioner wellbeing is valued as central to effective and ethical practice.

Literature Review

In recent years, self-care has evolved from a peripheral idea in the helping professions to a central principle of professional longevity, resilience, and ethical responsibility. Across social work, education, healthcare, and the arts, practitioners face high rates of burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue. These challenges are increasingly recognised in national policy, including the *Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034*, which emphasises practitioner well-being as vital to a sustainable arts sector (Arts Council of Wales, 2024), and the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, which embeds health, equality, and community cohesion into Wales' long-term vision (Welsh Government, 2015). This review synthesises research by Butler et al. (2019), on the six domains of self-care, the “Resilient Practitioner” (Skovholt, T.M. and Trotter-Mathison, M. 2025) model, and trauma-informed approaches (Sonnex, C. 2023), providing an interdisciplinary foundation for sustainable self-care.

The Six Domains of Self-Care

According to Butler et al. (2019), in *Six Domains of Self-Care: Attending to the Whole Person*, self-care is best understood as a holistic, integrative practice that extends beyond burnout

prevention to encompass the ongoing cultivation of personal and professional flourishing. Their model identifies six interdependent domains—physical, professional, relational, emotional, psychological, and spiritual—each addressing a distinct but overlapping dimension of human well-being. For arts and health practitioners, whose work often involves complex emotional labour, high interpersonal engagement, and fluctuating workloads, this framework provides a structured yet flexible guide for sustaining resilience.

- 1. Physical Self-Care** – Foundational to all other domains, this includes adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, regular movement, hydration, and access to healthcare. Physical health directly influences cognitive clarity, emotional regulation, and creative energy (Sharma and Haider, 2012; McGonigal, K. 2021). In arts and health contexts, this may require intentional rest periods to balance physically demanding facilitation.
- 2. Professional Self-Care** – Encompasses managing workload, setting boundaries, engaging in supervision, and seeking fair remuneration. In creative sectors, where role clarity can be fluid, professional self-care also involves skill development and adapting practice to evolving community needs (Maslach et al., 2001).
- 3. Relational Self-Care** – Supportive relationships act as a buffer against isolation and workplace stress (Neff, 2011). For freelancers or independent practitioners, cultivating intentional peer networks is essential to counteract the solitude of independent work.
- 4. Emotional Self-Care** – Includes practices such as journaling, therapy, mindfulness, and creative expression to process experiences and regulate affect. This is vital for practitioners holding space for others' vulnerability without overextending themselves (Neff and Germer, 2022).
- 5. Psychological Self-Care** – Intellectual stimulation, reflective practice, and meaning-making sustain motivation and ethical clarity (Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, 2025). For arts practitioners, engaging with inspiring works or new creative methods maintains curiosity and purpose.
- 6. Spiritual Self-Care** – Religious or secular practices that provide grounding, purpose, and connection to values enhance resilience (Rushton et al., 2015; Dennett, 2015). This domain often anchors creative work in broader visions of cultural or social change.

Integration and Interdependence of Domains

Butler et al. (2019) emphasise that the six domains function as a dynamic system: neglect in one area can destabilise the rest, while strengthening one domain can create cascading benefits. For example, improved emotional regulation may enhance professional boundaries and relational harmony. The authors recommend combining regular self-care plans with responsive strategies for periods of acute stress, ensuring that self-care remains intentional, reflective, and adapted to individual contexts. For arts and health practitioners, such integration aligns directly with the *Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034* commitment to practitioner sustainability and the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* goals of building a healthier, more equal, and cohesive Wales.

The Resilient Practitioner

Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison's (2025) concept of "The Resilient Practitioner" expands upon the need for holistic self-care by outlining multiple dimensions that practitioners must nurture to sustain themselves. This model includes elements such as the emotional self, the humorous self, the physical self, and the spiritual or religious self, among others.

Dimensions of the Resilient Self as highlighted by Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison's (2025)

- Nurturing the Emotional Self: includes processing feelings, expressing emotions in healthy ways, and seeking support when overwhelmed.
- Nurturing the Financial Self: encourages budgeting, financial literacy, and responsible planning to reduce anxiety related to income instability—a common issue in social and creative professions.
- Nurturing the Humorous Self: emphasizes laughter and light-heartedness as coping mechanisms, promoting emotional resilience.
- Nurturing the Physical and Nutritious Self: mirrors Butler et al.'s (2019) physical domain, reinforcing the importance of bodily care.
- Nurturing the Playful and Recreational Self: encourages engaging in joyful, non-productive activities that restore energy and creativity.
- Nurturing the Relaxational and Stress-Reduction Self: includes mindfulness, yoga, and other techniques that lower stress hormones and enhance presence.

- Nurturing the Solitary and Spiritual Self: suggests the importance of solitude and reflection as spiritual or existential anchors.
- Nurturing the Priority-Setting Self: focuses on time management and boundary-setting, echoing the need for intentional life structuring.

(Skovholt, and Trotter-Mathison, 2025, p.169-192)

The strength of the Resilient Practitioner model lies in its specificity and its acknowledgment of less traditionally emphasised areas of wellness—like humour or play—as legitimate and necessary forms of care. Its adaptability makes it particularly relevant to fields like arts and health, where emotional labour is intense and support systems may be informal or inconsistent.

Trauma-Informed Practice and Self-Care

The intersection of self-care and trauma-informed practice is especially critical in fields like social work, education, healthcare, and the arts, where professionals routinely engage with trauma narratives. Trauma-informed care emphasizes principles like safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment—not only for clients but for practitioners as well.

In Chris Sonnex's (2023) critique of the theatre industry in his article on trauma and the arts he offers a poignant example. Sonnex highlights how artistic industries often valorise suffering, with little regard for the emotional distress on creators. He notes that artists are frequently re-traumatised by the demand to draw from personal pain, often without access to adequate support. He calls for a paradigm shift: creating trauma-informed creative spaces that prioritise well-being as much as artistic output. Organisations such as *Cardboard Citizens* (2025) and *20 Stories High* (2025) exemplify this by integrating trauma-informed practices into their programming and organisational culture.

This emphasis on trauma-aware environments parallels best practices in social work and healthcare. For instance, trauma-informed supervision, reflective practice groups, and policies that prioritise psychological safety are all increasingly recognized as essential components of workplace wellness. These approaches are directly supported by the emotional, professional, and psychological domains of self-care.

The Interdisciplinary Imperative

What emerges across all these models is a call for an interdisciplinary, integrative understanding of self-care. The six domains of Butler et al. (2019), the Resilient Practitioner model (Skovholt, and Trotter-Mathison, 2025) and trauma-informed practice, each contribute essential perspectives. Whether applied in a hospital, classroom, theatre, or community centre, the core principle remains sustaining the practitioner is not optional—it is ethical, strategic, and necessary.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Based on the literature, several key recommendations emerge:

1. **Institutionalise Self-Care:** Educational and professional institutions should integrate self-care into training, supervision, and organizational policies.
2. **Normalise Emotional Labour:** Professions must acknowledge emotional labour as legitimate work and provide structures for its processing and management.
3. **Foster Peer Support Networks:** Relational self-care can be operationalized through mentorship, peer consultation, and team-building initiatives.
4. **Create Trauma-Informed Spaces:** Organisations should adopt trauma-informed principles that protect not only clients but also staff and creators.
5. **Promote Reflective Practice:** Psychological self-care should be supported through regular reflective exercises, continuing education, and intellectual stimulation.
6. **Value Individualisation:** One-size-fits-all approaches to self-care are insufficient. Personalised self-care planning that respects cultural, spiritual, and individual differences must be prioritized.

The contemporary landscape of helping professions and the arts demands a robust framework for self-care that acknowledges complexity, trauma, and the full spectrum of human needs. The six domains articulated by Butler et al. (2019) offer a holistic roadmap, while the Resilient Practitioner model adds nuance and flexibility. Integrating trauma-informed principles into professional settings further ensures that care for the self is embedded in broader systems of safety and ethics. Ultimately, sustainable self-care is not about indulgence but about sustaining presence, compassion, and integrity in the face of profound human challenges.

Self-care is the ground from which professional excellence and personal fulfilment grow. To attend to the whole person, as Butler et al. (2019) urge, is to affirm that the practitioner's humanity is not secondary to their work—it is central to it.'

Alignment with the Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034

The principles outlined in the literature resonate strongly with the *Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034*, which prioritises well-being, inclusivity, and sustainability within the arts sector (Arts Council of Wales, 2024). By embedding structured self-care practices within arts and health work, this project sustains and enhances practitioners' professional ambition, creativity, and resilience. This directly supports the creation of professional environments grounded in mutual respect and recognition of each practitioner's unique contribution to Wales' cultural life.

The integration of personal responsibility for self-care into professional practice also mirrors the strategy's vision for long-term sectoral sustainability. Encouraging practitioners to take ownership of their own well-being fosters a ripple effect, inspiring peers, collaborators, and community members to view self-care as foundational to effective arts and health practice. This alignment illustrates how policy objectives can be operationalised through targeted practitioner-focused interventions.

Alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2025). Act 2015

The *Well-being of Future Generations (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales) Act 2015* sets out seven goals for improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales (2015). This project directly aligns with four: *A More Equal Wales*, *A Healthier Wales*, *A Wales of Cohesive Communities*, and *A Globally Responsible Wales*.

- **A More Equal Wales** – By equipping practitioners with self-care tools that challenge inequities in personal and social contexts, the project enhances their capacity to advocate for equality across their professional and community engagements. Improved practitioner well-being can influence wider social networks, promoting inclusivity and fairness.

- **A Healthier Wales** – Focusing on the mental well-being of practitioners indirectly benefits the communities they serve. Resilient practitioners are better positioned to deliver effective, high-quality arts-based health interventions, leading to positive health outcomes across community settings.
- **A Wales of Cohesive Communities** – Practitioner well-being underpins the stability and effectiveness of the communities they facilitate. By fostering collaboration among practitioners from related disciplines—particularly within South West Wales—the project strengthens professional networks and enhances social cohesion.
- **A Globally Responsible Wales** – Supporting practitioners who lead socially, environmentally, and culturally rooted projects enhances Wales’s international reputation as a nation committed to sustainable, inclusive cultural practice. The well-being of those at the heart of these initiatives contribute to positive local and global impacts.

By situating the self-care frameworks discussed in the literature within these policy contexts, the project bridges theoretical understanding with the strategic aims of both the Arts Council and Welsh Government legislation. This underscores that practitioner self-care is not only a matter of individual well-being but also a driver of sector-wide sustainability and national well-being goals.

Methodology

The project adopts applied theatre methodologies to create spaces of reflection, experimentation, and collective problem solving. A series of workshops will integrate practices such as Process Drama (Bowell, P. and Heap, B.S. 2001; Bowell, P. and Heap, B.S. 2013). Storymaking (Gersie, A. and King, N. 1990) and Playback Theatre (The Centre for Playback Theatre, 2022), and Image Theatre (Boal, A. 1992). These participatory approaches enable practitioners to examine and embody the relational dynamics, power structures, and systemic pressures that shape their professional experiences and wellbeing. Through creative risk-taking and embodied inquiry, participants will be supported to surface underlying assumptions, articulate unspoken tensions, and explore new perspectives on self-care and resilience.

Sessions will be facilitated with an emphasis on critical reflection and psychological safety, allowing practitioners to engage openly with emotionally charged material. Participants will document their experiences in reflective journals, capturing personal insights, moments of realisation, and emerging strategies for sustaining their wellbeing. This reflective writing will serve both as research data and as a process that fosters autonomy, originality, and a deeper sense of ethical responsibility within complex professional systems.

In addition, the facilitator will maintain detailed observational notes throughout all workshops, recording moments of significance, recurring patterns, and unexpected themes that arise in the group process.

This approach demonstrates how applied theatre praxis and critical facilitation can function as rigorous, qualitative research methods. By centring practitioner agency, creativity, and systemic awareness, the methodology offers a dynamic way to generate knowledge that is both academically robust and directly relevant to the lived realities of arts and health professionals.

Ethical Considerations

This research engages practitioners in education, community, and health sectors, many of whom face sustained emotional and systemic pressures. A core ethical commitment is to create spaces that are responsive, non-extractive, and grounded in mutual respect. Informed by Arao and Clemens' (2013) shift from 'safe spaces' to 'brave spaces,' facilitation will encourage openness to challenge, recognising that critical conversations about well-being, equity, and identity may involve discomfort as well as support. Auston and Vadiveloo (2023) emphasise that in collaborative arts contexts, brave spaces depend on explicit negotiation of consent and boundaries, enabling participants to take creative and emotional risks without compromising autonomy or cultural safety. This project recognises that discomfort, when ethically held, can act as a catalyst for growth, deepening reflective practice and expanding perspectives. By balancing care with accountability, it aims to cultivate environments where trust coexists with a willingness to interrogate assumptions, fostering conditions for transformative dialogue and sustained professional resilience.

The commitment to cultivating brave spaces reflects the *Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034* priority of creating inclusive, respectful environments that recognise the unique contributions of cultural practitioners (Arts Council of Wales, 2024). It also supports the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* goals of *A More Equal Wales* and *A Wales of*

Cohesive Communities (Welsh Government, 2015), by ensuring that participation in arts and health contexts is grounded in equity, collaboration, and the shared responsibility of community well-being. In this sense, the ethical stance is both a methodological choice and a direct enactment of national policy commitments to social justice and cultural sustainability.

Facilitation is understood here not as a neutral act but as an evolving set of relational and performative stances. As Preston (2016, p. 52) observes:

A continuum of performance roles exists for the facilitator, from the informal nuanced performances of day-to-day practice to more formalized, heightened performances of teacher-in-role, opening a range of aesthetic resources that can bring another quality of role playing to facilitation... frames of reference for thinking about the different stances one might take whatever one's practice.

These roles—such as the reflector, the opposer, or the supporter—carry ethical implications, influencing power dynamics, trust, and participant well-being. The project will require careful judgement about when to step forward (e.g., to mediate or challenge) and when to step back, ensuring that participants' voices remain central. Drawing on participatory ethics, this work aligns with Karp's guidance in Banks (2011) that researchers enter professional settings as guests, listening deeply before offering interventions. This principal safeguards against imposing normative ideals of well-being or expecting disclosure as a form of performance.

To prevent participation from becoming burdensome, involvement will remain voluntary, with clear boundaries and appropriate support in place. Inspired by Jacques Derrida's critique of *transactional expectations* cited by (Nicholson, 2014), the project prioritises process over outcome, valuing care, reflexivity, and collaboration above measurable outputs. Ultimately, this approach frames ethical facilitation as an ongoing practice of humility, respect, and responsiveness to the expertise and agency of practitioners themselves.

Conclusion

This project has reimagined self-care for arts and health practitioners in South West Wales, not as an isolated act of personal maintenance, but as a deeply relational, ethical, and systemic practice. Drawing on applied theatre methodologies and critical self-care frameworks, the research has created spaces for practitioners to reflect, challenge dominant narratives, and co-develop sustainable strategies for wellbeing. In a field marked by emotional labour, precariousness, and systemic under-resourcing, this reframing is both urgent and necessary.

Through workshops grounded in process drama, storymaking, and embodied inquiry, participants were able to externalise complex professional tensions and surface shared experiences that are often silenced or minimised. These creative, participatory methods enabled practitioners to move beyond reactive notions of burnout prevention and into more generative models of care—where autonomy, collective support, and cultural sustainability intersect. The reflective data gathered highlights a powerful desire among practitioners to re-centre their own humanity within their work, without guilt or apology.

The research strongly aligns with both the *Arts Council of Wales Strategy 2024–2034* and the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, evidencing how practitioner wellbeing is not only central to personal sustainability but also to the long-term health, equality, and cohesion of Wales' cultural landscape. When practitioners are well-supported—physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually—they are better equipped to hold space for others, innovate ethically, and contribute to resilient, inclusive arts ecosystems.

Theoretically, this project extends the reach of Butler et al.'s (2019) *Six Domains of Self-Care* and Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison's (2025) *The Resilient Practitioner* model by placing them in direct conversation with applied theatre practice. This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates that self-care is not merely an individual coping strategy but a collective and creative act, shaped by systems, institutions, and relationships. Importantly, the research foregrounds the ethical dimension of self-care: it is not optional but integral to the integrity of the work.

In conclusion, this inquiry contributes a new lens through which to view wellbeing in arts and health—one that centres process over outcome, collaboration over isolation, and sustainability over sacrifice. By championing practitioner care as a shared responsibility, it calls on institutions, funders, and communities to support the conditions in which reflective, courageous, and compassionate practice can thrive. Ultimately, reframing self-care in this way not only preserves practitioners' ability to do their work but also enhances the transformative power of the arts in health contexts.

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Part 2 Major Project Reflection Journal

Reflection Journal Introduction

Before I begin this reflective journal, I want to address the writing style applied. Since this journal is a reflection on my major project, it represents a very personal and subjective experience. For that reason, it has been written in first person.

This journal is an amalgamation and reflection of the entire process, which began in June and concluded in August. I have appended the monthly journal entries to support this reflection, using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. However, for this overall reflection entry, I decided not to use Gibbs' framework, as I found its structure limited my ability to reflect openly and honestly.

Within this journal, I reflected on the evolution of my facilitation practice—moving from over-planning to embodied experimentation, and balancing risk with methodological growth. I considered how contrasting conditions, and the influence of individual participants shaped group dynamics, as well as the role of emotional labour and participant recognition. Themes of risk-taking, brave space principles, and the impact of language and framing also emerged. Finally, I examined how outputs and evidence developed across the process, concluding with the idea of holding from the centre as a core principle of my practice.

Negotiating Discomfort in Practice: Expanding the Methodological Toolkit

At the outset of this Major Project, I aimed to explore well-being through story-making, building on past participant-led, whimsical, and non-linear narrative practices. These methods, central to my facilitation work, used imaginative play as both engagement and personal insight. My initial idea, shaped in June, envisioned a fantastical 'meta-world' of self-care, echoing my BA project where participants co-created imaginary realms and narrative quests that supported well-being. The tone was playful, escapist, and co-authored—a kind of narrative wellness game.

As the project unfolded, however, it became clear this approach no longer fitted the deeper, more critically engaged inquiry I was pursuing. Rooted in real-world systems of care, labour, and burnout, the work required a grounded, embodied methodology rather than metaphor or fantasy. To address this methodological misalignment, a deliberate and significant pivot was made in my practice. I stood outside of my established comfort zone and into a practice I had previously resisted: Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2019), drawing from his influential text *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992). This decision was not made lightly. My hesitation with Boal's work stemmed in part from the terminology itself—specifically, the word 'oppressed,' which to me, carried a confrontational tone and a sense of binary struggle that felt at odds with my facilitation ethos. I have always approached my work through a lens of curiosity, co-creation, and restoration. I aim to create spaces that foster gentle inquiry rather than adversarial confrontation.

Nonetheless, I experimented with a hybrid approach, combining Boal's *Image Theatre*, *Great Game of Power*, and *Constellations* (1992) with the *Six Domains of Self-Care* framework (Butler et al., 2019). This shifted the exercises towards reflection, values-based decision-making, and shared meaning-making.

In practice, participants used their bodies to externalise boundaries, values, and care needs, reframing Boal's techniques for self-exploration rather than opposition. This methodological shift challenged me to step outside my comfort zone while affirming that facilitation can hold critique and care, structure and improvisation, playfulness and gravity.

Ultimately, this experience expanded my methodological toolkit and reshaped my understanding of narrative, embodiment, and power in co-creating well-being. It reminded me that transformation often comes through discomfort, and that stepping into resistance—my own included—can itself be an act of care when held with intention and reflexivity.

From Over-Planning to Embodied Experimentation

Early in the stages of this project and considering my facilitation practice, I struggled with perfectionism—wanting the methodology to be fully formed before delivery. This led to burnout and a disconnect from the relational core of my work. Over-planning created rigidity and reduced space for participant input or responsiveness, due to this I had to adjust.

Shifting to in-room experimentation was transformative. I began testing ideas live, adapting to group dynamics, and trusting the process. This echoed the theories of Ellsworth (2005) and Snowber (2016) in embodied pedagogy, which emphasise learning through presence and action. It reminded me that facilitation knowledge is co-created, not pre-determined as stated by Leach (2016).

This shift was fundamentally ethical. By releasing control, I created real space for participants lived experiences to shape the process—favouring cofacilitation over content delivery and meaning-making over monologue. As Mel Robbins reminds us, “The problem isn’t you. The problem is the power you unknowingly give to other people” (2024,p 23), and “when you stop trying to control things that aren’t yours to control, you reclaim your time, your peace of mind, and your focus” (2024,p 24). In practical terms, this meant accepting that “you will never be able to control what is happening around you... but you can always choose what you think, say, or do in response”(Robbins, M, 2024. p 101), shifting the focus of power back to myself while opening real agency for participants to co-construct the exploration of selfcare together.

This was clear in two July workshops. On the 12th, heat and group dynamics limited emotional expression, and structure offered containment. On the 26th, vulnerability emerged naturally, and I adjusted the session accordingly. In both, flexibility allowed me to meet the group at the stage of the activity where they were.

I reframed uncertainty as a strength rather than a failure. Letting go of control enabled deeper connection, creativity, and ethical responsiveness—hallmarks of participatory practice.

Contrasting Conditions, Common Growth

On the 12th of July, I facilitated a session in an unventilated dance studio during an intense heatwave, an environment that was physically and mentally taxing for everyone involved. The oppressive heat created a situation where traditional facilitation methods were no longer viable. My role shifted from guiding content exploration to managing group stamina and emotional regulation. I had to quickly restructure the session—shortening activities, accelerating the pace, and incorporating energisers to sustain focus and morale. These reactive strategies, though effective in maintaining surface-level engagement, significantly limited the depth of reflection the group could reach. The session became about getting through the heatwave rather than going deep.

In contrast, the session on the 26th of July unfolded under different conditions. A smaller group—further reduced by last-minute absences due to illness—created an unexpectedly quiet and intimate atmosphere. The reduced number, combined with a more temperate physical setting, allowed for a slower, more spacious dynamic within the group. Rather than adhere rigidly to my planned structure, I allowed the group's emerging needs and interests to guide the session. Relational presence—being attuned and responsive to the group in the moment—took precedence over facilitation control. I consciously chose not to steer participants back toward the agenda when conversations drifted or deepened; instead, I allowed the unfolding dialogue to lead. This was a turning point in my practice. In earlier stages of my facilitation journey, I would have viewed such deviation from the plan as a loss of control. Now, I recognise that meaningful learning often occurs in those unscripted, emergent moments.

What links these two sessions, despite their contrasting external conditions, is the theme of adaptation. Yet, the nature of that adaptation evolved. On the 12th, adaptation was reactive—a matter of tactical problem-solving to keep the session functional. On the 26th, adaptation became intentional and relational—an act of holding space for deeper group process to emerge. This evolution marks a philosophical shift in my practice: flexibility is no longer something I resort to in crisis; it is becoming a central orientation in my facilitation.

Where previously, I measured success by how closely I adhered to my plan, I now view success as how well I respond to the group's evolving needs. In privileging human connection and presence over content delivery, I am redefining what effective facilitation means to me. This shift reflects a maturing confidence in the value of co-created learning, where responsiveness is not a compromise but a strength—a sign that I am meeting participants where they are, not just where I had intended them to go.

The Impact of One Participant

During each workshop, there was a participant who, due to external circumstances, needed to leave halfway through. Both individuals had informed me of this in advance.

On the 12th of July, the participant who left early was a male primary school teacher. Within the group, he had one of the clearest connections to the arts and health practice, though he did not identify himself as an arts and health practitioner. His presence brought a vibrant, comedic energy to the room. He naturally took on the role of the clown in the room. Breaking tension and easing uncertainty. He was quick to volunteer for demonstrations and embodied the ideology of 'yes and.' While he was present, he held a subtle but powerful influence on the group dynamic. When he left, his absence was noticeable: although the activities continued smoothly, the playful energy dissipated, shifting to focused concentration. In particular, the other male participants seemed to adopt a 'I must do it right' mindset rather than the playful, questioning approach he had modelled.

The participant who left early on the 26th of July was an applied drama facilitator and life coach. This participant was really engaged with the content of the exploration as it aligned with their area of expertise, and they offered thoughtful advice and feedback before leaving. One of their key reflections was that the workshop went much deeper into the six domains of self-care than they had anticipated. Interestingly, it was through this participant's own interaction with the subject at hand that the group had reached this level of depth in the first place. Their contributions raised the standard of dialogue, but when they left, the rest of the group struggled to continue at the same level of depth and vulnerability, which was not encouraged by me but merely witnessed.

This experience led me to question whether I had given too much freedom to my participants and whether I should have been more hands-on during the session on the 26th. However, upon reflection, I recognised that the depth of engagement was only possible because I had already built a foundation of trust and safety with the group during the introduction and contracting section of the workshop. Even though the participants could not sustain the same intensity of discussion after the life coach left, they still exceeded my expectations in their willingness to represent themselves authentically and to approach self-care with honesty.

Emotional Labour and Participant Recognition

Facilitating two workshops in July revealed contrasting emotional dynamics and the often-unseen social labour present in participatory arts spaces. Participants were not passive recipients, but active emotional labourers—many were educators, facilitators, and community leaders engaged in ongoing care work. While some identify within the Arts and Health Framework, others operated beyond formal recognition. Acknowledging these contributions became an important part of my role, though how far I could explore this, varied across sessions.

The 12th of July workshop was affected by extreme heat and a clear gender divide, alongside differing levels of experience with applied theatre. These factors limited emotional expression, and while emotional labour was present, it remained unspoken. I focused on offering structure and stability rather than inviting deeper engagement. As Hochschild (2012) notes, emotional labour is often invisible—here, it was felt but not shared, and I recognised the need to respect the group's readiness.

On 26th of July, the group naturally expressed emotions around burnout, transition, and vulnerability. In response, I adopted a trauma-informed approach aligned with ACE Hub Wales principles—centring containment, consent, and closure (ACE Hub Wales, 2022). I shifted from a task-driven role to one of stewardship, prioritising emotional safety over completion. This mirrors trauma-informed pedagogical models (Carello and Butler, 2015), which emphasise relational sensitivity and adaptability.

These contrasting sessions deepened my understanding of facilitation as a responsive practice shaped by emotional context. Emotional attunement emerged as a vital skill, particularly when working with individuals already embedded in care roles. Recognising their labour became both an ethical and methodological imperative.

These experiences reinforced that facilitation involves not just leading content but *holding space*. Balancing structure with responsiveness will remain a central question in my evolving practice.

Risk-Taking and Brave Space Principles

Drawing on Arao and Clemens' (2013) and Auston and Vadiveloo's (2023) reframing of 'safe spaces' as 'brave spaces', I began each workshop by asking participants: '*What do you need in this space to feel brave enough to enter discomfort?*' This question acknowledged that safety is not always possible in emotionally or socially charged work, but that bravery—supported by collective care—can be intentionally cultivated.

The responses to this prompt shaped each group's approach to shared responsibility. One group responded through a blend of movement and verbal expression, co-creating a dynamic, embodied agreement. The other took a more structured approach, verbalising and then collaboratively writing down a contract. These varied formats reflected the unique relational cultures within each group, but in both cases, the process fostered trust and buy-in, reinforcing that brave space is not imposed—it is co-authored.

Two key moments revealed how my own relationship to facilitation risk was evolving.

On 12 July, a participant resisted engaging with the *Constellations Self-Care* activity. Rather than pushing for inclusion or interpreting the resistance as disengagement, I chose to allow space for observation without pressure. Over the session, this participant moved from watching to asking questions to eventually joining the activity on their own terms. This experience reminded me that risk-taking must be self-determined. Holding space for hesitation created the conditions for curiosity to emerge organically.

On 26 July, a discussion around the *Six Domains of Self-Care* became emotionally charged and potentially divisive. I sensed an old instinct to step in and redirect or mediate but instead chose to trust the group's collective capacity to hold the discomfort. My non-intervention allowed the conversation to unfold more honestly. What could have become polarising, instead it deepened mutual understanding. This moment taught me that sometimes, the facilitator's role is to step back, not step in.

Reflecting on both moments through the lens of Baim's (2020) *Drama Spiral*, I began to see how each group navigated cycles of vulnerability and restoration. Rather than viewing risk-taking as a linear progression from safety to discomfort, I recognised it as a dynamic, responsive process. Participants entered and exited moments of exposure at their own pace, spiralling toward deeper engagement over time.

These experiences reinforced that brave space is not simply about encouraging people to take risks—it is about creating conditions where risk feels possible, purposeful, and supported. As a facilitator, I am learning to listen more deeply to what is happening in the space—not just what is being said—and to hold back when needed, trusting that growth often happens in the pauses, not the pushes.

Language, Framing, and Space-Making

I became more aware of how the way we frame a space shapes how people engage. On the 12th, few participants identified as Arts and Health practitioners, despite clearly working in that area. This highlighted how formal labels often do not reflect lived experience, reminding me of Walker's book *From Contempt to Curiosity* (2014) and the power of clean, intentional language. When words do not feel accurate or welcoming, they can quietly exclude.

Later, on the 26th, I reframed the session from training to a restorative space. The change was immediate, people were more relaxed, open, and present. It echoed Sullivan and Rees' *Clean Space* (2008) showing how naming and holding space differently, can influence what unfolds.

This also connected with Busby (2021) who sites and draws on Smyth (2011), Mayo (2013), and Kincheloe (2008), stresses the need to move beyond labels, create enabling spaces, and value participants' knowledge. The shift in framing invited people to bring their whole selves, not just professional roles.

Critical pedagogues Smyth (2011), Mayo (2013), and Kincheloe (2008) all caution their readers to focus on the individual and not their stereotype or label, to create a space which enables rather than marginalises, to convert the hierarchical power dynamics by valuing the knowledge of participants until work with them not for them.

(Busby, S. 2021, p. 86p)

I was reminded too, of Karpman's (1968) drama triangle and how formal settings can trigger unhelpful dynamics. Using the language of 'restoration' seemed to disrupt that, fostering care over performance. Harland's *Power of Six* (2012) further supports the idea of making space for diverse voices and shared meaning.

This experience reinforced that space-making is never neutral. The language we use signals who belongs and how safe it is to be real. For me, framing is not just about clarity—it is an act of care.

Evolution of Outputs and Evidence

At the beginning of this project, I was confident in my plan to deliver a fixed, structured self-care programme, complete with a formal proposal and a straightforward, chronological reflective log. I thought this approach would provide clarity and demonstrate professionalism. However, as I engaged more deeply with the sessions, I found myself wrestling with the rigidity of this plan. The lived experience in the room felt more fluid and complex than any fixed programme could capture.

Practical challenges like limited time and shifting group dynamics forced me to rethink my approach, but it was a deeper, philosophical shift that truly transformed my thinking. I realised that holding tightly to a predetermined structure was at odds with the emergent, co-created nature of the work. This insight challenged me to embrace adaptability—not as a fallback, but as a vital strength that honours the realities of the participants and the relational nature of facilitation.

I also evaluated how I reflected on the process. Rather than documenting each session in isolation, I moved towards a thematic, critically evaluative synthesis that allowed me to see patterns and tensions across the whole journey. This gave me richer insights into my own evolving facilitation philosophy and the complexities of group dynamics.

Looking back, I see these changes not just as practical adjustments but as markers of my growth. The outputs now reflect not only what I produced but how I am learning to approach facilitation—as a responsive, ethical, and relational practice. Most importantly, this journey reinforced for me that meaningful self-care cannot be prescribed or fixed; it must be discovered, negotiated, and continuously adapted. This feels like a valuable lesson both for my work and for my own self-understanding.

Conclusion: Holding from the Centre

This project has marked a profound shift in how I understand and enact facilitation. When I began, I approached facilitation as a kind of guided leadership—clear objectives, structured plans, and well-prepared content. Over time, through both challenge and discovery, that position evolved into something more relational, responsive, and grounded in co-presence.

The turning point came not from success, but from discomfort. When my original, imaginative “meta-world” self-care concept felt out of place in this practitioner-focused context, I had to let go of what I knew and step into methodological risk. Choosing to work with Theatre of the Oppressed—despite initial resistance—forced me to rethink what facilitation looks like when it centres embodied practice, self-inquiry, and shared meaning-making. I learned that risk was not an element I asked participants to take—it also meant being willing to step into the unknown myself.

Through moments of discomfort—like the constrained conditions on the 12th of July—and moments of deep connection—like the emergent vulnerability on the 26th—I began to experience facilitation not as control, but as *holding*. Not holding answers or authority but holding conditions. Holding space. Holding presence.

My practice moved from over-planning to embodied experimentation. I began to trust that the most meaningful moments were not in the perfect delivery of a session plan, but in the unscripted, relational encounters that emerged when I stepped back. I started seeing flexibility not as a fallback but as a principle. I began listening not only what was said, but to what was happening *between* people—the subtle shifts in energy, the quiet emotional labour, the readiness or unreadiness to engage.

Language too, revealed its power. Reframing a session as a ‘restorative space’ rather than ‘training’ shifted dynamics immediately reminding me that words create worlds. They signal belonging, invite presence, and shape what becomes possible.

Looking back, I have learned:

- Risk-taking must begin with me—not as performance, but as openness.
- Flexibility is not a sign of weakness, but a form of ethical responsiveness.
- Framing and language are tools for inclusion, recognition, and depth.
- Evidence is not just about outcomes—it is also about documenting philosophical and personal growth.
- My own well-being is not separate from the work—it is integral to holding it with care.

Most importantly, I have reaffirmed my understanding that I no longer need nor want to stand ‘at the front’ as a facilitator. I now try to stand *within*—anchored, listening, adjusting. Not leading people somewhere, I have already decided on but holding space for us to discover meaning together.

To ‘hold from the centre’ is to trust that what emerges in relationship is more powerful than what I can plan alone. It is to commit not just to outcomes, but to presence, and it is in that presence that real learning—and real care—can unfold.

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Appendix

1. June Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle
2. July Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle
3. August Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle

June Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle

Description

At the outset of this project, I was contending with profound burnout. I felt like a cinder at the edge of a creative flame. Contrary to my expectations, taking time away did not alleviate this exhaustion; rather, it illuminated its contours more starkly. My initial plans centred on employing Process Drama, Mantle of the Expert, and Storymaking methodologies, with the intention of crafting an environment where participants could engage reflectively with the concept of self-care.

However, remaining in a primarily conceptual mode—engrossed in literature, frameworks, and planning documents—gradually compounded my sense of inertia and overwhelm. The more I attempted to design a perfect programme on paper, the more disconnected and depleted I became. The pivotal shift occurred when I chose to move beyond theoretical preparation and simply enter the room to begin experimenting.

This decision to adopt an embodied, iterative approach catalysed a transformation both personally and methodologically. In practice sessions, I explored a range of activities, observing which evoked resonance and genuine engagement. It became increasingly evident that approaches drawn from Theatre of the Oppressed—particularly Image Theatre, the Great Game of Power, and Constellations—held the most potential to facilitate exploration and meaning-making around self-care.

Through this process of iterative experimentation, I refined my methodology and developed two core activities:

1. The **Six Self-Care Domains Constellation**, in which participants spatially mapped their relationships to the domains and surfaced the tensions and priorities among them.
2. The **Embodied Self-Care Domains Creation**, which invited participants to collaboratively create a representation of the 6 self-care domains within their bodies

Feelings

Initially, I felt considerable anxiety and guilt about my inability to ‘think’ my way out of burnout. I questioned whether my need to experiment reflected a lack of preparation or professionalism. I worried that colleagues or participants might interpret my uncertainty as incompetence. This belief—that I should be able to design a flawless methodology entirely in advance—became a source of self-criticism and paralysis.

Paradoxically, I also felt ashamed that I was grappling with the same exhaustion and perfectionism I hoped to help others explore. It seemed contradictory to advocate self-care while privately feeling depleted.

Yet, as soon as I entered the space and began arranging chairs, moving my body, and inviting others to test emerging ideas, I experienced an almost immediate shift. The heaviness began to lift, replaced by curiosity and creative energy. Moving from abstract theory into embodied, relational practice was a relief. I realised that much of my ‘stuckness’ came from trying to resolve complexity alone, rather than in dialogue.

Trusting that knowledge could arise through practice—rather than precede it—felt both vulnerable and liberating. It affirmed that experimentation was not a lack of professionalism but an integral part of ethical, responsive facilitation.

Evaluation

This embodied approach was instrumental in reinvigorating both my wellbeing and my

practice. Experimenting in real time offered invaluable insights into which methods were accessible, resonant, and generative for participants. The Great Game of Power surfaced critical reflections on how power dynamics shape access to care and whose needs are centred. The Constellations work provided a powerful container for participants to situate themselves in relation to the six self-care domains and to witness one another's experiences in a shared space.

The primary challenge in this approach was tolerating ambiguity and resisting the impulse to over-determine the process in advance. At times, I was uncomfortable with the perceived risk of 'not knowing,' and I worried that this openness might be interpreted as a lack of expertise. However, I ultimately found that embracing uncertainty was both necessary and productive.

Analysis

On reflection, I can see clearly that my burnout was partly sustained by the disconnection between cognition and embodiment. I was attempting to design a relational, participatory process from a position of isolation and over-intellectualisation. Entering the room and testing activities restored my connection to the purpose and values underpinning this work.

The methodology shifts to Theatre of the Oppressed practices represented a return to the principles I most value: co-creation, reflexivity, and situated knowledge. The Constellations and the Great Game of Power enabled hypothetical (at that time) participants to transform abstract concepts into lived, relational experiences. Rather than compromising the project's integrity, this adaptive approach significantly deepened its relevance and impact.

Conclusion

This experience has underscored the importance of aligning my planning process with the values of embodiment and responsiveness I aim to cultivate in facilitation. I learned that effective practice does not emerge from rigid perfectionism but through iterative

cycles of experimentation and reflection. Letting go of the need to control every outcome created space for authentic engagement and innovation. By moving from abstract theorising into embodied, relational practice, I rediscovered curiosity and creative energy. This process has reinforced that sustainable, ethically grounded facilitation requires tolerance for uncertainty and a commitment to co-creating meaning in the moment, rather than predefining it.

Action Plan

In future work, I intend to prioritise early prototyping and experimentation to avoid becoming immobilised by over-planning and the illusion of control. By testing ideas in practice sooner, I can more effectively assess their relevance and adapt them to the unique dynamics of each group. I will continue integrating Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies to bridge theory with embodied experience, enabling participants to explore complex themes through action rather than abstraction. I also aim to honour the role of uncertainty as an essential feature of responsive facilitation rather than interpreting it as a deficiency to be eliminated. This means creating structured opportunities to reflect in action and adjust my approach dynamically as new insights emerge. Equally, I will remain attuned to the relational dimensions of self-care, recognising that my own wellbeing is not peripheral but central to the quality and sustainability of my practice. Ultimately, this process has reminded me that care is not simply a theme for participants to explore; it is a foundational ethic to be enacted in every facet of my work.

July Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle

Reflective Journal on Workshop Conditions – 12th July

Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

On 12th July, I co-facilitated a workshop during an extreme heatwave, with indoor temperatures exceeding 30°C. The venue—a dance studio—had no air conditioning.

Despite an open fire door and two small fans, the conditions were physically draining, and we nearly ran out of water. These environmental factors significantly impacted the workshop: attention spans shortened, energy dipped, and both facilitators and participants had to work harder to stay engaged. We frequently adjusted our plan, modifying activities and pacing to suit the group's changing needs.

The group consisted of seven participants—mixed gender, with an age split between those in their early 20s and those in their late 40s. Two couples and three single participants attended, and while relationship status did not dominate discussion, it subtly shaped group dynamics, particularly in trust-building and physical closeness during embodied work. All participants identified their faith as Christian, which offered a shared cultural and spiritual reference point, even if not directly explored. There were brief but meaningful conversations around faith and values, which seemed to add a layer of openness and shared understanding.

Although none of the participants self-identified as 'arts and health practitioners,' their work told a different story. Most described themselves as teachers, volunteers, assistants, or community leaders, but they clearly used music and art to support people's mental or physical wellbeing. This disconnect between their role, and it is recognised label made me reflect on how invisible care work often becomes—especially when done through creative practices.

What stood out strongly throughout the day was the emotional labour these individuals carry. The heat exposed their fatigue early on, and I wondered how often they get to focus on their own wellbeing. While the workshop was designed to explore embodied practices and group facilitation, it became clear that what many really needed was a space for self-care—to reconnect with their own bodies and replenish their emotional reserves.

There were moments of humour and lightness throughout the day, which helped co-regulate the group and ease tension. Games like *Bomb and Shield* brought welcome energy shifts, especially when engagement started to deplete. However, I also noticed that at times I avoided going deeper, uncertain whether the group had the capacity to delve further, given the environmental and emotional demands. One moment of

resistance from a participant during *The Great Game of Power* evolved into a rich group discussion, reminding me that discomfort often holds the doorway to deeper insight.

Moving forward, I want to better frame workshops like this as spaces for restoration, not just training. I will build in grounding earlier, create flexible pacing, and invite participants to care for themselves as much as they care for others. I also want to use language that helps people recognise the value of what they do—even if they do not call it ‘arts and health.’ Facilitation, I am learning, is not just about content delivery—it is about holding space for people’s full selves, especially those who spend so much time supporting others.

Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle – Workshop Facilitation on 26th July

On the 26th of July, I facilitated a self-care workshop for a group of drama facilitators. Due to illness and other unforeseen circumstances, attendance was low, and the session started late. This was the final session, which added pressure to make it meaningful. Despite the rocky start, the session evolved into a rich, reflective experience. The participants were at different life and career stages—some working through burnout, others transitioning roles or still in education. We began with an in-depth conversation exploring the six domains of self-care: emotional, psychological, physical, spiritual, personal, and professional. Each person was given space to share their reflections and consider how they could physically embody each domain. The group’s shared background in drama meant they responded naturally to this approach. Their level of openness and depth of discussion prompted me to shift from a directive facilitation style to one of space-holding and witnessing. One participant, who to leave early, completed a constellation activity expressing their six domains—this was received with joy and presence by the group and marked a shift into deeper emotional territory.

Initially, I felt anxious—about the late start, the smaller group, and whether my planned structure would still work. As the conversation deepened, my anxiety was replaced by trust in the participants; in the process, and in my ability to adapt. I felt humility and responsibility, especially as it became clear some individuals were navigating very

fragile life circumstances. My focus turned toward holding a space that felt supportive, grounded, and emotionally safe.

Though the session deviated from my original plan, it was successful in a different, more meaningful way. The depth of discussion was possible because of the small group size and the participants' emotional readiness. While we spent far more time on the first activity than intended, the engagement it prompted justified the shift. Practical concerns also shaped my decision to go deeper with fewer activities. When the participant left after lunch, there would not have been enough people for the originally planned post-lunch exercise. More importantly, the group clearly needed time, space, and dialogue, not structure for structure's sake. This realisation allowed me to let go of the schedule and trust the unfolding process.

This experience reinforced the value of responsive and trauma-informed facilitation. Theories of adult learning, particularly Knowles' (1984) andragogy, emphasise learner autonomy and lived experience—both were clearly present in the session. The participants did not need to be led; they needed space to process and connect. I also became more aware of the role of emotional containment. As the depth of exploration increased, I ensured there would be space for closure. At the end of the session, participants were invited to reflect on their takeaways, write down questions, and consider how they would care for themselves moving forward.

The session taught me the value of flexibility, trust, and letting go of rigid plans. By leaning into the group's energy and needs, I was able to co-create a meaningful and emotionally resonant experience. My role shifted from delivering content to stewarding a collective process, and this was the right choice for this group, at this time.

In future, I will design workshops with built-in flexibility and remain open to adapting structure based on group dynamics. I will also prioritise emotional closure in sessions involving sensitive material. Finally, I plan to further develop my trauma-informed and participatory facilitation skills to better support complex group needs with compassion and clarity.

August Reflective journal entry using Gibbs Reflective cycle**Reflective Journal: Facilitation, Risk, and Evidence-Gathering**

Facilitating workshops on the 12th and 26th of July marked two pivotal points in my evolving facilitation practice. Using Gibbs' reflective cycle as a guiding framework, these sessions revealed how flexibility, emotional presence, and ethical risk-taking intersect in ways that continually reshape my professional identity. Across the two, I encountered contrasting challenges—environmental strain in one, emotional depth in the other—that shifted my facilitation from the delivery of content to the holding of space.

From Tactical Adjustment to Relational Presence

The 12th of July workshop unfolded under extreme heat in an unventilated dance studio. The conditions demanded immediate, tactical responses: shortening activities, accelerating pacing, and incorporating energisers to preserve attention and energy. Here, flexibility was a logistical survival skill—adapting structure to sustain engagement. My role became more about managing bodies in space than deepening reflection, and while this responsiveness kept the group functioning, it left little room for more emotionally attuned facilitation.

By contrast, the 26th of July workshop was quieter, smaller, and emotionally charged. Fewer attendees—due to illness—meant the session naturally leaned towards intimacy. My planned structure quickly gave way to emergent dialogue, and I found myself stepping back, creating more space for the group's reflective processes. Trusting this slower pace felt like a professional milestone; where in earlier years I might have steered back to my agenda, I now leaned into the unfolding moment, allowing depth to emerge without forcing it.

In both cases, adaptation was key, but the nature of that adaptation shifted—from reactive adjustment to intentional, relational holding. This change reflects a growing confidence in my capacity to facilitate without over-directing, and a deeper trust in group-led process.

Emotional Labour and Recognition

A shared thread across both workshops was the unacknowledged emotional and social labour participants carried. On 12th July, many were educators, volunteers, or community leaders engaged in care work, yet few identified as “arts and health” practitioners. This disconnect prompted me to consider how easily such contributions are overlooked in professional discourse. My facilitation sought to validate these roles, but in the heat-strained conditions, I hesitated to probe more deeply into the emotional dimensions of their work, fearing it might overextend their capacity.

On 26th July, the emotional tenor was more explicit. Participants spoke openly about burnout, transition, and vulnerability. The space called for a trauma-informed approach, one centred on containment, permission, and reflective processing. My facilitation here prioritised emotional safety and closure over activity completion. This was a shift from orchestrator to steward—holding people rather than plans—and it reinforced the idea that facilitation is as much about emotional attunement as it is about content delivery.

Risk-Taking in Facilitation

These workshops also became testing grounds for risk-taking in my facilitation practice. Drawing on Arao and Clemens’ (2013) and Auston and Vadiveloo’s (2023) concepts of ‘brave spaces,’ I framed each session with a question: *What do you need in this space to feel brave enough to enter discomfort when exploring self-care?* The responses varied—one group preferred physical, movement-based agreements; the other opted for verbal, contract-like discussion—but both processes created co-owned parameters for engagement.

In the first group, risk emerged when a participant visibly resisted a *Constellations Self-Care* activity. Instead of pushing, I honoured their choice to observe first. Over time, observation shifted into curiosity, then participation. This experience confirmed that stepping back and trusting the group’s readiness can yield more authentic engagement than insisting on immediate involvement.

In the second group, risk was in allowing a potentially divisive discussion about the *Six Domains of Self-Care* to unfold without my intervention. Participants navigated the discomfort respectfully, validating both personal perspectives and the unseen experiences of others. This reaffirmed that brave spaces require not only the acceptance of discomfort but also the willingness of the facilitator to relinquish control when trust has been established.

The *Drama Spiral* (Baim, 2017) proved a useful metaphor here. Both groups spiralled inward to explore challenging emotional territory before returning to safer ground. Risk-taking, I realised, is not a straight descent into vulnerability—it is cyclical, requiring careful pacing, responsiveness, and closure.

Flexibility as a Philosophical Stance

Initially, I viewed flexibility as a contingency skill—something to deploy when things went wrong. These workshops shifted that understanding. On 12th July, flexibility meant external adjustments to keep participants physically and mentally engaged. On 26th July, flexibility meant internal openness—letting go of my planned sequence to follow the group's emergent needs.

This reframing aligns with my growing belief that flexibility is not merely reactive but philosophical. It embodies a facilitator's willingness to privilege human need over pre-designed outcomes, and to see deviation from the plan not as a failure, but as a sign of alignment with the group's lived reality.

Language, Framing, and Restoration

Language also played a crucial role in shaping how participants perceived themselves and the space. On 12th July, I noticed the absence of self-identification as 'arts and health' practitioners, which suggested a gap between lived experience and formal recognition. On 26th July, I reframed the workshop explicitly as a space for reflection and restoration rather than training, which seemed to lift performance pressure and invite greater honesty.

This shift in tone confirmed that how a workshop is introduced matters as much as its activities. Naming the space as restorative signals permission to bring one's whole self, not just one's professional role.

Evidence-Gathering and Evolving Outputs

These facilitation experiences also influenced how I gathered evidence for my major project. My original plan was to produce a fully designed self-care programme, supported by a proposal, workshops, and a reflective log. As the project progressed, I shifted towards producing a self-care resource—more flexible and adaptable than a fixed programme—and consolidating my reflective writing into a thematic, critically evaluative synthesis rather than a raw chronological log.

This change was both practical and philosophical practical because time and resource constraints limited the feasibility of a fully realised programme; philosophical because I came to value openness and adaptability over prescription. The resulting resource is designed to be reinterpreted in multiple contexts, making it a living tool rather than a static artefact.

Consolidating my reflections allowed me to move beyond self-description towards Schön's (1983) reflexivity—interrogating my own assumptions, positionality, and growth. The evidence now tells a story not just of what I produced, but how my facilitation philosophy evolved in practice.

Conclusion: Holding from Within

Across these workshops and the wider project, my facilitation has moved from directional guidance and reactive problem-solving towards emergent, relational presence. I have learned that risk-taking is not just about encouraging participants to be brave—it is also about my willingness to release control, to hold space for discomfort, and to trust the group's capacity to navigate its own depth.

I have also learned that flexibility is not a backup plan but a guiding principle; that language shapes the possibilities of a space; and that evidence is as much about process and reflection as it is about outputs.

Most importantly, I now see my role less as a leader at the front and more as a presence within—someone who can hold from the centre, facilitating not just activities but the conditions in which human connection, recognition, and restoration can unfold.

Part 3 Major Project Evidence of the Practical Aspect

Introduction Evidence of practice

This document presents a collection of evidence. It includes:

- **Risk Assessment** – Conduct a risk assessment for each workshop, addressing hazards related to activities, equipment, venue, and participants. Apply control measures, ensure safety protocols, and update assessments regularly. My approach could have improved by using templates and being made aware of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David *Lone Worker Policy*, which I became aware of after the practical Element of Major Project
- **Workshop Plan** – outlining the intended structure and activities, with accompanying notes on facilitation intentions and how these shaped the delivery.
- **Facilitator Poem** – crafting a tool to introduce the workshop and set expectations. The poem served to place all participants on the same footing while also holding myself accountable to the values and commitments of the session.
- **Workshop Recording & Consent Statement**– linking to a recording from the second workshop I facilitated. While some technical issues during filming resulted in broken, non-continuous footage, it still captures key moments of the process.
- **Feedback Forms** – receiving optional written feedback provided during and after the workshop session for participants as an alternative to verbal responses. Due to the informal and transient nature of the verbal feedback offered during the workshop, it was not possible to capture participants' spoken reflections verbatim.

These materials offer a record of the workshops, approach, creative tools, and participant engagement.

Risk assessment

12th Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment: Applied Theatre Workshop – “Collaborative Exploration of Self-care”

Location: UWTSD Carmarthen Campus Noah Isaac (dance studio)

Facilitator: Aimee Williams

Date: 12/07/2025

Time: 9:00 – 16:30

Number of Participants: 8

Risk Matrix Key

Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating
Low (1)	Minor (1)	Low (1–2)
Medium (2)	Moderate (2)	Medium (3–4)
High (3)	Major (3)	High (6–9)

Identified Risks & Control Measures

Emergency Procedures

- First Aid: UWTSD campus employees on site
- Fire Procedure: Point out exits and muster point during the welcome.

Participant Preparedness

Participants advised to:

- wear comfortable clothing and shoes
- bring water and snacks
- notify facilitator of accessibility or health needs in advance

Sign-Off

Signature: AWilliams

Date: 12/07/25

Hazard	Risk	Persons at Risk	Controls in Place	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Action Needed
slips/trips during movement or games	minor injuries (ankles, knees)	all participants	clear space before activities, advise appropriate footwear, warm-up included	2	2	4	first aider onsite; ensure access to first aid kit
emotional distress during reflective activities	triggering content, emotional overwhelm	all participants	brave space contract, right to pass emphasized, facilitators trained in trauma-sensitive practice	2	3	6	have grounding techniques ready; provide break-out space
Outdoor nature walks	injury, getting lost, exposure to weather	all participants	route pre-checked, route shared, group walks together, weather-appropriate advice given	1	2	2	ensure mobile phones are charged and available
Fatigue or dehydration	reduced participation or medical issues	all participants	frequent breaks, water available, lunch break included	1	2	2	remind participants to bring water and snacks
power dynamics within group activities	feeling excluded, unsafe sharing	participants	emphasize co-creation, shared leadership, reflective debriefs after power-based exercises	2	2	4	active facilitation to monitor group dynamics
burnout/overwhelm due to theme	emotional/mental exhaustion	participants	domains of wellness built into content; moments of lightness included	2	2	4	integrate body-based check-ins throughout the day
accessibility issues	physical barriers, exclusion	participants with mobility/access needs	choose accessible venue, check beforehand, adaptable activities	1	3	3	have flexible alternatives (e.g. seated version of games)

26th Risk Assessment**Risk Matrix Key****Risk Assessment: Applied Theatre Workshop – “Collaborative Exploration of Self-care”**

Location: UWTSD Carmarthen Campus Noah Isaac (dance studio)

Facilitator: Aimee Williams

Date: 12/07/2025

Time: 9:00 – 16:30

Number of Participants: 6

Likelihood**Severity****Risk Rating**

Low (1)

Minor (1)

Low (1–2)

Medium (2)

Moderate (2)

Medium (3–4)

High (3)

Major (3)

High (6–9)

Identified Risks & Control Measures**Emergency Procedures**

- First Aid: UWTSD campus employees on site
- Fire Procedure: Point out exits and muster point during the welcome.

Participant Preparedness**Participants advised to:**

- wear comfortable clothing and shoes
- bring water and snacks
- notify facilitator of accessibility or health needs in advance

Sign-Off

Signature: AWilliams

Date: 26/07/25

2205102			Major Project Portfolio				ADPA7012	
Hazard	Risk	Persons at Risk	Controls in Place	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Action Needed	
slips/trips during movement or games	minor injuries (ankles, knees)	all participants	clear space before activities, advise appropriate footwear, warm-up included	2	2	4	first aider onsite; ensure access to first aid kit	
emotional distress during reflective activities	triggering content, emotional overwhelm	all participants	brave space contract, right to pass emphasized, facilitators trained in trauma-sensitive practice	2	3	6	have grounding techniques ready; provide break-out space	
Outdoor nature walks	injury, getting lost, exposure to weather	all participants	route pre-checked, route shared, group walks together, weather-appropriate advice given	1	2	2	ensure mobile phones are charged and available	
Fatigue or dehydration	reduced participation or medical issues	all participants	frequent breaks, water available, lunch break included	1	2	2	remind participants to bring water and snacks	
power dynamics within group activities	feeling excluded, unsafe sharing	participants	emphasize co-creation, shared leadership, reflective debriefs after power-based exercises	2	2	4	active facilitation to monitor group dynamics	
burnout/overwhelm due to theme	emotional/mental exhaustion	participants	domains of wellness built into content; moments of lightness included	2	2	4	integrate body-based check-ins throughout the day	
accessibility issues	physical barriers, exclusion	participants with mobility/access needs	choose accessible venue, check beforehand, adaptable activities	1	3	3	have flexible alternatives (e.g. seated version of games)	

Workshop plan

The workshop plan below served as a flexible guide during both sessions.

- On **12th July**, I followed the structure but added several extra activities and energizers to keep participants engaged throughout the six-hour session.
- On **26th July**, the group was half the expected size, so I stuck closely to the original plan and removed activities that didn't suit the smaller group.

Each session was adapted to meet the needs of the participants while staying aligned with the overall project goals.

Check-In

Poetic Framing

What We Carry

We carry more than plans and agendas—
.....

- Use poem to set intention.
- Emphasise care, witness, and shared power.

Brave Space Agreements / Contract

- Invite co-creation of guidelines:
- **Write** shared agreement visibly in space.

Game: Group Focus Warm-Up

Choose one of the following:

- **1 person move at a time** - builds group awareness and patience
- **Count to 20** – non-verbal connection, listening and leading

Activity 1: Image Theatre – Introducing the 6 Domains

Instructions:

- 6 Domains explained
- Create images in stillness that represent the **6 domains of self-care**:
 - **physical**
 - **professional**
 - **relational**
 - **emotional**
 - **psychological**
 - **spiritual**
- Begin individually, then form **pairs** to co-create deeper meanings in the image.

Nature Walk / Break**Game: Energizer**

- **Funky Chicken** (high-energy, loosens self-consciousness)

Activity 2: Power & Placement**The Great Game of Power**

- Use objects to explore **power dynamics** within/around the 6 domains.
- Follow with **constellations activity**:
 - Participants position each domain in a scene they build and then themselves in relation to each domain

Lunch Break**Game (Post-lunch Re-grounding)**

Choose:

- **1 person move at a time**
- **Count to 20**

Activity 3: Movement & Systems**Equidistance**

- Participants move to maintain equal distance between two others—explores balance, unseen influences.

Bomb and Shield

- Explore burnout/overload metaphorically.
- Link to **stressors and protectors** in the 6 domains.

Playback: Fluid Sculpt Form

- Participants build a “Fluid Sculpt” form: symbolizing **burnout** in each domain show percentages of burnout and restoration.

Nature Walk / Break**Activity 4: Embodied 6 Domains Creation****Instructions:**

- Participants craft a picture to represent **each domain embodied** within the abstract.
- Using materials from the space and supplied (scarves, chairs, drawings etc.)

Closing Game

Repeat:

- **1 person move at a time**
- **Count to 20**

Check-Out: Reflective Closing

Facilitator Poem

The *Facilitator Poem* introduced the workshop by establishing shared values and a sense of mutual accountability. It was designed to create an equitable, collaborative space where all participants felt empowered to engage fully. As facilitator, I viewed my role as providing tools, ideas, and structure—while allowing participants to shape the outcomes in ways that were meaningful to them. Like an IKEA flat pack, the materials could be assembled according to their own needs and visions. The poem served to communicate this co-constructive approach and to share my intentions openly and authentically.

What We Carry

We carry more than plans and agendas—

We carry rooms.

We carry silence before the speaking,

Tension before the trust.

We carry stories that aren't ours,

Wounds wrapped in someone else's words,

The soft weight of listening

When no one else could.

I know this—

Because I've carried too much.

I've filled my pockets with everyone else's pieces,

Thinking if I held them long enough,

They might become lighter.

I've smiled through burnout,

Kept holding space

Even when my own was empty.

So, this is not just a check-in.

This is an invitation:

To name what we hold,

To place some of it down.

To recognize the labour in care,

Even the quiet kind.

Let's not romanticize resilience.

Let's build tools,

Rituals,

Boundaries that breathe.

Let's create a space

Where you can exhale.

Where your own well-being

Is not a footnote

But a foundation.

Because we cannot offer steadiness

While we're unravelling.

We cannot hold others

Without, sometimes,

Being held too.

And so—

My invitation to you

Is to be the frame

For the canvas you will paint,

The container you will fill

With your own colour, your own care.

I will not carry

The painting we create,

Nor the vessel we shape.

They will remain here—

Rooted in this space,

Living beyond us.

This is where it will stay.

Workshop Recording & Consent Statement

The video links and accompanying consent forms, serve as evidence for each workshop conducted. Please note that **audio has been intentionally removed** from the recordings, as participants expressed a preference for maintaining the confidentiality of their conversations. Prior to recording, I held discussions with each group and assured them that while **visual documentation** would be retained for transparency and promotional purposes, **all verbal exchanges would remain private**.

- **Workshop on 12th July:**

The first link is a **time-lapse video** of the session I facilitated on the 12th of July. This footage contains one-hour from a total six-hour session has also been edited into 1 minute video used for promotional content and a social media post.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CjFePRjKuRPnF53DxBUb79gUhFvxHxE/view?usp=drive_link

- **Workshop on 26th July:**

The second link shows a **time-lapse video** of the workshop conducted on the 26th of July. This clip contains an hour and a half of recorded footage from the session and has been edited into 1 minute video used for promotional content and a social media post.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15Q8C9rblokFYKmAqD63C6UhxfwDkKbZ1/view?usp=drive_link

Consent forms were collected from all participants for both workshops and are available as supporting documentation.

12th Consent form**Photo and Video Consent Form**

Please sign or initial below to you acknowledge and consent to being photographed and/or recorded on video during this workshop project. These images and recordings may be used by Aimee Williams and or UWTSD for promotional or documentation purposes.

If you do not wish to be photographed or recorded, please inform Aimee Williams.

Abel Cui

Anna Williams

Grace Williams

~~Grace Williams~~

~~G H Stephens~~

O J Williams

C Williams

26th Consent form**Photo and Video Consent Form**

Please sign or initial below to you acknowledge and consent to being photographed and/or recorded on video during this workshop project. These images and recordings may be used by Aimee Williams and or UWTSD for promotional or documentation purposes.

If you do not wish to be photographed or recorded, please inform Aimee Williams.

Ali Foulds.

~~Ella~~

Cassidy Smith

Feedback from workshops

This feedback was gathered through two key methods. The first was during the checkout process at the end of the workshop, and second, via a follow-up feedback form distributed a few days later. Participants were invited to share their thoughts, reflections, and suggestions in their own words. All responses were recorded verbatim to ensure the authenticity and integrity of their voices were preserved throughout the evaluation process. During the workshops participants offered some of their own learn practise and theories such as the Spoon theory. This is reflected in the Feedback.

12th checkout feedback

Recorded verbatim

“this works!”

“useful”

“thought provoking”

“positively safe “

“surprisingly expensive/expressive”

“recognition of different expressions of self-care. identifying which ways/methods are easier to access at perhaps indicating other ways or other areas that have been neglected”

“beginning”

“enlightening”

“gave its face to be comfortable and vulnerable. thank you!”

“we are all sticky today”

“sticky”

“clear”

“kfc”

“pineapple”

“brave”

“focus”

“insightful”

“help it's hot!”

“games surprised me but engaged my little brain”

“self-care is more than just physical care”

“fun reminder we're all different in the ways we see/appreciate the world”

“trusting and safe atmosphere”

“greasy”

“fanta”

“clown”

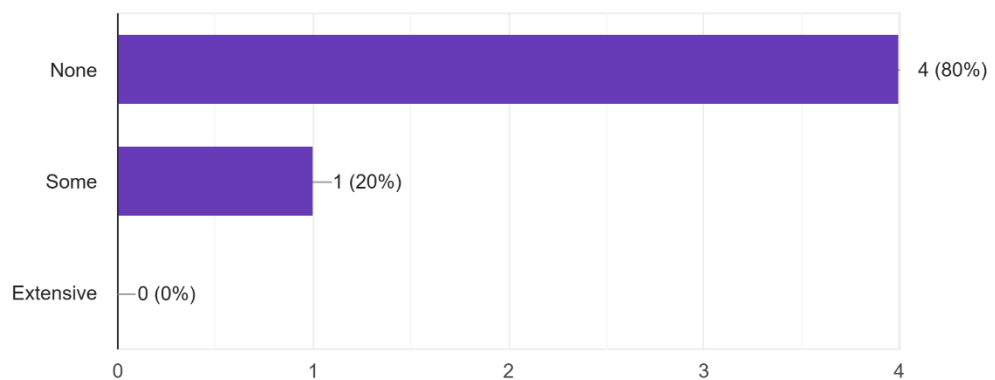
“reminder of the importance of your own well-being”

12th form feedback

Recorded verbatim

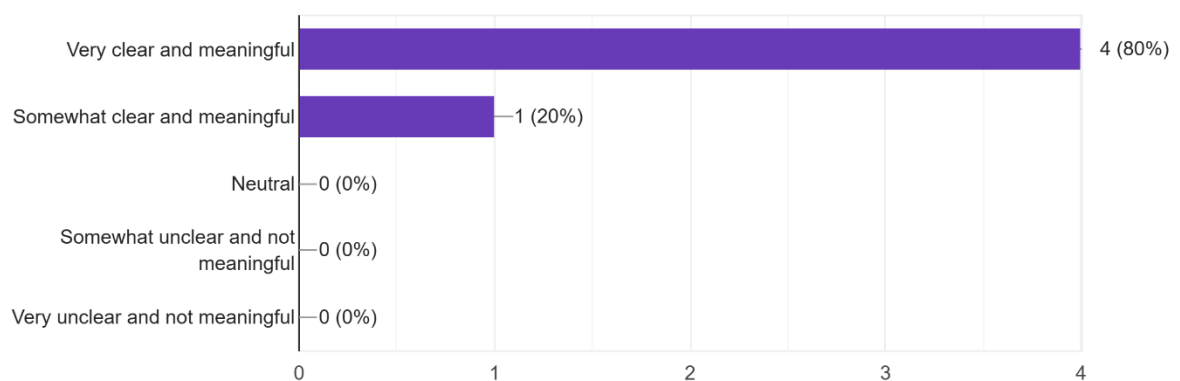
Prior experience with applied theatre or similar workshops?

5 responses



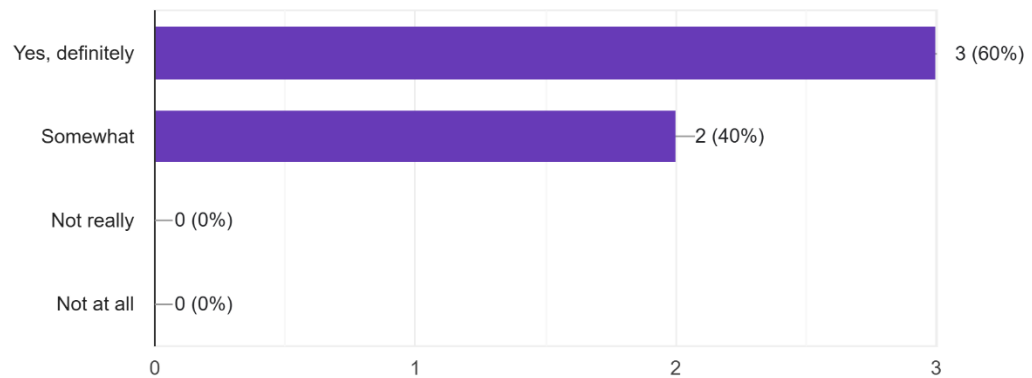
How clear and meaningful did you find the introduction to the 6 domains of self-care?

5 responses



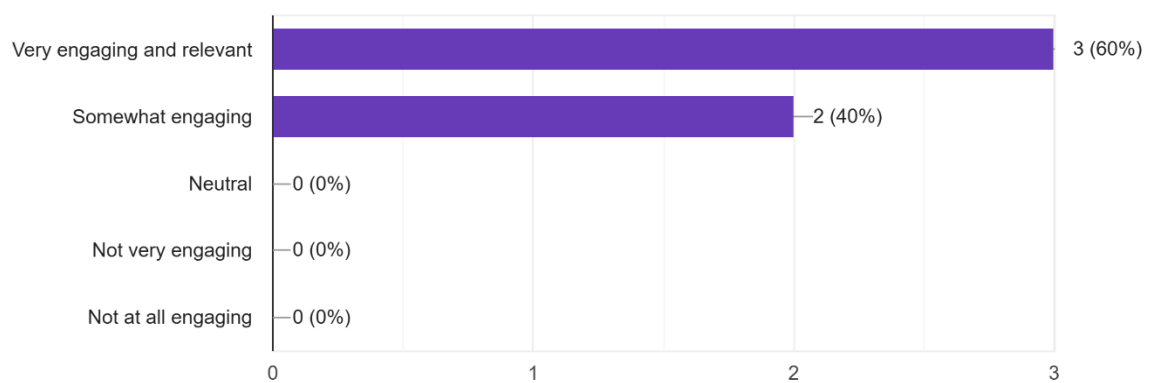
Did the poem help set the tone and intention for the workshop?

5 responses



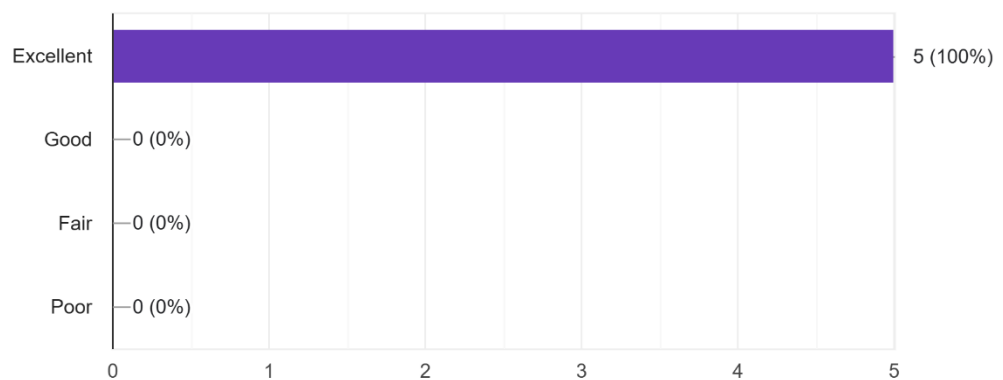
How engaging and relevant were the activities focused on the 6 domains of self-care?

5 responses



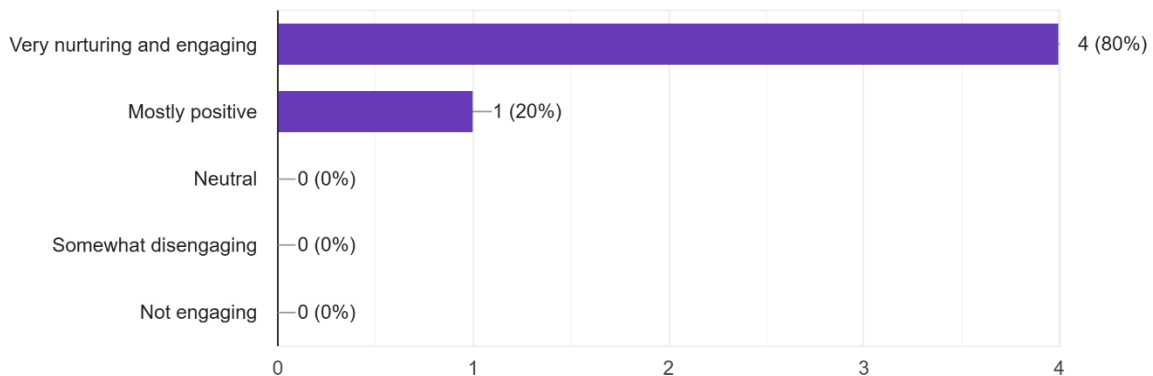
How well did the facilitator create a brave, supportive, and inclusive space?

5 responses



How would you rate the overall tone and energy maintained throughout the day?

5 responses



Which activity or moment stood out to you the most, and why?

5 responses

“Chair activity was most meaningful for me as I was able to verbally express my thoughts and concerns and also gave me insight into the other members in the room without feeling judged or judging others”

“The chair activity - seeing how different people's opinions about what they thought were the most important.”

“Arranging chairs in light of the 6 domains and one's own self. It built off the concepts that had been introduced and was one of the first steps to mapping all six domains.”

“The chairs exercise as it dawned on me we all think differently and have different strengths and weaknesses regarding self care and that is exactly what we needed to see. It wasn't a competition but a championing that is safe to look at self care.”

“The chair activity. It was surprisingly fulfilling to put what we had learned into practice while looking at ourselves. Very well thought out.”

What did you learn or take away from the workshop relating to your own well-being or power dynamics?

5 responses

“Awareness of the 6 domains and how they interact on each other, at times there are external factors that influence these domains and an awareness of their importance to me in maintaining a healthy balanced life.”

“That we all have different ways of expressing ourselves for reaching the same goal.”

“Perhaps a reminder to check in once in a while and see where personally the balance between all six might be and one's own well-being.”

"I haven't stopped talking and chewing on the six domains since we have done the work shop. Exploring how I can maintain a better balance and also articulating and communicating, so others are free to have an open discussion about our well being."

"The fact that "self-care" is a far more complex and interesting topic than I expected. And while I work on one domain I might be neglecting others."

Is there a domain of self-care you feel motivated to focus on after today? Which one(s)?

5 responses

"For me it was a recognition that each domain changes perhaps on a daily basis and maintaining each area is required for a healthy functioning life"

"Looking after your own priorities are just as important as looking after others l."

"The interplay between the psychological and relational personally might need further focus."

"My physical domain came to the for front that requires attention but not a beat yourself up type of motivation just slow and steady changes to make a difference."

"Yes. All of them really but Spiritual and Emotional would be a good start."

What worked well in the workshop?

5 responses

"Aimee facilitated people to take part at their own pace and icebreaker worked well to restart"

"Pace"

"Chair exercise"

"The group gelled together very quickly with the way it was facilitated. Everyone felt safe to explore what could be quite a daunting subject but in a safe space."

"After understanding the fundamentals of what each domain meant, every activity was meaningful, entertaining and fulfilling."

What could be improved for future workshops?

5 responses

"I struggled with the morning games as to their relevance but understood after lunchtime the game's relevance. A verbal recap as they build through the day may help audio learners."

"N/A"

"Perhaps that initial easing into exercises, statues."

“Not have it on the hottest day of the year, the room had no air con or drinking water facilities which let the side down.”

“Perhaps the structure of how the domains are introduced through activities? Some of them felt very in depth and others had less focus. I personally took some time before I fully understood what each concept was and sometimes need more time to process things.”

Any additional comments or feedback?

4 responses

“Great workshop a workshop for each domain or exploration of what next how to develop self care tools as a follow up.”

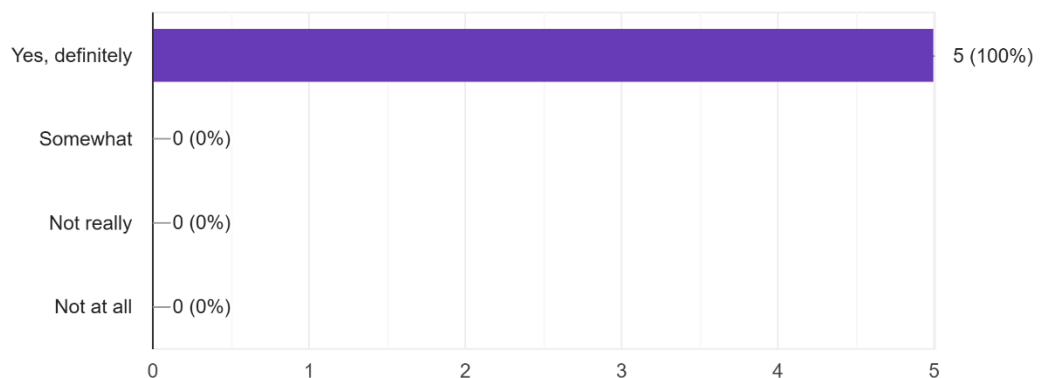
“Well done Aimee. Keep bringing those ideas in a fun and positive way.”

“I am still processing but enjoyed looking at my own personal self care in a positive manner rather than 'there is something wrong with me' type mindset. Valued understanding what a drama facilitator does and was in awe at Aimee's ability to read the room and taylor the activities to the individual at times and to the group.”

“The atmosphere and group was fantastic. After we had settled and became comfortable everyone enjoyed the workshop thoroughly. The only hesitancy was because we were unsure what the workshop was going to be about.”

How likely are you to recommend this workshop to a friend?

5 responses



26th Brave space Contract

Recorded verbatim

“Respect”

“Yourself and others”

“Reassuance that to make mistakes”

“Don’t be scared of silence”

“Be willing to try – be a little vulnerable”

“Challenge assumptions – let go allow to dissipate”

“Ask questions”

“Challenge the opinion compassionately not the person”

“None violent”

“Challenge the ‘No’”

26th checkout feedback

Recorded verbatim

Prompt – write down any questions or thoughts that have arisen during our exploration of self-care.

“-ownership

-understanding

Of our own feelings.”

“How do you achieve the ideal self-care domains?”

“Treat yourself how you treat other – with grace”

“Society places work above living, taking back control, work to live not live to work. Shift the balance.”

“Does anyone truly believe they practice self care well or is it unachievable?”

“Where do I stand spiritually?”

“Be deliberate”

“Self-care is hard!! But maybe it isn’t, it’s hard to feel like you deserve it!”

“How do you go from saying you will do a thing to actually doing it?”

“Is balance the answer?”

“Do we need to practice self-care in all areas?”

“How do we get better at it?”

“Stop saying ‘I don’t have time.’ * Make time!”

“Reflection”

"You don't have to do huge tasks to practice self-care. The small and everyday are just as important"

"What counts as self care?"

"How do you quantify self-care? And how do you make sure what you are doing counts?"

Eg. Having a lie in but that then stops you from going out and doing a thing."

"Is there even such a thing of self care when external factors often prevent balance?"

"How do you cultivate a balanced self-care domain?"

"Is there space in my life for all 6 domains?"

"Societal norms- guilt, otherness- prevent"

"Okay not being okay"

"Am I ever going to be able to balance all 6 domains?"

Prompt – write what you are going to take with you to improve on or safeguard yourself

"Spoons

- What uses up my spoons and do I need that thing anymore
- Knowing when they've been spent and what on"

"I only associate myself with negative things -> I need to be willing to fill my cup more"

"Not a linear process, never will be"

"Be deliberate in thoughts and emotions"

"Always room to grow"

"EBB and Flow"

"Try new thing more often -> give myself time to think and not just superficially"

"Small acts just as important"

"I can better visualise my strengths and weaknesses"

"It is ok not to have all the answers and to keep figuring things out."

"Your self care and priorities can change day to day"

"Exploration"

"Spoons"

"Life is messy!"

"2 sides of a coin"

“Relationship are scary but necessary”

“Spirituality is personal and daunting”

“Physical is a mess and strength”

“Professional life is fulfilling and overwhelming”

“Psychological hurts and engages my brain”

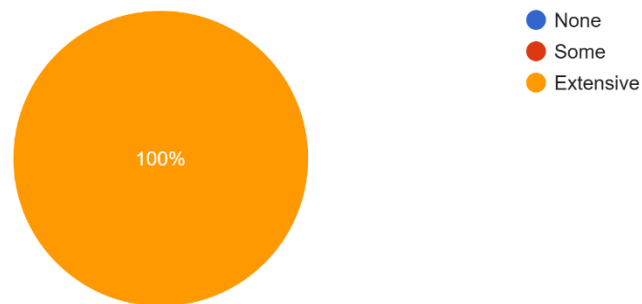
“Emotional is vulnerable and freeing”

26th form feedback

Recorded verbatim

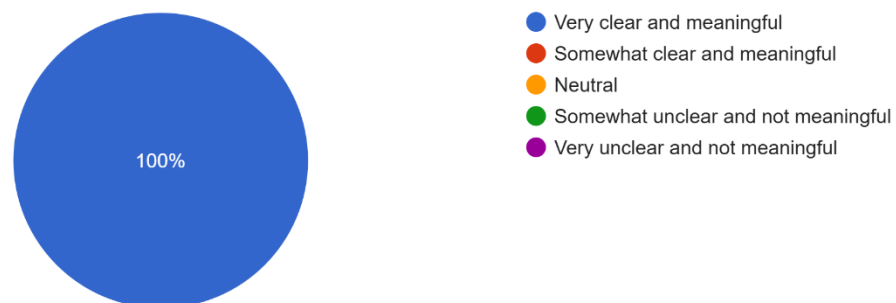
Prior experience with applied theatre or similar workshops?

2 responses



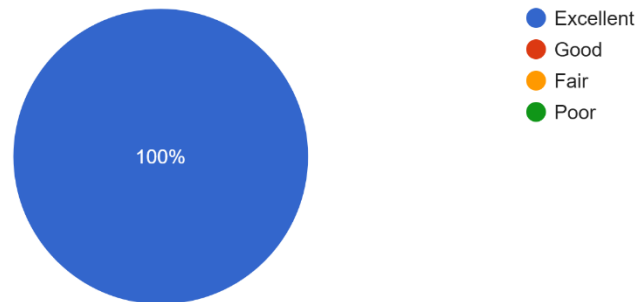
How clear and meaningful did you find the introduction to the 6 domains of self-care?

2 responses



How well did the facilitator create a brave, supportive, and inclusive space?

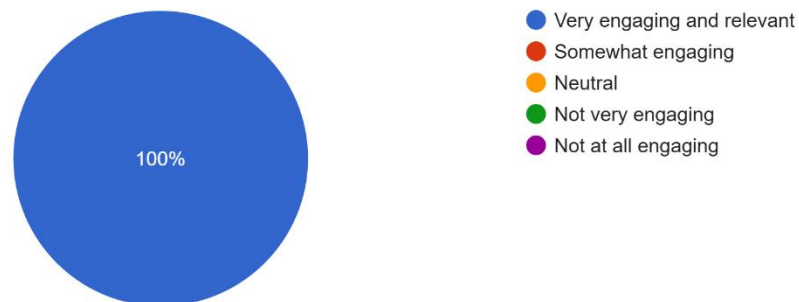
2 responses



Did the poem help set the tone and intention for the workshop?

How engaging and relevant were the activities focused on the 6 domains of self-care?

2 responses



Did you feel invited to participate at your own pace and level of comfort?

2 responses



How would you rate the overall tone and energy maintained throughout the day in 10 words?*2 responses*

“Calm, collaborative and mindful”

“Authentic and honest witnessing of self care”

Which activity or moment stood out to you the most, and why?*2 responses*

“Creating our self care domains with chairs, being asked to then create our ideal domain - it was interesting to visualise it”

“The introduction to the self domain through image theatre. It set a foundation and open my mind through conversations”

What did you learn or take away from the workshop related to your own well-being?*2 responses*

“I loved the spoon analogy shared by Cass and it was interesting for me to place value onto the 6 domains”

“It is a balance. There are two sides to a coin.”

Is there a domain of self-care you feel motivated to focus on after the workshop? Which one(s)?*2 responses*

“Emotion and spiritual”

“Emotional”

What worked well in the workshop?*2 responses*

“The facilitator created a space in which we all felt calm but supported, which meant we were confident to share - honesty was welcomed”

“I felt seen and that encouraged me to share honesty and objectively”

What could be improved for future workshops?*2 responses*

“N/A”

“Can't think of anything”

Any additional comments or feedback?*2 responses*

“It was a really interesting workshop, something I haven’t experienced or considered before, I truly believe it would be beneficial for a lot of people”

“Good introduction could focus on individual domains in depth if it was a series of workshops instead of an intensive workshop.”

How likely are you to recommend this workshop to a friend?

2 responses

Part 4 Major Project Sustainability Resources

Resources Introduction

The brochure was developed to provide a tangible, accessible resource that synthesizes key self-care concepts, making them easy to communicate, share, and apply in both academic and practical contexts. It highlights the six domains of self-care and reflects the facilitation style I employ, demonstrating how presentation and engagement shape the impact of self-care practices. As a physical tool, it offers participants something concrete to revisit, share, and circulate, while also future proofing the project by extending its reach beyond the immediate workshop context.

Complementing the brochure, I recorded and shared a poem online, which reflects how I set expectations and communicate self-care in practice. Its digital format broadens access, allowing the project to reach diverse audiences and supporting the ongoing relevance of its messages. Together, the brochure and poem balance physical and digital formats, addressing different learning preferences, enhancing accessibility, and broadening engagement.

Both resources explore the interplay between individual and systemic approaches to self-care, emphasising that while personal responsibility is essential, sustainable wellbeing relies on supportive systems and environments. They translate complex ideas into creative, engaging formats that act as both guides and invitations—to reflect, practice, and integrate self-care into daily life. Ultimately, they underscore that self-care is not a luxury but a foundational practice for resilience, wellbeing, and professional effectiveness.

Brochure

Inside flap

THE SIX DOMAINS OF SELF-CARE:

Self-care is often reduced to indulgences like bubble baths or early nights. But true self-care is an intentional, ongoing practice—one that supports your whole self across multiple areas of life.



Emotional
Tending to your emotional world helps you respond, not just react.



Physical
Your body is your vehicle through life—caring for it is essential.
Sleep, Nutrition, Movement, Health Maintenance



Psychological
Nourish your mind as well as your body.
Intellectual pursuits—reading, learning, problem-solving. Self-awareness, reflection



Professional
Your work life can nourish or deplete you.
Breaks, boundaries, and expectations to handle work stress. Stay engaged while maintaining your identity.



Relational
Human connection is a cornerstone of wellbeing.
Community, social support, balance selflessness with self-respect



Spiritual
Spirituality, religious or secular, highlights meaning and connection.

The Six Domains of Self-Care offer a holistic, practical framework to support personal wellbeing, professional resilience, and relational health.

Back panel

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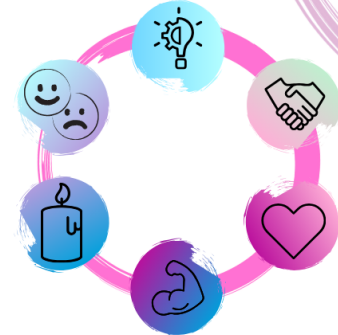
AIMEE WILLIAMS

Cover

THE SIX DOMAINS OF SELF-CARE:

A FRAMEWORK FOR PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE WELLBEING

Tools for Navigating a Facilitation Career with Intention and Resilience



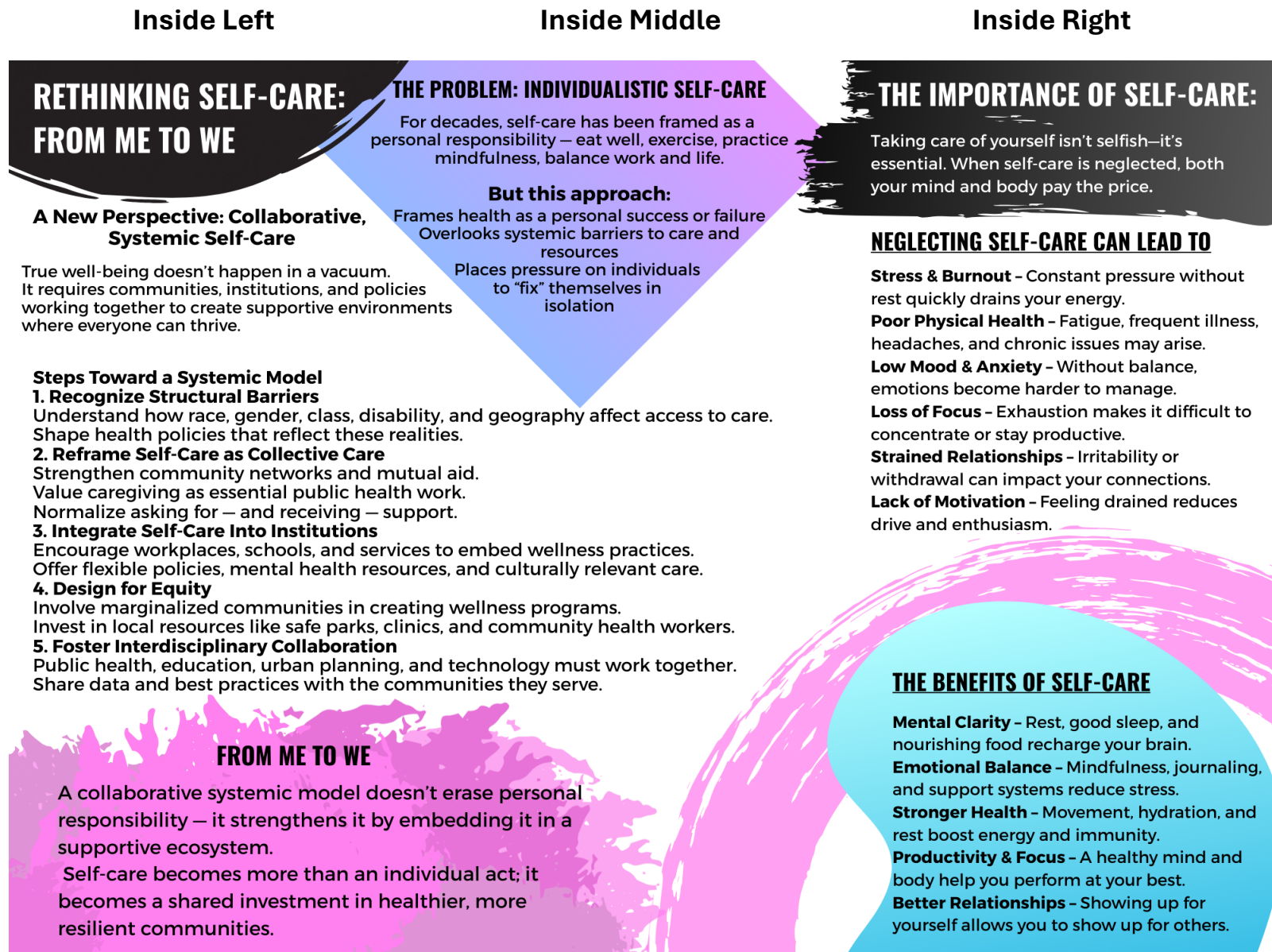
MY ROLE AS FACILITATOR:

A FLAT-PACK APPROACH

I see myself as an IKEA flat-pack: I provide tools—frameworks, questions, and guidance—but it's up to participants to assemble them. I offer flexible resources and emphasize collaboration.

I aim to:

- Hold inclusive, generative space
- Invite curiosity and experimentation
- Share knowledge transparently
- Witness the process with respect



Recorded Poem Link

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NH5zCq0HFg2kSptbZESP24QAmZCQcjJG/view?usp=drive_link

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Major Project Conclusion

This portfolio presents a reimagined approach to wellbeing in arts and health, positioning self-care as a relational, ethical, and systemic practice rather than a solitary or peripheral act.

Through workshops, reflective journaling, and the creation of accessible resources, the work demonstrates that self-care (Butler et al., 2019) is inseparable from the contexts, communities, and systems in which practitioners operate. Central to this practice is witnessing holding space attentively for participants' experiences, acknowledging both spoken and unspoken narratives, and validating the emotional and professional labour often unseen. Witnessing transforms sessions into spaces of mutual recognition, shared reflection, and collective meaning-making, foregrounding the relational essence of sustainable practice.

Equally important is the cultivation of brave spaces (Arao, and Clemens, 2013; Auston, and Vadiveloo, 2023) —environments that embrace vulnerability, discomfort, and experimentation. By co-authoring these spaces with participants, facilitation becomes a responsive, ethical practice where risk-taking is supported, creativity is encouraged, and reflection deepened. Such spaces highlight that self-care is a collective responsibility, shaped through dialogue, trust, and relational attunement.

The portfolio reframes resilience (Skovholt, and Trotter-Mathison, 2025; Butler et al., 2019) as relational and emergent rather than an individual measure of endurance. It grows through reciprocity, connection, and holistic support—physical, emotional, and ethical—and is strengthened when practitioners nurture themselves alongside others. Creative methodologies such as applied theatre, embodied inquiry, and process drama enabled participants to externalise complex professional tensions, explore shared experiences, and co-develop sustainable approaches to wellbeing.

Ultimately, this work articulates a vision of arts and health practice in which wellbeing is embedded as a shared, foundational principle. By foregrounding witnessing, brave spaces, and relational resilience, the portfolio demonstrates how practitioners can sustain themselves while creating conditions for others to flourish. Facilitation becomes an act of ethical stewardship—holding space, presence, and possibility—preserving humanity, strengthening ethical and creative integrity, and affirming the transformative role of the arts in health, wellbeing, and cultural resilience.

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Word Count Breakdown

- Major Project Portfolio Introduction: 439 words
- Part 1 – Major Project Proposal Document: 3,789 words
- Part 2 – Major Project Reflection Journal: 3,556 words
- Part 3 – Major Project Evidence of the Practical Aspect: 3,500 words
 - Includes 2 six-hour session videos
 - Equivalency:
 - 30 sec video $\approx$ 1,000 words (1-hour extract of workshop)
 - 1 min video $\approx$ 1,500 words (1.5-hour extract of workshop)
 - Part 3 Total (words + equivalents): 6,000
- Part 4 – Major Project Resource:
 - Resource Introduction: 221 words
 - Brochure: 819 words
 - Recorded Poem: 223 words
 - Part 4 Total: 1,263 words
- Major Project Conclusion: 319 words

Total: 15,366 words / equivalents

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