Module Code BMPF7013F

Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters

Lilli Unwin

Student Number 2243308

Total word Count: 11,633

Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters 1
Glossary 3
Component 1 5
Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters 5
Introduction 5
Planned Programme of Study 6
Theoretical Influences 6
Perfectionism and Mindful-Self Compassion 7
Learning Theories 7
Socio-philosophical movements 8
Best Practice Influences 8
Structure 9
Author tone 9
Knowledge foundation and limitations 10
Methodological Influences 11
Research Philosophy 11
Research Methodologies 12
Literature Review Methodology 13
Activities and Assessment Criteria 14
Activities and Review Dates 14
Assessment criteria 15
Ethics 17
Aims, Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes 18
Aim 18
Objectives 18
Expected Learning Outcomes 19
Critical Review 20
Concrete Experience 20
Reflective Observation 22
Abstract Conceptualisation 23
Research Questions (RQs) 24
Active Experimentation 25
Component 2 27
Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters 27
Introduction 27
Know That 29
Potential benefits of drawing on research to inform practice 29
Creative and MSC interventions for singer-songwriters 30
Know How 31
Effective communication strategies 31
1. Writing style 31
2. Accessibility 32

3. Graphic Design 33
Practical implementation approaches 37
Know What 38
What? 38
So what? 40
Now what? 41
Reflective Conclusion 41
Key insights 41
Reflecting on my research questions and learning outcomes 42
Limitations and recommendations 43
Future research 43
Pedagogical implications 44
Reference list **45**
Appendices **61**
Appendix 1: Gannt Chart 62
Appendix 2: Assessment Criteria Rubric (white and grey literature) 65
Assessment Criteria Breakdown 77
Appendix 3: Autoethnograpic Practice: ethical statement 78
Boundaries of what I will write about 78
Appendix 4: Start With Why Process for the Artefact (Sinek, 2011) 79
Appendix 5: Reflexive thematic analysis of findings from literature 82
Appendix 6: Chapter outline iterations 89
Version 1 89
Version 2 90
Appendix 7: User experience design: graphics, type, colour (designed in Canva app) 92
Appendix 8: Literature Review Strategies 93
Appendix 9: Assessment Criteria: my artefact 99
Appendix 10: Artefact (final version) 101

Glossary

AACODS checklist - Authority, accuracy, coverage, objectivity, date and significance
AI - Artificial intelligence
CAP - Creative analytical processes
MBI - Mindfulness-based intervention
MSC - Mindful self-compassion
PBR - Practice-based research
PSP - Perfectionistic self-presentation
SDT - Self-determination theory
SOP - Self-oriented perfectionism
SPP - Socially prescribed perfectionism
RTA - Reflexive thematic analysis

Component 1

Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters

Word count: 6,694

Introduction

While there are ample ways to learn about the musical skills required to be an intermediate singer-songwriter, through attending music education or self-guided learning with books, for example, there is a lack of resources designed to build skills in the mindset required for creativity in songwriting. It has been my experience, both on graduation from higher education, but also through the students I have taught, that many of the musical skills learned become redundant when mindset obstacles (such as perfectionism) block creativity. Both the undergraduate students I work with, as well as hobbying amateurs, tend to struggle to maintain a consistent relationship with creativity due to obstructions such as perfectionism, lack of motivation and structure, which are also familiar problems I have experienced during my career. Through undertaking this study, I will be able to develop a pedagogy for creative songwriting that is grounded in psychological literature.

As a way to address this problem, I will design an asynchronous workbook that includes interactive practical exercises designed to enhance the creative process of singer-songwriters. This artefact will be a synthesis of white and grey literature (encompassing theories such as perfectionism and self-compassion, as well as best practice in the field) and will be aimed at supporting creativity, well-being and connection, while lessening perfectionism. From the literature reviewed, it will be a novel approach to create a research-informed intervention that is in the form of a creative workbook for singer-songwriters. Based on my occupational context, the audience for the workbook will be self-guided, intermediate singer-songwriters who may use it as a structure to guide their creativity in the songwriting process. The workbook will be designed to be used asynchronously, based on the needs I have identified in my typical students in higher education and private clients.

Concerns for the mental health of musicians have been raised in several studies (Gross and Musgrave, 2017; Loveday, Musgrave and Gross, 2023), with the likelihood of depression in musicians double that of the general population, with similar issues shown to be present in the student population (Hubble and Bolton, 2019; Vaag, Bjerkeset and Sivertsen, 2021). Calls to provide health and well-being education in tertiary music education have been made (Vermeersch *et al.,* 2023; Musgrave, 2024) as a way to mitigate the raised levels of mental ill health in the musician population. *Perfectionism*, the pursuit of unattainably high standards, has been identified as a potential contributor to poor mental health (Flett, Hewitt, and Dyck, 1989; O'Connor, Rasmussen, and Hawton, 2010; Flett, *et al.,* 2012; Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017; Egan, *et al.,* 2022), as well as recognised to be present in performance (Mor, *et al*., 1995; Dobos, Piko, and Kenny, 2019; Hill, *et al.*, 2020) and creative settings (Nordin-Bates, 2020). While it is an emerging area, with no interventions specifically targeting the unique needs of singer-songwriters yet, *self-compassion* (mindfully accepting, and kindly meeting, one's suffering as a natural part of the human condition; Neff, 2003) has been identified as a mitigator for perfectionism (Egan, *et al.*, 2022; Liu, Wei and Russell, 2023; Benedetto, Macidonio and Ingrassia, 2024), as well as shown beneficial for increasing well-being (Neff and Germer, 2013). I will be drawing on my professional experience to target the distinct needs of singer-songwriters when it comes to perfectionism (the pressure of managing singing, songwriting, and business simultaneously; coping with creative blocks in songwriting; and the risk of identity being tied to output and productivity). This artefact seeks to address the calls to action in the literature by providing a preventative, creative songwriting intervention grounded in literature that builds mindset skills for creativity.

Planned Programme of Study

Theoretical Influences

The design of the artefact will be underpinned by a variety of theoretical influences that will not only contextualise the need for such an artefact but also inform how learning is experienced, as well as how it may be positioned commercially. The aim is that this artefact will be a research-informed interactive workbook that seeks to minimise the experience of perfectionism and boost creativity, connection and well-being in the singer-songwriter population. The artefact will be influenced by theories rooted in psychology and pedagogy,

as well as broader socio-philosophical movements. These theoretical influences will be used to create an assessment rubric which can be used for self-evaluation of the artefact.

Perfectionism and Mindful-Self Compassion

Dimensions of perfectionism (Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017) such as *self-oriented perfectionism* (SOP; self-directed unrealistically high expectations) and *socially prescribed perfectionism* (SPP; the belief that others expect perfection of you), as well as *perfectionistic self-presentation* (PSP; publicly highlighting perfection and concealing imperfection; Hewitt, *et al.*, 2003) will be drawn upon to inform the design of the artefact. The main self-compassion theory to be used will be Neff and Germer's (2013) *mindful self-compassion* (MSC) model. The core components of this are self-kindness, mindfulness and shared sense of common humanity (Neff, 2003).

Learning Theories

The learning design of the artefact will draw on humanistic learning theories, primarily Rogers' (1969) person-centred approach, which promotes autonomy, self-directed learning, self-evaluation (Arab *et al.,* 2015), and the benefits of 'co-created' learning (Bovill, 2016). Joseph, Murphy, and Holford's (2020) review of the model highlights Rogers' belief that if a learner has the right conditions to thrive, they will pursue intrinsically motivated goals in a self-directed way, which aligns well with the asynchronous design of the artefact. Furthermore, Rowley, Fook and Glazzard (2018) highlight the inclusivity of the person-centred learning approach, which is something that will be important to be aware of when designing the artefact for a potentially diverse group of singer-songwriters. Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) will also be used to inform the design of the artefact with provoking, questioning and facilitating learning being key aspects of the educational tone of the artefact, rather than it being an authority on the subject matter (Mezirow, 1997; Joseph, Murphy and Holford, 2020).

Motivation for learning while using the artefact will be informed by Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' theory of motivation model (1943) and *self-determination theory* (SDT; Ryan and Deci, 2020). The artefact will be designed with the hierarchy of needs in mind, with awareness that in Maslow's view, basic, safety and love needs are foundations on which self-esteem and self-actualisation (such as creative pursuits) can thrive upon (Maslow, 1943). The basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci, 2020) of autonomy, competence and relatedness will feed into different sections of the artefact that seek to enhance these needs. Finally, the influence of intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000), as well as the *intrinsic*

motivation principle of creativity (Amabile, 2018), will be heavily relied upon for the design of the artefact, both in the case of the creator and user of the artefact.

Socio-philosophical movements

When considering the theoretical influences that may play into the commercial positioning of the artefact, it will be crucial to consider the philosophical perspectives that underpin this. Whilst it will be important that the audience and commercial viability of the artefact is thought through, this will not be at the expense of sustainability (a core value for the design of this project). Several socio-philosophical movements will be used to inform the hypothetical business model in which this artefact would sit, such as ‘degrowth’ (Tayyab *et al.,* 2024), ‘doughnut economics’ (Raworth, 2017), and ‘regenerative’ business strategies such as the ‘restore-preserve-enhance' model (Hahn and Tampe, 2021). As in person-centred learning, which defies the mainstream approach of hierarchical learning from an authority (teacher) and promotes the idea that learning is co-created between facilitator and learner (Joseph, Murphy and Holford, 2020), doughnut economics (Raworth, 2017) proposes a new economic model which emphasises balance. Furthermore, du Plessis (2012) proposes a regenerative paradigm which encourages a "co-creative partnership with nature.". Ultimately, the artefact will be positioned as an antidote to *individualistic* (prioritising individual actions and interests; Merriam Webster Online, 2025b) pursuits such as capitalism.

Best Practice Influences

Although traditional research tends to favour peer-reviewed white literature, there is a wealth of practitioner knowledge to be drawn upon. Multiple ‘modes of knowing’ (Nelson, 2022) can provide learning advantages (such as theoretical knowledge, as well as practitioner insights), thus highlighting the importance of synthesising findings from both white and grey literature. As a way to bring in rigour when assessing the inclusion and analysis of grey literature, I have developed a ‘fit for purpose quality criteria’ as recommended by Adams, Smart and Sigismund Huff (2017). The AACODS checklist (authority, accuracy, coverage, objectivity, date and significance; Tyndall, 2010) has been drawn upon and adapted for this project (see Table 1). I discuss key texts from this field and highlight their relevance for my artefact design.

Table 1: Checklist for assessing the inclusion of grey literature, adapted from Tyndall (2010), The AACODS checklist

Essential	Must meet at least one of three:
	A. Is it by a reputable source (expert in the field/reputable organisation)?
	B. Has it been recommended by a reputable source (expert in the field/reputable organisation)?
	C. Is it commercially successful (indicating that it is perhaps useful to a wide range of people)?
Desirable	
	A. Does it cite other sources?
	B. When was it produced? How recent is the information?
	C. Does it clearly state transparent methodology?
	D. Does the work seem balanced in its presentation?

Structure

There are a variety of ways that key creative practitioners have structured their work, ranging from very brief and abstract to 12-week programs. ‘Oblique Strategies’ (Eno and Schmidt, 1975) is a set of abstract prompt cards designed to inspire creative practitioners to find a new perspective as a way to overcome artistic obstacles, and has been recommended by many eminent artists. Each card contains a sentence, indicating their brevity, although the overly abstract nature of the prompts may be confusing and difficult to interpret, which may impact their user-friendliness.

In contrast, Cameron's (1995) ‘The Artist's Way’ has been endorsed by high-profile creative practitioners, as well as wide audiences who appreciate the clear structure and warm environment the author facilitates. A unique selling point of The Artist's Way (1995) is the clear structure, in the form of a 12-week creative program with exercises to follow throughout, which includes 'morning pages' daily journaling and weekly artist dates as a way to increase inspiration.

Author tone

Of the best practices that follow a more traditional book structure than Cameron (1995) and Eno and Schmidt (1975), a key aspect they share is leveraging storytelling. ‘Big Magic’ (Gilbert, 2015) is a best-selling book, which is highly popular among creative practitioners and lay people alike, about the philosophy of creativity. Gilbert (2015) combines personal experiences with the creative process with storytelling about creative lives, and how creativity can behave. In contrast to Gilbert’s (2015) warm author tone, Pressfield (2003)

presents a 'tough love' approach to motivating people to engage with creativity, by giving strategies for combating inner resistance and creative mindset blocks. The book also promotes taking creative work seriously as a way to facilitate a deeper commitment to the craft. Furthermore, while undoubtedly extremely useful to many users, it reads more like a philosophical look at creative obstacles, which some users may find hard to apply without explicit exercises or prompts.

Knowledge foundation and limitations

While there is value in this type of grey literature, it lacks some credibility by failing to draw on scholarly knowledge. For example, Gilbert (2015) and Pressfield (2003) do not cite research formally. However, these limitations do not impact the user-friendliness and wide appeal to a large community. Whilst Cameron (1995) does not follow academic referencing conventions, there is a reading list included, which further enhances the breadth of knowledge drawn on to build this methodology.

Despite their commercial success, it will be important for me to assess the ethical implications of this type of work. For example, while potentially very helpful to users, Cameron (1995) sometimes presents exercises that encourage users to engage with potentially traumatic memories from the past (for example when examining a relationship with criticism) which may pose ethical risks for people with a history of trauma, with around 70% of people likely to have experienced a traumatic event in their lives (World Health Organisation Online, 2024). The War of Art (2003) may potentially minimise perfectionism in some respects by encouraging users to get started without overthinking it, but the harsher tone of the writing may not be as effective in eliciting self-kindness.

Table 2: initial rubric for evaluating best practices

Best Practice Element	Big Magic (Gilbert, 2015)	The Artist's Way (Cameron, 1995)	Oblique Strategies (Eno and Schmidt, 1975)	The War of Art (Pressfield, 2003)
Creative Retreat		✅		
Structured		✅		
Routine		✅		✅

Contains practical exercises		✅	✅	
Boosts Motivation	✅			✅
Boosts Creativity	✅	✅	✅	✅
Boosts Self-Kindness	✅	✅		
Boosts Connection		✅		
Well-being informed	✅			
Minimises perfectionism	✅	✅	✅	✅
Ethical	✅			
Inclusive	✅	✅	✅	✅
Accessible & User-Friendly	✅	✅	✅	✅
Facilitates a safe and non-judgemental space	✅	✅	✅	

Methodological Influences

Research Philosophy

The design of this independent study is informed by a *critical realist* perspective (Bhaskar, 2008), which "combines ontological realism and epistemological relativism" (Willis, 2023). The *ontological* perspective (how reality is viewed; Crotty, 1998) of *realism* acknowledges an objective reality, independent of human interaction (Gray, 2009), and aligns with the idea that theories drawn on in this study, such as perfectionism, for example, may be influenced by external factors (such as thwarted attachment needs in childhood in the case of perfectionism; Hewitt, Flett and Mikail, 2017). In the case of *epistemology* (the nature of knowledge; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018), *relativism*, the perspective that there are

many different interpretations and constructions of knowledge in the mind (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), acknowledges that although there may be objective reasons for someone displaying perfectionistic personality traits, it will be experienced differently by each individual, with a unique construction of meaning in each case. The ‘world-view’ (Creswell, 2014) underpinning this study will be the *pragmatic* paradigm, which will make the research question(s) the centre of the process and leave the methodology open to whatever is most appropriate in answering the question(s) (Morgan, 2007).

Research Methodologies

A qualitative, *practice-based research* (PBR) methodology (an inquiry centring around the development of an artefact and the evaluation of that process; Candy and Edmonds, 2018) will be employed for this study, primarily following the Nelson (2022) ‘know-how; know what; know that’ model. This will be combined with the process advised in Skains (2018): write research question(s), conduct literature review, write in research log in situ while creating an artefact, analyse both log and artefact after the fact. The analysis of the research log, with the benefit of some temporal distance, can then form a 'creative analytical processes (CAP) ethnography', crucially where the artefact and critical analysis of the process come together to provide new insight (Skains, 2018). This combination of *praxis* (embodiment of theory within practice; Nelson, 2022) and *exegesis* (“critical interpretation of a text”; Merriam Webster Online, 2025a) is a defining feature of PBR, and thus time will be allocated to both the development and evaluation of the artefact. Alongside the PBR methodology, the Kolb (1984) reflective model will be used to structure a critical review. The review will serve as an opportunity to reflect on my positionality, pre-existing knowledge and assumptions as I begin the study, as well as provide a structure from which to develop my research question(s) and action plan going forward.

Autoethnography, a research approach that combines autobiographical writing practices with ethnography as a way to gather insights from personal experience to analyse and understand wider cultural experiences of a community (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011; Skains, 2018), will be employed in this study as a complementary method to extract useful data for the PBR artefact generation process. The use of autoethnographic practices is highly relevant in the generation of an artefact that is designed for commercial use, as it may be accessible to larger audiences, and draw in those that traditional research and academia may not reach (Adams, Ellis and Holman Jones, 2017). My autoethnographic methodology will be influenced by the steps set out in Chang (2008), which include asking why, how and what questions to discern the aims and objectives of the study, as well as creating an autobiographical timeline as a method of collecting personal memory data. Processes set

out in Slade, Martin and Watson (2020) will also be used as a basis from which to structure the enquiry, including reflexive journaling, identifying career stages, cultural influences and epiphanies. Finally, examples of autoethnography in practice (Ellis, 2000; Adams, Ellis and Holman Jones, 2017; Goode, Lumsden and Bradford, 2023) will be informative and guide my final result. Drawing on methodology is crucial as it is important that autoethnography remains analytical and grounded in research methodology to set it apart from common personal stories (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011).

As well as following autoethnographic methodologies, it will be crucial to stay aware of the many potential pitfalls (as outlined in Chang, 2008), such as not keeping a balance between personal narration and analysing cultural experiences, as well as a range of ethical concerns (see ethics section). Autoethnography does not come without criticisms of the methodology, which, while debatable, must be considered before employing it as a methodology. Campbell (2017) summarises some of the key criticisms of autoethnography, such as researchers being overly self-indulgent, relying too heavily on themselves for data collection and not spending enough time in the field (Fine, 1999; Delamont, 2009). Furthermore, Campbell (2017) discusses the common criticism that autoethnography is unscientific and not a genuine contribution to social science (Delamont, 2012).

Literature Review Methodology

As a way to provide structure and enhance the rigour of this project, ‘rapid’ scoping review techniques (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005; Bryant and Gray, 2006; Grant and Booth, 2009; Peters, *et al.*, 2015; Snyder, 2018) will be drawn on for the literature review process. Literature will be drawn on from the rapid scoping review I recently conducted (Unwin, 2024b), which mapped out the evidence base for self-compassion interventions in the context of perfectionism. Remaining literature (primarily best practices) will be searched with a broad scope to assess relevance to the research question(s), and mapped out, identifying potential gaps in the literature (Munn *et al.*, 2018). Phrases and keywords from the research question and relevant papers will be searched across various databases and journals, with titles and abstracts being screened for their relevance to the study (Ridley, 2012). Keywords from highly relevant papers will be extracted and searched as part of a ‘citation pearl growing strategy’, as well as the citations being backward/forward chained. Boolean logic (Ridley, 2012) will be employed to help specify the type of literature that should be included or excluded. The inclusion criteria (see table 3) will appropriately limit the scope to mean only the most relevant literature will be analysed in this study (Swift and Wampold, 2018). The tiered framework (as set out in Adams, Smart and Sigismund Huff, 2017) for evaluating the usefulness and credibility of *grey literature* (literature that has not been subject to the

peer review process) will be used to inform the design of a ‘fit-for-purpose quality criteria’, alongside selecting peer-reviewed ‘white’ literature for the review. Finally, *reflexive thematic analysis* (RTA; Braun and Clarke, 2022) will be employed to develop themes from the topics emerging in the literature, which will aid synthesis of the literature reviewed.

Table 3 - Inclusion criteria for white literature

Inclusion Criteria	**Justification**
English language	Time constraints
Published in the last ten years, unless it is a key text	Ensuring it is grounded in recent developments in scholarship
It is an intervention of some kind that relates to theoretical influences literature, and is relevant to the aim of this project	Ensures that there are practical insights that can be fed into the artefact design
Journal article/peer-reviewed	Higher chance of methodological rigour
Relevant to the intermediate singer-songwriter population and research questions	Relevant to the population and research questions

Activities and Assessment Criteria

Activities and Review Dates

The project timeline has been developed with the MSC model (Neff and Germer, 2013) in mind throughout, particularly the self-kindness aspect. As a result of undertaking a part-time Master’s, during this project, I will need to maintain both my professional work as well as personal well-being. As a way to embody this, I have scheduled my work trips and projects into the Gantt chart, as well as time off from work and study, so that my expectations reflect self-kindness and are realistic. Crucially, this is a step I am taking to integrate the theoretical influences into the initial design of the project, as well as throughout, and in the artefact.

Summary of Gantt chart (see Appendix 1)

	Feb	Feb	March	March	April	April	May	May
Initial Phase								
Secondary Phase								
Final Phase								

Initial Phase: 30.01.2025-28.02.2025

Midway review: 13.02.2025

Tasks include:

- Setting up the project and getting organised
- Initial reading
- Drafting the content for component 1 sections
- Low expectations for making progress during work trips

Secondary Phase: 03.03.2025-18.04.2025

Midway review: 24.03.2025

Tasks include:

- Writing the critical review
- Artefact design
    - Exercises
    - Graphic design and branding
    - Commercial, legal and ethical
- Allocated time for work trips, as well as a week off work and study
- Finish component 1 draft

Final Phase: 21.04.2025-02.06.2025

Midway review: 09.05.2025

Tasks include:

- Evaluating the artefact
- Writing up component 2
- Final drafts
    - Artefact
    - Written work
- Time off from study (and work, where possible)
- Make edits on the final draft

Assessment criteria

As a way to analyse both white and grey literature, I have developed an assessment criteria which allows me to score all literature based on its relevance to my research questions. Each measure includes a predetermined criteria which I have developed based on my theoretical and best practice influences (see table 4). These same criteria will be used to evaluate my artefact in component 2 (see Appendix 2).

Table 4: Assessment criteria breakdown

Quantitative	Qualitative
Likert Scale Codes 1-10	**2. Creativity**
1-3: minimal/not evident	May include: practical creative exercises or reflective prompts; encourages creative routine habits; is coherently structured to build competence (SDT); promotes autonomy (SDT); boosts motivation.
4-6: moderate/partially evident	**3. Well-being**
7-9: strong/consistently evident	May include: promotes mindful self-compassion (mindfulness, sense of common humanity, self-kindness); reduces perfectionism; facilitates a non-judgemental and safe space.
10: central/exemplary	**4. Connection**
	May include: fosters belonging, collaboration, relatedness (SDT); encourages social connection and building community through creativity; supports solo creativity as well as group collaboration.
	5. Accessibility and Ethics
	May include: accessible and inclusive language/design; user-friendly for intermediate-level singer-songwriters; avoids manipulation, exploitation and harmful ideologies; aims to do no harm.
	6. Learning Theories
	May include: promotes intrinsic motivation (SDT); uses a facilitative tone (non-authoritarian; Rogers person-centred approach); encourages learners to co-create their learning (Rogers person-centred approach); highlights the importance of basic, safety and love needs for creativity (Maslow).
	7. Socio-philosophical Alignment
	May include: aligns with degrowth/anti-capitalist values; encourages balance and sustainability rather than endless productivity and growth; draws on, and celebrates, lessons from nature.

Ethics

As this artefact is intended for use commercially further down the line, it is vitally important that ethical considerations are taken into account. The elements I will be discussing encompass user ethics, research methodology ethics and researcher positionality.

Firstly, the hypothetical risks involved with singer-songwriters using the artefact asynchronously will be discussed, as well as mitigating steps:

- The artefact will contain signposting to mental health support if anything triggers an adverse emotional response in users of the artefact through asynchronous use.
    - For example, including URLs for mental health charities such as Mind, as well as musician-specific ones such as Music Minds Matter.
- Thought will go into reflecting on how best to avoid doing any harm (Bell and Bryman, 2007), as well as avoiding creating new problems while aiming to solve another.
    - For example, I will be mindful of the depths to which I invite users to reflect on their experiences, as this could be an area where they may retraumatise themselves by recalling intense memories. Some introspection may be healing, such as the cathartic process of kindly acknowledging painful memories known as *backdraft* in MSC (Neff and Germer, 2018), but to avoid traumatising, or retraumatising users, trauma-informed educational practices such as establishing a structured and predictable learning environment can help to facilitate a sense of safety (Carello and Butler, 2015).
- The boundaries of the artefact will be made clear so it is easily understandable what it is (a workbook designed to promote creativity) and is not (a substitute for professional medical/psychological advice).
    - For example, I will highlight that if someone using the artefact was clinically depressed, they should seek proper medical advice in addition.

Secondly, the ethical considerations for PBR and autoethnography must be considered. In autoethnography, there is a risk of implicating others in the text, which can sometimes be helped by altering identifying characteristics to mitigate this (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011), such as using pseudonyms, or altering identifiable information, and combining multiple characters into one (Tullis, 2022). It should be noted that there may still be a risk that individuals are identified through persons who have prior knowledge of the researcher's connections. Ellis (2009) highlights the possibility that autoethnographic work may also disrupt communities that a researcher may be embedded in.

Tullis (2022) also addresses the risks autoethnography poses to the researcher, which include difficult emotions arising during the process and personal stories being questioned and critiqued, a researcher's safety being an important ethical consideration (Paterson, Gregory and Thorne, 1999). As a way to reflect on the risks involved, I will write an ethical statement (see Appendix 3) which will outline the topics I will and will not write about (personal boundaries), as well as how I will protect the identities of others in my writing. Hübner (2022) echoes the importance of considering carefully the ethics involved with telling stories that belong to other people, but concerning PBR artefact generation, provides a list that suggests ethical standards for artists to uphold, including avoiding plagiarism and deception, as well as giving back, sharing ideas and safeguarding audiences.

Finally, as a researcher, it is important to consider the power dynamic that may be present in future studies that may include participants. Holmes (2020) highlights the importance of engaging in reflexivity to consider researcher positionality, and the considerations of being an insider researcher (part of the community I am making the artefact for), which can sometimes have its advantages such as prior knowledge/experience of the topic (Costley, Elliott, and Gibbs, 2010).

Aims, Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes

Aim

To develop and critically evaluate a practice-based artefact that synthesises best practices from white and grey literature, designed to support creativity, well-being, and connection while lessening perfectionism in intermediate singer-songwriters through asynchronous use, and exploring its potential impact while establishing pathways for future development.

Objectives

- Initial Phase: To conduct a structured literature review drawing on rapid scoping methodologies, synthesising best practices from sources across white and grey literature. This review will categorise key strategies (using RTA) supporting creativity, well-being and connection in intermediate singer-songwriters based on relevant literature (perfectionism, mindful self-compassion, and creativity theories).

- Secondary Phase: To follow on by embodying findings from the literature to create an interactive, research-informed workbook designed to enhance intermediate singer-songwriters' experiences of creativity, well-being and connection. The workbook will be designed with both SDT and the MSC model in mind.

- Final Phase: Conclude by critically evaluating the artefact using Nelson's (2022) model to assess its usability and potential impact, as well as theoretical alignment, through using structured self-reflection and the use of the assessment criteria framework developed to assess literature (see Appendix 2). The findings from this process will then inform the trajectory of future iterations, as well as potential pathways for participant-based research.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- To develop the required skills needed for practice-based research, as well as conducting a review of the literature that synthesises findings from both white and grey literature.
- To develop themes based on knowledge from best practices, as well as evaluate their relevance to the artefact design process.
- To gain an understanding of the commercial, legal, and graphic design elements required to successfully sell a research-informed workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters.
- To improve my ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice by designing an artefact (research-informed workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters).
- To understand the learner-based ethical implications involved with producing a research-informed workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters, as well as developing awareness of the ethical implications of sharing my own story through autoethnographic practices (balancing insight, empathy and personal boundaries).
- To gain skills in developing assessment criteria that can be used to evaluate the efficacy of artefacts (including my own).

Critical Review

To structure my reflections, I will be using the experiential learning cycle (see figure 1; Kolb and Kolb, 2013). I will begin by considering the position of my existing experience now that I have done preliminary research (concrete experience), followed by reflecting on any inconsistencies between the theoretical knowledge I have been exploring in my planned programme of study and my experience (reflective observation). The final two stages will see me 'grasp' (abstract conceptualisation) the knowledge I have set out in the first two stages, and then 'transform' it (active experimentation), through developing an action plan for my study that is based on my new perspective (Kolb and Kolb, 2013).

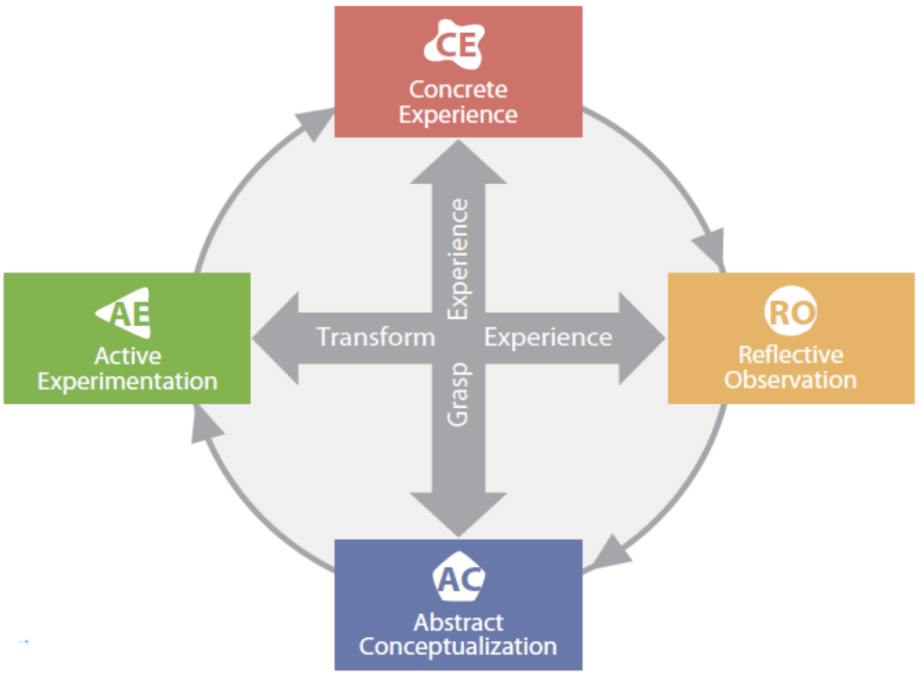


Figure 1: The experiential learning cycle (Kolb and Kolb, 2013)

Concrete Experience

One of the reasons I undertook this project was based on wanting to provide resources that I did not have when I was a newly developing singer-songwriter. In hindsight, I can now see that when I graduated from music college, I found it challenging for several reasons:

- I had a wealth of musical skills, but did not feel I knew how, or could, manage the many aspects of my creative work and business effectively, without becoming overwhelmed.

- Losing the structure of being in an institution was a new experience (as I had been in education since the age of three), and subsequently, I felt lost without routine and external motivation.
- The reality of entering a challenging workforce, along with not having a clear pathway to develop my artistry, impacted my identity and fueled mental ill health.

In hindsight I can see how I would have found it overwhelming to balance my workload, because there is an expectation that singer-songwriters must use social media frequently (therefore taking time away from musical activities) as a tool to market themselves (Haynes and Marshall, 2018; Baskerville and Baskerville, 2019; Szymkowiak, Kubala and Antoniak, 2020). Furthermore, Creech *et al.* (2008) highlight the distinct challenges emerging professional musicians face when entering the workforce, such as honing a niche and dealing with a highly competitive field. Finally, with the high likelihood of suffering from mental health problems as a result of pursuing a music career (Gross and Musgrave, 2017; Loveday, Musgrave, and Gross, 2023; Musgrave, 2023; Deuze, 2025; Musgrave, Gross and Carney, 2025), as well as difficulties establishing a healthy sense of identity (Burland, 2021; Burland, Bennett and López-Iñigues, 2022), it is unsurprising that I felt overwhelmed and subsequently struggled with my mental health.

Gradually, I was able to piece together knowledge from different fields (creativity, music, self-help, business) and began to find a routine that worked for me. It was during the pandemic that I had the time to hone this process and reap the well-being benefits being musically creative can bring (MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012). Looking back on this experience through the lens of perfectionism theory I can now see that there were potentially too many expectations I had set for myself (indicative of self-oriented perfectionism; Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017), as well as a broken creative/music industry that normalised precarity (McRobbie, 2004), which may have contributed to me experiencing socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017).

Alongside witnessing my journey, I have stood alongside many of my students (private lessons with adults, and undergraduate lectures) who have encountered struggles of their own concerning their creative process and identity. These have included:

- Struggling to manage their time, lack of structure, not having any clearly defined goals, and not knowing how to focus their time creatively.
- Perfectionism and procrastination.
- Balancing being intrinsically motivated, along with the many external pressures that can lead to extrinsically motivated goal-setting (Ryan and Deci, 2020).

- Confusion around how to spend their creative time independently, and losing motivation in between lessons with me.

While some amateur adult music students may be able to reap the positive benefits of their music-making, the high levels of poor mental health in the musician population have been shown to be present in the undergraduate music student population (Vaag, Bjerkeset and Sivertsen, 2021). The combination of my experience, along with my observations as an educator, provides me with the motivation and theoretical justification to develop an artefact to mitigate these obstacles.

Reflective Observation

As I have started to design my planned programme of study, and engage with initial literature, I have begun to reflect deeply on the significant rise of socially prescribed perfectionism (Curran and Hill, 2019), which leading researchers in the field have been issuing urgent calls to address (Flett, *et al.*, 2022). While it has been clear to me that self-oriented perfectionism (Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017) poses significant issues in the creative process of singer-songwriters (Unwin, 2024a), based on my analysis of the literature I believe socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017) presents far greater challenges that are widely experienced. Curran and Hill (2019) posit that this rise may, in part, be due to individuals using perfectionism as a coping strategy for "neoliberalism's new culture of competitive individualism". Furthermore, Curran (2023) discusses the need to acknowledge that perfectionism is not an individual problem, but rather a symptom of the capitalist world we currently inhabit, which prioritises individualism and endless growth.

Through trying to investigate how to mitigate the negative impacts of perfectionism in a holistic way, I have sought out interventions that tackle the root cause. An alternative economic model, 'doughnut economics' (Raworth, 2017), has been proposed as an antidote to capitalist ideologies which underpin how the economy is currently run. I have felt a sense of relief and inspiration when I have learned that doughnut economics prioritises balance, sustainability, and regeneration, as well as recognises that nothing is able to grow limitlessly in the natural world. I have begun to realise that models such as doughnut economics (which had been primarily designed with environmental sustainability in mind) may provide suitable philosophies to underpin sustainable creative work, as well as actively move away from perfectionistic mindsets of always needing to reach an unattainably higher level (Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail, 2017). In other words, by recycling frameworks from environmental

sustainability, we may be able to repurpose them in a way that ameliorates some of the challenges singer-songwriters face.

Alongside my continued concern that musicians are suffering widely from mental ill health, I have also had frustrations for a long time about the state the music industry is in including significant budget cuts to the arts sector (Stewart, 2024) and the impending threat of artificial intelligence (AI) on creative practitioners' intellectual property (Scott, 2025). Raworth (2017) describes her frustration with economics and how she nearly walked away from the field before realising she needed to rethink the model and propose a suitable alternative. Based on this, I have also realised that instead of walking away from the problems I am frustrated by in the music industry, and beyond, I may be able to propose an alternative model which seeks to mitigate some of the issues singer-songwriters are facing. By engaging with theories such as doughnut economics, I have been able to question my worldview and realise a new, more sustainable paradigm for creativity in a singer-songwriter context.

Abstract Conceptualisation

In an era marked by political, ecological and technological uncertainty, I believe that the opportunity to retreat into creative expression has never been more important for well-being and connection. There is literature to suggest that the use of the arts may positively impact social cohesion and well-being (Fancourt, Warran and Aughterson, 2020), although it is a nuanced topic that must be treated with caution when making broad claims (Skov and Nadal, 2025). Specifically, songwriting has been suggested as a potentially effective therapeutic intervention (Gee, Hawes and Cox, 2019). Considering the potential well-being and connection benefits that being immersed in creative expression poses, I believe that there may be scope to see it as a well-being supportive practice, in the same way *forest bathing* (mindful immersion in forested nature; Siah, *et al.*, 2023) has been recommended as a complementary practice to promote well-being (Antonelli, *et al.*, 2022).

I hypothesise that by engaging in creative practices, such as songwriting, in a way that feels playful and intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 2020), singer-songwriters may be able to connect with their innate ability to be creative and remove any layers of perfectionism that hold them back. Connecting to their creative practice in this way may not only be a peaceful moment of solitude and self-connection, but also act as a form of quiet resistance to *neoliberalism's* (a political philosophy that prioritises free market capitalism; Bockman, 2013) promotion of endless growth (Tayyab, *et al.*, 2024) and consumerism (Ndiaye, 2022).

Furthermore, it may be a way to quietly resist the perfectionistic beliefs that are entrenched in these philosophies, and also be a starting point from which to connect with others socially.

Through my engagement with theories such as doughnut economics, I have begun to explore more of the strategies that are being proposed in the environmental sustainability field. I believe that the term *rewilding* (allowing nature the space to return to how it was without human interference; Baker, 2021) may work as a suitable metaphor for me to repurpose as a philosophy for creative songwriting. In the artefact, I am proposing that singer-songwriters 'rewild' their creativity, and infuse their creative practice with this philosophy. Furthermore, I plan to integrate nature-based moments throughout, such as encouraging mindful connection with nature to stimulate creativity, specific exercises such as collecting field recordings of nature to use in songwriting tasks, and encouraging users to follow seasonal rhythms for creativity (for example, allowing themselves to rest more in the winter, as nature does) which has been recommended as a practical way to apply regenerative practices (Hahn and Tampe, 2021). Finally, I also plan on choosing colours which align with both the values I have for the project (see Appendix 4), but also reflect natural and earthy tones as a way to weave this 'rewilding' thread throughout the artefact.

Through my reflections, I have also been able to discern how my theoretical and best practice influences can directly feed into the artefact design, as well as why it is appropriate for them to do so. SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2020) will be integrated by designing exercises that foster basic psychological needs, for example, ensuring that practical exercises are structured well to build a sense of competence, but leave room for the user to choose how to use them autonomously. I will use MSC (Neff and Germer, 2013) to underpin the tone of the language, so that it promotes self-kindness and normalises their experiences (fostering a common sense of humanity). Self-reflection, adaptation and creating action steps will be part of the role of the artefact, inspired by experiential learning theory (Kolb and Kolb, 2013). Rogers' (1969) person-centred humanistic learning theory will feed in by way of designing exercises that are not overly prescriptive, and encourage the user to co-create them, as well as the tone of the writing will aim to be facilitative, rather than authoritative.

Research Questions (RQs)

- RQ1: What best practices can be combined from both grey and white literature on creativity, perfectionism, and self-compassion interventions, to create an accessible workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters which increases connection, creativity and well-being, while reducing perfectionism?

- RQ2: How might the use of rewilding as a metaphor (and subsequently, a philosophy) in creativity help singer-songwriters sustain creativity in a society that promotes perfectionism?

Active Experimentation

An important part of this reflective process is to build an action plan through which to 'transform' (Kolb and Kolb, 2013) the ideas I have reflected on, taking into account how my perspective has shifted throughout this process, as a result of new knowledge gained. Going forward, I plan to draw on the socio-philosophical movements that underpin 'rewilding creativity', as well as the synthesis of white and grey literature, to develop an intervention (artefact) that seeks to answer my RQs. I will set out by conducting a review of the literature (as detailed in the methodological influences section), which aims to map out the white and grey literature relevant to my RQs. I will run any grey literature through the checklist I have developed to assess inclusion status (see table 1), and white literature will be included based on the criteria set out in table 3. Search terms will be derived from keywords within the research questions (see Table 5).

Table 5 - Boolean search terms based on keywords from research questions

creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND well-being OR mental health
creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND perfectionism
self-compassion OR mindful self-compassion AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide
creativity OR artistic process AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide
songwriting OR composition AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide
creativity OR artistic process AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide AND self-compassion
creativity OR artistic process AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide AND perfectionism
songwriting OR composition AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide AND self-compassion
songwriting OR composition AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide AND perfectionism
sustainable creativity OR creative sustainability AND perfectionism OR burnout
sustainable creativity OR creative sustainability AND self-compassion OR mindful self-compassion
rewilding AND creativity OR creative practice AND metaphor OR philosophy
self-determination theory AND creativity OR songwriting
the artist's way OR creative journaling AND self-compassion OR motivation OR perfectionism

Following the initial phase of reviewing literature, artefact generation will be informed by both my planned programme of study as well as my analysis of the literature. I intend to use my reflective journal as a way to capture observations about my choices, the limitations of the artefact and the potential impact it may have. I will be using Nelson's (2022) model as a way to critically evaluate my artefact design. Furthermore, I will draw on the assessment criteria (see Appendix 2) that I have developed to assess literature to evaluate the efficacy of my artefact using the same process.

Finally, the methodological choices I have made reflect the needs of the study and population I seek to serve. I am guided by a pragmatic paradigm (Morgan, 2007) and, therefore, will not discriminate against certain types of knowledge, theories, or studies if they are relevant to answering the research questions. Following a practice-based research methodology is important as it centres the development of an artefact that can be used to further theoretical knowledge, as well as be genuinely useful to singer-songwriters. I have chosen to integrate approaches from autoethnography as a way to draw on the wealth of personal experience I have, as well as normalise this journey for others (rather than positioning myself as a distant researcher, observing and and making judgements in a silo). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) has been selected as a pragmatic way to analyse the findings from the literature and develop broad themes that can be drawn upon for the design of the artefact. Overall, the methodological choices have been made specifically to meet the aims, objectives, personal learning outcomes, and RQs set out for this independent study.

Component 2

Creative mindset toolkit: designing a research-informed intervention to support creativity and mental health in intermediate singer-songwriters

Word count: 4,939

Introduction

While there are books on songwriting techniques (Davis, 1992; Pattison, 2009; West, 2016; Bell, 2017) and creativity (Cameron, 1995; Pressfield, 2003; Gilbert, 2015; Rubin, 2023), there are few resources that provide singer-songwriters with a targeted approach for managing the mindset required for creativity in songwriting. While there is growing research on self-compassion and perfectionism in performance domains, few studies address this in the singer-songwriter population. This artefact has been designed to address this problem by drawing on scholarly research, and best practices to support intermediate singer-songwriters in managing perfectionism, while boosting well-being through creative songwriting. Synthesising theory and best practices, I combine practical exercises, underpinned by psychological models (notably MSC), offering a co-created learning experience for cultivating creativity and well-being.

To make positive changes in this area, it may be beneficial to examine potential factors which may lead to negatively impacted mental health in musicians. One potential predicting factor for poor mental health in music settings may be perfectionism. There have been ample studies to show how perfectionism can contribute to worsened mental health in the cases of anxiety/depression (Flett, Hewitt, and Dyck, 1989; O'Connor, Rasmussen, and Hawton, 2010; Flett, *et al.,* 2012; Egan, *et al.,* 2022), and also suicide attempts (Hewitt, *et al.,* 1998). Furthermore, perfectionism has been found in performance settings (Mor *et al*., 1995; Kenny, Davis, and Oates, 2004; Stoeber and Eismann, 2007; Dobos, Piko, and Kenny, 2019; Hill *et al.*, 2020), as well as in creative domains (Nordin-Bates, 2012; Nordin-Bates, 2020). Given perfectionism's role in contexts where singer-songwriters may exist (performance and creativity), it has become clear that a leading objective must be addressing this in my artefact design. Based on the qualitative data (Unwin, 2024a), dimensions of perfectionism (such as harsh self-directed criticism and high standards) were perceived to obstruct creativity in songwriting. Through undertaking this study, it became

clear that there were few strategies designed to mitigate perfectionism in this population, giving me insight into the barriers my learners face, thus demonstrating a clear need for targeted interventions to be developed.

While it has not yet been adapted for the singer-songwriter population, evidence suggests that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) such as self-compassion may be a viable theory to embed in future artefacts. Self-compassion reduces perfectionism (Liu, Wei and Russell, 2023), increases well-being (Pastore, Brett, and Fortier, 2023), and decreases mental health symptoms (MacBeth and Gumley, 2012). More specifically, regarding the singer-songwriter population, it has been shown to improve recovery following failures (Hope, Koestner, and Milyavskaya, 2014; Ceccarelli *et al.*, 2019; Mohebi *et al.*, 2020) and positively impact how sportspeople perceive their performance (Barczak and Eklund, 2018; Killham *et al.*, 2018). Finally, in an industry where social media use has become a common element of a singer-songwriter's career (Haynes and Marshall, 2018; Baskerville and Baskerville, 2019), the findings from the Keutler and McHugh (2022) study (self-compassion's mediating effect on aspects of perfectionism via social media on well-being) demonstrate the benefits self-compassion may have in the singer-songwriter domain. I have taken the findings from self-compassion literature as a justification for using the MSC model to underpin the artefact design, as a way to mitigate perfectionism, while also increasing well-being, both key to the research aims of this project. While this project initially focused on songwriting pedagogy, throughout the process, it became more interdisciplinary, drawing on socio-philosophical literature that provides contextualisation for the wider context that singer-songwriters are situated in.

I have drawn on the Braun and Clarke (2022) RTA model to generate themes based on the findings when reviewing literature. Initial codes (179) were developed, which I then grouped into clusters (11), sub-themes (7), finishing the process by developing three main themes (see table 6), which will be discussed in this report, highlighting their significance for my artefact design process. Analytical rigour in the coding process was aided by repeatedly immersing myself in the data, refining the codes across multiple passes, and reviewing them for coherence, as well as alignment with the research aims. I have specifically chosen the RTA model as a way to synthesise diverse sources and capture themes across the literature that can feed into my artefact design. Using the Nelson (2022) model for evaluation, this report will outline the artefact's theoretical underpinnings (know that), discuss the practical steps taken to realise it (know how), and evaluate the final artefact. Finally, the reflective conclusion will summarise the findings from the project and the intended next steps for future research.

Table 6 - RTA main themes - full analysis in Appendix 5

Main themes (3)
Bridging the gap between theory and practice
Research-informed practice
Developing a philosophy that is guided by ecological principles
The benefits of creative and mindful self-compassion interventions for singer-songwriters
Benefits of mindfulness and self-compassion interventions
Applications of self-compassion in specific contexts
Creative approaches to well-being
A pathway to engaging user design for creative interventions
Effective communication strategies
Practical implementation approaches

Know That

Potential benefits of drawing on research to inform practice

There are advantages in producing books for laypeople that are grounded in research. Curran (2023), a leading academic in the field of perfectionism, leverages his depth of knowledge and research experience to produce a book for laypeople that gives a holistic view of the development and growth of perfectionism. Curran (2023) uses data as a backdrop for rationales for change, as well as draws on wider socio-philosophical movements (such as doughnut economics; Raworth, 2017) to contextualise the societal implications involved with perfectionism. While the arguments presented are credible, there are no practical exercises to tackle perfectionism, and the writing is still relatively complex for laypeople to remain engaged with, which may impede its impact.

In terms of practical application of perfectionism theory, several books exist that leverage evidence-based knowledge to varying degrees including: highly accessible language that connects with the intended audience of teenagers, but does not draw on research (Dobosz,

2016), highly accessible practical exercises to manage perfectionism that draws on research (Martin, 2019; Kemp, 2021); and more in-depth look at overcoming perfectionism that is thoroughly grounded in the literature but may be less accessible for laypeople (Shafran, Egan and Wade, 2018). In a slightly wider context, resources for singers (Fisher and Kayes, 2018) and musicians (Daubney and Daubney, 2017; Jones and Heyman, 2021) that are grounded in the literature manage to strike an effective balance of highly credible, while remaining accessible.

Whilst this is an underdeveloped area, there are some interventions for laypeople that draw on self-compassion research but seek to present academic theory in a highly accessible manner. The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook (Neff and Germer, 2018), for example, developed by originators of the theory, outlines the core aspects of MSC, while including numerous practical exercises which help users apply it in their lives. While this workbook does not apply directly to singer-songwriters, this has been a key influence on the development of my workbook, particularly the exercises on 'reframing' perfectionism through MSC. In terms of creativity books, while not officially drawing on an evidence base, some do include reading lists (Cameron, 1995; Tharp, 2006; Kleon, 2012), which demonstrates some engagement with literature. Conversely, many lauded creativity books do not draw on literature (including Pressfield, 2003; Meir, 2018; Rubin, 2023), which may impede their credibility, thus diluting their mission. In summary, of the grey literature reviewed, there is a tendency not to draw on research, which may be a pitfall due to key theories not being accounted for.

In summary, I have drawn on the design of these workbooks for perfectionism and MSC, as well as guides for musicians to influence my workbook's design for singer-songwriters by drawing on literature (such as MSC) to inform the language and pacing, while thinking of the intended audience, and not becoming too academic for them to engage with. Furthermore, I have sought to draw on the best practices set out in grey literature, while not making the same pitfalls of avoiding a research-informed approach.

Creative and MSC interventions for singer-songwriters

Creative practice and MSC interventions have been shown to have advantageous benefits. Argyle (2020) found engaging in group drawing and painting activities to be a successful means of improving well-being and social connection, although it is unclear whether this is due to it being a group activity or participants engaging in creative practice. Similarly, Gee, Hawes and Cox (2019) found that engaging in group songwriting as a creative practice

intervention acted as a preventative mechanism for declining mental health, as well as fostered social connection. In grey literature, a prominent takeaway from Gilbert (2015) is the benefit of engaging in everyday creativity (regardless of ability level), which may be conceptualised as ‘little-c’ creativity in academia (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009).

MSC offers evidence-based advantages that may be relevant to singer-songwriters. Research shows that MSC increases well-being (Neff and Germer, 2013; Mantelou and Karakasidou, 2017; Finlay-Jones, *et al.*, 2018; Yela, *et al.*, 2021), while also reducing mental health symptoms (Neff and Germer, 2013; Yela, *et al.*, 2021; Kuchar, Neff, and Mosewich, 2023), perfectionism (Nadeau, Caporale-Berkowitz, and Rochlen, 2021; Woodfin, *et al.*, 2021; Liu, Wei, and Russell, 2023; Birni and Satici, 2024), and self-criticism (Dundas, *et al.*, 2017; Northover, *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, MSC is showing promising results in sport populations through the reduction of self-criticism and improving perceptions of performance (Kuchar, Neff, and Mosewich, 2023), as well as being advantageous for athletes’ mindsets (Eke *et al.*, 2020; Terzioglu and Çakir-Çelebi, 2024). These benefits address central issues singer-songwriters may face, as shown in Walton *et al.* (2025), where MSC helped performers manage their mental health. Resultingly, these consistent findings across varying populations demonstrate the potential MSC has in a singer-songwriter context, despite the lack of research. Furthermore, through engaging with their creative practice, I posit that it may be possible that intended future users may feel that their creativity has increased, as well as opportunities for social connection.

Know How

Effective communication strategies

1. Writing style

Key texts advocate the importance of developing a personal philosophy for creativity as a starting point from which to flourish (Gilbert, 2015), as well as the significance of building a regular creative routine marked with discipline and discovery (Cameron, 1995; Pressfield, 2003; Kleon, 2012). Throughout the workbook, I encourage readers to develop a personal relationship with their creative process, build a personal philosophy, and move away from seeing it as outcome-based: *“…the point of this book is not to guide you to a finished product, but an invitation to explore the creative process itself. I will be focusing on the act of being creative in this book, rather than any particular outcomes.”*.

Several key texts leverage storytelling to illustrate learning points, often bringing in personal insights and experiences that elevate the work (Cameron, 1995; Pressfield, 2003; Kleon, 2012; Gilbert, 2015; Curran, 2023). While I focused the majority of the workbook on the user creating their own experience, I also draw on my story to frame my positionality, hopefully building trust with the reader: *"Only, the niggling emotional difficulty of turning what was once a hobby into a career... As a way to navigate this journey, I actually ended up finding solace in the creative process itself."*.

Best practice insights show it can be effective to use language that is informal, humorous (Cameron, 1995; Pressfield, 2003; Kleon, 2012; Gilbert, 2015) and well-being-informed (Neff and Germer, 2018; Curran, 2023). For example, when introducing the creative warm-up section in my workbook I seek to dispel the 'tortured artist' myth, as scholars encourage (McRobbie, 2004; Alacovska and Kärreman, 2023), in an informal, light and well-being-informed manner: "*...I think it's about time we change the narrative and rewrite the song on that one. Please remember that before you became a creative, a singer, a songwriter, you became a human first. I strongly encourage tending to your human needs …before your creative pursuits such as being a singer-songwriter."*.

2. Accessibility

Based on my experience, I suspect that intermediate singer-songwriters are likely to engage more with a workbook that is not time-consuming. Many singer-songwriters have busy lives and may also be deterred by excessive reading. Grey literature (Pressfield, 2003; Kleon, 2012; Gilbert, 2015; Daubney and Daubney, 2017; Haig, 2022; Tweedy, 2022) demonstrates the efficacy of 'micro-chapters' (very short passages), which may help to engage busy singer-songwriters. Despite the fact that Cameron (1995) is a highly successful intervention, at 12 weeks, it may be intimidating for users to commit to, and thus, that may impact motivation and engagement. This is something I have aimed to learn from, taking influence from the useful components, while aiming to be more accessible. Along with the use of micro-chapters, inspired by Fitzpatrick (2021), I have ensured readers gain value early on to remain engaged (first practical exercise, p. 9), have not held back the key message of the workbook (summarised p. 8), while keeping theoretical underpinnings and content concise.

A defining element of The Artist's Way (Cameron, 1995) is that it is structured like a creative retreat. I have designed my workbook to act as a creative retreat, *"intended to be a creative place that you can retreat to, learn from, grow with, and design the creative life you love"*, encouraging users that it "can be dipped into, or used chronologically". I have sought to create a structure that is predictable enough to ease anxiety (Dobosz, 2016) through use of

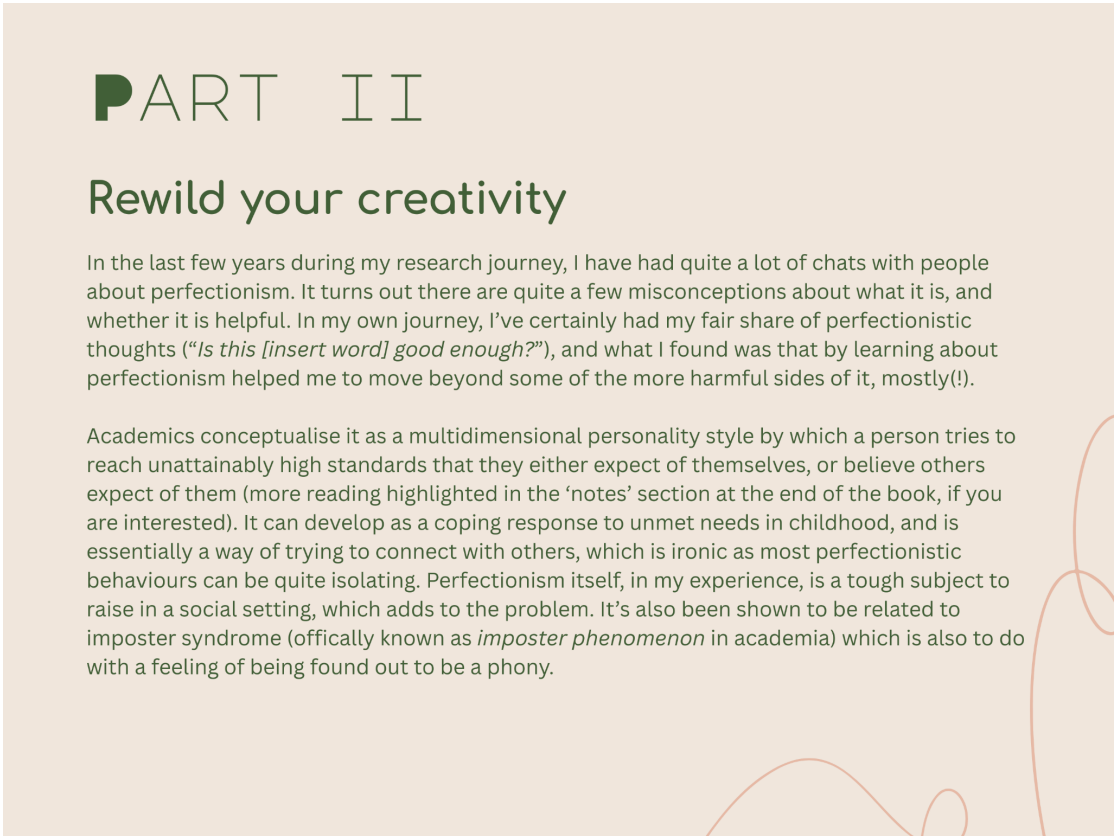
recurring exercise types with changing content, as well as scaffold the learning sequentially (Dobosz, 2016; Fisher and Kayes, 2018; Tweedy, 2022; Cameron, 1995) to build competence (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Efforts to make the workbook more accessible are evidenced in the iterations of chapter outlines (see Appendix 6), which have been refined throughout this study to emphasise practical tasks over prose.

3. Graphic Design

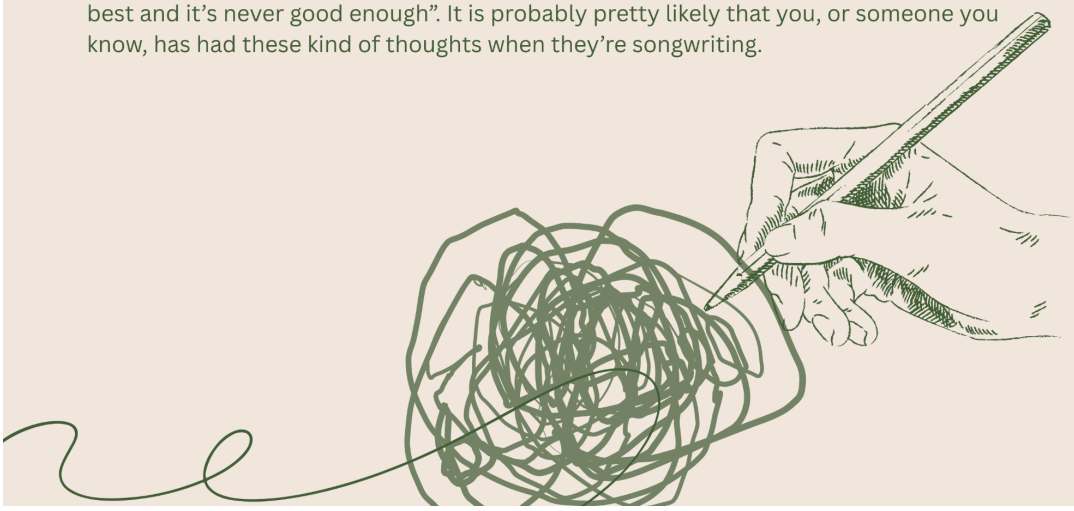
A leading influence for my design, Kleon (2012) harnesses the power of graphic design (typography, colours and illustration) to convey the message of creative living. I have been inspired by this approach, as well as subverted the common portrait book layout, opting for a more quirky small landscape orientation, in a similar way. **To view the final artefact, please see Appendix 10.**

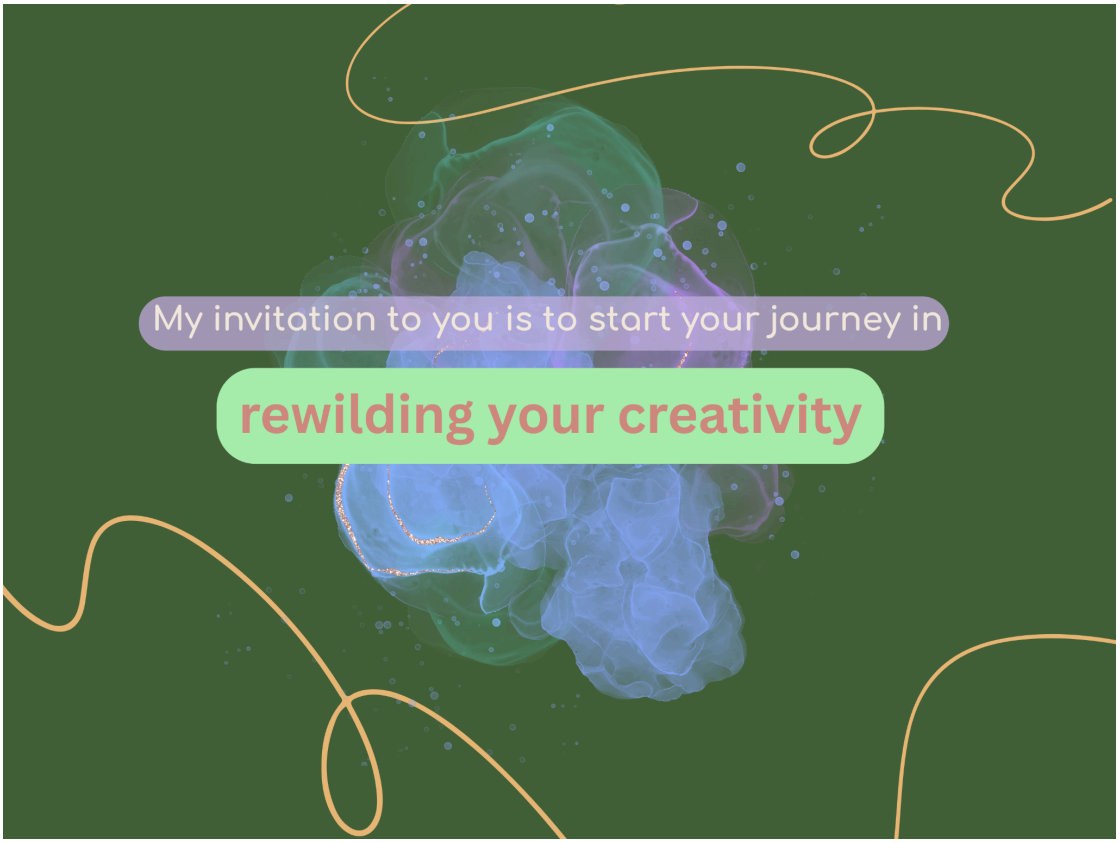
By using hints of illustration, I have sought to evoke imagery of creativity, reflection and imperfection (to actively challenge perfectionism), through the use of the following illustrations:

The squiggly lines, playful doodles and messy paint splashes (evoking creativity, reflection and imperfection)



There a few dimensions that I feel are quite relevant to singer-songwriters, and also popped up regularly in a qualitative pilot study I did exploring this, *self-oriented perfectionism* and *socially prescribed perfectionism*. Self-oriented perfectionism is when we expect unattainably high standards of ourselves, the key word being **unattainable**. Many great artists hone their work and reach for excellence, but it's when that striving for excellence (known as *excellencism* in academia) tips into feeling upset with ourselves that we haven't reached the standards we set ourselves. Where excellencism says "I did my best and that's good enough", perfectionism says "I did my best and it's never good enough". It is probably pretty likely that you, or someone you know, has had these kind of thoughts when they're songwriting.





Typography has been used to express the philosophy, message and values (see Appendix 4) of the workbook, with the header font signifying playfulness and creativity, and the body type both simplicity and kindness.



The colours in my workbook have been selected to communicate the values of the workbook: pink for connection; purple for sustainability, play and creativity; and yellow for authenticity (Perryman, 2021). The position (core, sub, accent) of the colours on the palette (see appendix 7) informed by Perryman (2021), with the intention that the workbook branding should inspire users to engage playfully, while also feeling calmly supported. I have ensured that there is a mixture of bold and light shades in the core palette, with more intense colours such as lime green being used sparingly to accentuate the colour narrative. Font and background colours with high contrast have been paired to increase readability, and thus inclusivity.

Table 7: Colour palette analysis using 'The Colour Bible' Perryman (2021)

Colour	Psychology	Suggested uses	Palette position
	• Symbolises sustainability, prosperity and quality. • Greens generally: fresh; abundant; soothing; calming; balancing; rejuvenative; and restful. • Darker greens indicate contemplative moods.	• Communicates quality and elegance when used in branding as the primary hue. • Use of black and green in high contrast can make content more accessible for a diverse group of readers.	Core
	• Neutrals generally: human; elegant; gentle; nuanced; calm and	• To counterbalance saturation. • For a visual identity that is	Core

	mindful. ● Shade-specific: tactile, tranquil and expressive.	confident, pair with pink and yellow.	
	● Pinks generally: calm; youthful; modern; soft yet powerful and rebellious; empathy; lowers heart rates. ● Shade-specific: calming; inviting; connecting.	● Promote dynamic interplay by pairing with green.	Core
	● Oranges generally: energising; responsive; vital; friendly; warming; genuine; communicates important messages with ease. ● Shade-specific: wondrous; protection; approachable; natural warmth which aids support-focused product design. ● Aids online communication (both approachable, yet vibrant).	● Pair with yellow.	Sub
	● Greens generally: fresh; abundant; soothing; calming; balancing; rejuvenative; and restful. ● Shade-specific: Fresh, youthful and innovative. ● Welcoming, future-facing, and symbol of ‘utopian optimism’. ● Growth; cleansing; vitality; associated with	● May encourage user engagement when paired with soft pinks.	Sub

	wellness; health-boost, and the environment.		
	• Purples generally: royal; creative; spiritual; awareness and reflection. • Shade-specific: playfulness and creativity; innovative; sustainable; intelligent.	• Combine with coral for a refined palette.	Accent
	• Greens generally: fresh; abundant; soothing; calming; balancing; rejuvenative; and restful. • Darker greens indicate contemplative moods.		Accent
	• Yellows generally: happy; hopeful;utopic; optimism; stimulating; refreshing; flexible when combined with other colours. • Shade-specific: sacred; sunny; authenticity	• When used in combination with neutrals evokes organic origins.	Accent

Practical implementation approaches

Practical exercises are used by many key authors to promote creativity. Reflective journaling can be used to gain insights and harvest new ideas. It is used in grey literature such as Neff and Germer (2018) and Kleon (2012), with Cameron (1995) also promoting reflective journaling through a practice called ‘morning pages’. I feature reflective learning in my workbook, asking users to reflect on their values (exercise on p. 9) to kickstart their creative process discovery.

The significance of playful creative expression is brought out in Eno and Schmidt’s (1975) ‘oblique strategies’ abstract prompt cards, although these may be too abstract to interpret and apply for some users. Another strength represented in Eno and Schmidt (1975) is the fast-paced nature of the medium, which other key texts advocate too (Pressfield, 2003;

Kleon, 2012), which may minimise perfectionism with users being less able to overthink due to the quick pace. I have sought to feature playfulness and brevity in my workbook by naming playful tasks as ‘games’, as well as including concise instructions for exercises, such as *“Find an image and write a poem inspired by it (timer: ten minutes)”* (p. 17). Furthermore, as evidenced in existing workbooks (Shafran, Egan and Wade, 2018; Martin, 2019; Kemp, 2021), and supported by the self-compassion literature, I have used MSC to reframe perfectionistic thoughts that are relevant to singer-songwriters’ creative process (p. 25), as a practical way to address perfectionism, although I have taken care not to go outside of the scope of being music-related (due to not being a qualified MSC teacher).

Know What

What?

While I believe the final artefact is highly effective, there are ways it can be elevated further, which I will discuss using the same assessment criteria used to assess literature (see table 8). The majority of my study aims and objectives were met through synthesising literature to inform the creation of a workbook, as well as determine potential next steps for future iterations. Through using the assessment criteria, I have identified highly effective areas (socio-philosophical alignment) and areas that need refining (promoting connection). In this iteration, while it is indirectly encouraged, building connection is not actively demonstrated. Upon reflection, I have realised that this may in part be due to the choice of medium (workbook), which tends to be an individual activity, thus making it challenging to emphasise connection. Based on this learning, going forward, I will carefully consider the medium in which I develop an artefact, and ensure it is apt in meeting all research aims.

When critically evaluating the extent to which I met my expected learning outcomes, I can identify areas that were more successfully met (developing PBR skills; synthesis of white and grey literature; graphic design) and others that need refinement going forwards such as gaining understanding of the legal and commercial aspects of selling the artefact, as well as striking an effective balance of autoethnographic writing. Despite being sceptical initially that autoethnography would lack objectivity, through critical questioning of my assumptions, I have transformed my frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997) and now view subjectivity as a strength of autoethnography. The critiques of autoethnography being ‘too subjective’ (Fine, 1999; Delamont, 2012) have been critiqued in return by autoethnographers who question whether research can truthfully ever be fully objective (Campbell, 2017) and reject to being

held to the same standards as traditional research, which autoethnography is not trying to be (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). Based on the challenges of autoethnographic writing, I have included less of it in the final artefact, which may end up preventing users from feeling connected to me.

As detailed in the assessment criteria (see table 8), I have included ample practical exercises that are structured to build competence and promote autonomy (SDT, Ryan and Deci, 2020), which may in turn influence motivation, although this is hard to know without testing. MSC has been integrated throughout the workbook indirectly through the kind author's voice, and directly through specific exercises. Finally, developing an assessment criteria was an expected learning outcome I set out for myself. Naturally, these criteria have been designed based on my research aims and RQs (meaning it is biased towards this study), and my artefact seeks to address these, which, if I have done well, would mean I score highly on it. Resultingly, I felt mixed emotions, partly confident that I had been overwhelmingly successful in meeting my objectives, while also slightly critical of the criteria design. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, this may not be something that should be amended, but it has certainly given me new perspectives to take into future studies.

Table 8: Assessment criteria: my artefact (expanded version in Appendix 2)

Assessment Criteria	Rewilding creativity: a songwriting workbook for letting go of perfectionism
1. Summary of scope/relevance	A workbook with practical exercises for singer-songwriters that is grounded in literature and promotes well-being and creativity, as well as provides strategies for managing perfectionism.
1a. Limitations	Building connection and shortage of autoethnographic writing
2. Creativity	9
3. Well-being	8
4. Connection	5
5. Accessibility and Ethics	8
6. Learning Theories	9
7. Socio-philosophical	10

Alignment	
TOTAL SCORE	49

So what?

A pivotal emergent theme that has been extremely insightful is the benefit of creating an artefact that strongly aligns with the socio-philosophical movements, such as doughnut economics (Raworth, 2017), degrowth (Tayyab, *et al.,* 2024), regenerative business (Hahn and Tampe, 2021), regenerative paradigm (du Plessis, 2012), that underpin it. Kuchta (2022) discusses the need for a paradigmatic shift away from *anthropocentrism* (the belief that humans are the most important type of existence, above others such as animals; Goralnik and Nelson, 2012) in education, as well as provides nature-based interventions that foster connection with nature. I have sought to develop a philosophy for creativity guided by ecological principles and weave in nature-based creative interventions to strengthen this foundation. Conversely, some scholars remain cautious about these benefits, warning that models such as degrowth and doughnut economics are lacking in empirical data (Engler *et al.*, 2024) and require further development (Eriksson, 2022), something I will be considering for future iterations. From the literature assessed, I can see that the way I have framed this is considerably unique, and potentially forward-thinking, integrating approaches that may be necessary to adopt in the coming years as the rise of AI and ecological breakdown continues to be more present in our lives. Thus, the work addresses the gap in literature by integrating ecological principles into songwriting pedagogy, which appears to be relatively novel.

This process has illuminated aspects of my thinking and professional practice, which I have not been able to reify before, such as productive ways to view the crises I witness in the literature with regard to the societal rise in perfectionism and poor mental health in the music industry. I have often felt disenfranchised and powerless in these situations, but through engaging with literature (particularly socio-philosophical), I can see a new paradigm for creative songwriting emerging, just as Raworth (2017) did in economics. As a result, I feel more motivated and hopeful about the future of music-making. Academically, I feel ready to take the learnings from this study into my final research project and test out whether my hypothesis has weight to it. That being said, it will be important to bear in mind the criticisms of self-compassion interventions (Bailis, Single, Brais and Schellenberg, 2023) and the potential risks of overstating the benefits of creative interventions (Musgrave, 2025). Professionally, I believe I have honed my niche, expertise, and what I can offer to my

students. Finally, on a personal level, I have connected to my creative practice and documented for myself (and others) an inspiring framework that I can follow for years to come.

Now what?

Moving forward, I plan on shifting the focus of my research from the perfectionism and self-compassion literature silos, to embracing the multi-faceted interdisciplinary nature of my current research area. The complex and interdisciplinary nature of my research may make it harder to categorise or publish traditionally, but also represents the nuanced context of singer-songwriters today, which cannot be fully understood through singular disciplines (such as psychology) alone. Through building on the socio-philosophical alignment previously discussed (‘so what?’ section), I will now seek to welcome the interdisciplinary qualities in my research.

The current study has provided a suitable springboard for my final research project, where I intend to test my artefact with participants. In (Neff and Germer, 2018), there are downloadable audio recordings that supplement the workbook and provide me with a framework of how mixed media delivery may enhance the overall design and user-friendliness of my workbook. In the next iteration, I intend to fully realise the visualisations that I have included in this iteration as titles only at this stage (for example: “defining your version of success”). Additionally, based on my reflections on the artefact’s limitations (‘what?’ section), I intend to build on the connection aspect of the artefact by detailing how I plan on building an online community of future users through creative challenges and creative book groups. Finally, I intend to deepen my exploration of both the socio-philosophical underpinnings that may be relevant to a healthy future for singer-songwriters, and how grey literature can be synthesised with white literature to create unique findings that are readily for application in a singer-songwriter context.

Reflective Conclusion

Key insights

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the artefact’s development not only offers a practical intervention for songwriting pedagogy but also serves as a lens through which to examine wider socio-philosophical issues that intersect with creativity and well-being in the

singer-songwriter population. The project began as a way to respond to a perceived gap in songwriting interventions that mitigate perfectionism, and has evolved into a broader inquiry into what sustainable, research-informed creative practice might entail.

Key insights gained centre around the value of drawing on theoretical models such as SDT and MSC, but also socio-philosophical movements that may become increasingly relevant in the coming years. The artefact showcases the benefit of balancing a coherently structured learning route (to build competence), with creative freedom (to foster autonomy), as outlined in SDT. Furthermore, I propose that by including MSC in a songwriting intervention, some of the main mindset challenges (such as perfectionism and poor mental health) singer-songwriters are likely to experience may not only be mitigated, but also prevented, in some cases (based on the existing literature).

My study has revealed the effectiveness of ‘rewilding’ as a metaphor to mitigate perfectionism in songwriting and shown a way to integrate successful ideas from environmental sustainability literature into creative practice. I posit that, based on the neoliberal philosophy that may perpetuate perfectionism, it is necessary to be guided by other domains (such as environmental sustainability) that are already proposing successful counter models (such as degrowth and doughnut economics), and adapt them for singer-songwriters. By doing so, this may not only ameliorate perfectionism but also improve well-being and creativity, through providing an alternative songwriting pedagogy. Finally, on a wider scale, this new paradigm for creativity that I propose may support singer-songwriters into the future, as it becomes increasingly necessary to ‘resist’ neoliberalism (for example, with respect to mitigating climate change).

Reflecting on my research questions and learning outcomes

When reflecting on the RQs and learning outcomes I initially set out I can see that I have met them in the following ways:

- RQ1: I have successfully synthesised best practices from a diverse range of literature (grey and white), as well as used this knowledge to design a workbook.
- RQ2: I have demonstrated the potential of using ‘rewilding’ as a metaphor for sustainable creativity and opened up interdisciplinary areas to explore in future research.
- Learning outcomes: I have found a suitable balance between grounding the artefact theoretically and emphasising practical application, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice as I set out to do. Furthermore, I identified many ethical

considerations to inform future studies with participants, as well as developed a framework for assessing grey and white literature that can be used to evaluate my work in addition.

Limitations and recommendations

While there are many areas this report has shed light on that may be relevant to explore, there are also a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. At present, I am only able to hypothesise the potential impact that this artefact may have on the singer-songwriter population, as I am yet to test its efficacy with participants. Because of this, I recommend that this artefact be tested in a study with participants, perhaps using mixed methods (psychometric testing and semi-structured interviews, for example) to gain a broad understanding of its impact. In addition, as I have previously noted, based on my assessment, the artefact was limited in fostering connection (collaboration and community), so based on this, I wish to explore ways I can improve on this in future iterations. It is through this process that I have had time to reflect on the strengths and potential limitations of the current medium for this intervention (workbook). Based on my professional experience, I know that many of my students are very busy and may not find it as engaging to use a workbook intervention as other potential media. Therefore, I recommend experimenting with developing this current artefact into other media that future users may find more engaging and accessible (such as an online video course).

Future research

Given the limitations and recommendations I have outlined, I propose several next steps for future research that I plan on implementing in my final dissertation and future professional practice, as appropriate. Such as:

- I intend on transforming the current artefact into an online video course that I can test out (excerpts from) with participants in my final research project, and subsequently release a future iteration of it commercially.
- Investigate ways through which I can hypothetically foster connection in future iterations of the artefact, perhaps through group-based interventions.
- Develop companion guides or pedagogy-focused resources for educators to learn from based on the songwriting pedagogy I am proposing here.

- Finally, in the event that this is a successful intervention in singer-songwriter populations, it may be beneficial to adapt the model for other creative disciplines and do further studies to gain insight into the impacts.

Pedagogical implications

While it is only an initial exploration in this area, this study sheds light that may be relevant to the emerging field of sustainable creative practice. The possibility that this intervention may not only act as a way to ameliorate, but also prevent, some of the psychological challenges musicians (including singer-songwriters) are currently facing shows its potentially significant contribution to research. Due to there being a dearth of literature concerning perfectionism's occurrence in the creative process of singer-songwriters, this study contributes to theory in an under-explored area, which may be the first step in mitigating it. By drawing on both theoretical influences and best practices to develop a highly practical artefact, there is now a fit-for-purpose intervention that may be applied in songwriting pedagogy and music education. Finally, through engaging with creative practice with sustainable mindsets, there may be wider societal impacts including increased well-being, less perfectionism and increased social connection.

Reference list

Abdollahi, A., Allen, K.A. and Taheri, A. (2020) ‘Moderating the Role of Self-Compassion in the Relationship Between Perfectionism and Depression’, *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10942-020-00346-3.

Adams, R.J., Smart, P. and Sigismund Huff, A. (2017) ‘Shades of Grey: Guidelines for Working with the Grey Literature in Systematic Reviews for Management and Organizational Studies’, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19(4), pp. 432–454. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12102.

Adams, T.E., Ellis, C. and Holman Jones, S. (2017) ‘Autoethnography’, *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, pp. 1–11. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011.

Alacovska, A. and Kärreman, D. (2023) ‘Tormented selves: the Social Imaginary of the Tortured Artist and the Identity Work of Creative Workers’, *Organization Studies*, 44(6), p. 017084062210895. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406221089594.

Amabile, T. (2018) ‘Creativity and the Labor of Love’, in *The nature of human creativity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, Ny, Usa: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–15.

Ann Marie Dobosz (2016) *The Perfectionism Workbook for Teens*. New Harbinger Publications.

Antonelli, M. *et al.* (2022) ‘Effects of forest bathing (shinrin-yoku) on individual well-being: an umbrella review’, *International Journal of Environmental Health Research*, 32(8), pp. 1–26. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2021.1919293.

Arab, M. *et al.* (2015) ‘Learning Theory: Narrative Review’, *International Journal of Medical Reviews*, 2(3), pp. 291–295.

Argyle, E. (2020) ‘Creative practice as a mutual route to well-being’, *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, 24(4), pp. 235–239. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/mhsi-05-2020-0035.

Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) 'Scoping studies: Towards a Methodological Framework', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), pp. 19–32. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616.

Bailis, D.S. *et al.* (2022) 'Going for broke: Self-compassion, risky decision-making, and differences in problem gambling severity among undergraduates', *Self and Identity*, pp. 1–29. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2022.2104363.

Baker, N. (2021) *ReWild*. White Lion Publishing.

Barczak, N. and Eklund, R.C. (2018) 'The moderating effect of self-compassion on relationships between performance and subsequent coping and motivation', *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18(2), pp. 256–268. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2018.1511620.

Baskerville, D. and Baskerville, T. (2019) *Music business handbook and career guide*. 12th edn. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Bell, E. (2017) *The art of songwriting : how to create, think and live like a songwriter*. New York City: The Song Foundry, Inc., July.

Bell, E. and Bryman, A. (2007) 'The Ethics of Management Research: an Exploratory Content Analysis', *British Journal of Management*, 18(1), pp. 63–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00487.x.

Benedetto, L., Macidonio, S. and Ingrassia, M. (2024) 'Well-Being and Perfectionism: Assessing the Mediational Role of Self-Compassion in Emerging Adults', *European journal of investigation in health, psychology and education/European journal of Investigation in health, psychology and education*, 14(5), pp. 1383–1395. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe14050091.

Bhaskar, R. (2008) *A Realist Theory of Science*. London: Routledge.

Bırni, G. and Begüm Satıcı (2024) 'A compassion focused intervention for trait perfectionism in non-clinical settings: a pilot study', *Current psychology*, 43(10), pp. 9422–9431. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-05118-7.

Bockman, J. (2013) 'Neoliberalism', *Contexts*, 12(3), pp. 14–15. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504213499873.

Bovill, C. (2016) 'Making time for "freedom to learn" in higher education'.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic analysis: a Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

Bryant, S.L. and Gray, A. (2006) 'Demonstrating the positive impact of information support on patient care in primary care: a rapid literature review', *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 23(2), pp. 118–125. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2006.00652.x.

Burland Clark, K. (2021) 'Defining ourselves through music', in W. Thompson and K. Olsen (eds) *The Science and Psychology of Music: From Beethoven at the Office to Beyoncé at the Gym.* Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 119–123.

Burland, K. (2005) 'Becoming a musician : a longitudinal study investigating the career transitions of undergraduate music students. - White Rose eTheses Online', *PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield* [Preprint]. Available at: https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/15097/1/420783_vol1.pdf.

Burland, K., Bennett, D. and López-Íñiguez, G. (2022) 'Validation of the Musical Identity Measure: Exploring musical identity as a variable across multiple types of musicians', *Musicae Scientiae*, 26(4), pp. 704–728. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649221108576.

Burland, K., Mellor, L. and Bates, C. (2022) 'Employability ecosystems in music: (Re)navigating a life in music (in precarious times)', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, p. 147402222211256. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/14740222221125629.

Cameron, J. (1995) *The Artist's Way : a Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity.* London: Pan Books.

Campbell, E. (2017) '"Apparently Being a Self-Obsessed C**t Is Now Academically Lauded": Experiencing Twitter Trolling of Autoethnographers', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(3). Available at: https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.3.2819.

Candy, L. and Edmonds, E. (2018) 'Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts: Foundations and Futures from the Front Line', *Leonardo*, 51(1), pp. 63–69. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1162/leon_a_01471.

Carello, J. and Butler, L.D. (2015) 'Practicing What We Teach: Trauma-Informed Educational Practice', *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 35(3), pp. 262–278. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2015.1030059.

Ceccarelli, L.A. *et al.* (2019) ‘Self-Compassion and Psycho-Physiological Recovery From Recalled Sport Failure’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, p. 1564. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01564.

Chang, H. (2008) *Autoethnography as method*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education*. 8th edn. New York: Routledge.

Costley, C., Elliott, G. and Gibbs, P. (2010) *Doing Work Based Research : Approaches to Enquiry for insider-researchers*. London: Sage.

Creech, A. *et al.* (2008) ‘From music student to professional: the process of transition’, *British Journal of Music Education*, 25(3), pp. 315–331. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265051708008127.

Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Crotty, M.J. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Curran, T. (2023) *The Perfection Trap*. Simon and Schuster.

Curran, T. and Hill, A.P. (2019) ‘Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016’, *Psychological Bulletin*, 145(4), pp. 410–429. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000138.

Daubney, G. and Daubney, Dr.A. (2017) *Play: a psychological toolkit for optimal music performance*. ISM Trust. Available at: https://www.ism.org/product/play-e-book-members/.

Davis, S. (1992) *The Songwriters Idea Book*.

Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2000) ‘The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior’, *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), pp. 227–268. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01.

Delamont, S. (2009) ‘The only honest thing: autoethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork’, *Ethnography and Education*, 4(1), pp. 51–63. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820802703507.

Delamont, S. (2012) *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Deuze, M. (2025) ‘What Makes You Happy Also Makes You Sick: Mental Health and Well-Being in Media Work’, *International Journal of Communication*, 19(0), p. 21. Available at: https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/23583.

Dobos, B., Piko, B.F. and Kenny, D.T. (2019) ‘Music performance anxiety and its relationship with social phobia and dimensions of perfectionism’, *Research Studies in Music Education*, 41(3), pp. 310–326. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X18804295.

du Plessis, C. (2012) ‘Towards a regenerative paradigm for the built environment’, *Building Research & Information*, 40(1), pp. 7–22. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2012.628548.

Dundas, I. *et al.* (2017) ‘Does a short self-compassion intervention for students increase healthy self-regulation? A randomized control trial’, *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 58(5), pp. 443–450. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12385.

Egan, S.J. *et al.* (2022) ‘A meta-synthesis of qualitative studies of the link between anxiety, depression and perfectionism: implications for treatment’, *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 50(1), pp. 1–17. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/s1352465821000357.

Eke, A. *et al.* (2020) ‘Narratives of adolescent women athletes’ body self-compassion, performance and emotional well-being’, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 12, pp. 1–17. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2019.1628805.

Ellis, C. (2000) ‘Creating Criteria: An Ethnographic Short Story’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), pp. 273–277. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040000600210.

Ellis, C. (2009) ‘Telling Tales on Neighbors’, *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 2(1), pp. 3–27. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2009.2.1.3.

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. (2011) ‘Autoethnography: An Overview’, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1).

Engler, J.-O. *et al.* (2024) ‘15 years of degrowth research: A systematic review’, *Ecological Economics*, 218, pp. 108101–108101. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.108101.

Eno, B. and Schmidt, P. (1975) *Oblique strategies* .

Eriksson, F. (2022) *Towards a critical understanding of Doughnut Economics - The case of Tomelilla, Sweden*, *Lund University Libraries*. Available at: http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/9082991 (Accessed: 2 June 2025).

Fancourt, D., Warran, K. and Aughterson, H. (2020) *Evidence summary for policy: The role of arts in improving health and wellbeing*, *GOV.UK*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-for-policy-the-role-of-arts-in-improving-health-and-wellbeing.

Ferrari, M. *et al.* (2018) 'Self-compassion moderates the perfectionism and depression link in both adolescence and adulthood', *PLOS ONE*. Edited by T. van Amelsvoort, 13(2). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0192022.

FINE, G.A. (1999) 'FIELD LABOR AND ETHNOGRAPHIC REALITY', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), pp. 532–539. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/089124199129023523.

Finlay-Jones, A. *et al.* (2018) 'A Pilot Study of the 8-Week Mindful Self-Compassion Training Program in a Chinese Community Sample', *Mindfulness*, 9(3), pp. 993–1002. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-017-0838-3.

Fisher, J. and Kayes, G. (2018) *This is a Voice : 99 exercises to train, project and harness the power of your voice.* Wellcome Collection.

Fitzpatrick, R. (2021) *Write Useful Books: A Modern Approach to Designing and Refining Recommendable Nonfiction*. Useful Books Ltd.

Flett, G.L. *et al.* (2012) 'Perfectionism, mattering, and depression: A mediational analysis', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(7), pp. 828–832. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.12.041.

Flett, G.L., Hewitt, P.L. and Dyck, D.G. (1989) 'Self-oriented perfectionism, neuroticism and anxiety', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10(7), pp. 731–735. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(89)90119-0.

Fong, M. and Loi, N.M. (2016) 'The Mediating Role of Self-compassion in Student Psychological Health', *Australian Psychologist*, 51(6), pp. 431–441. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12185.

Gee, K.A., Hawes, V. and Cox, N.A. (2019) ‘Blue Notes: Using Songwriting to Improve Student Mental Health and Wellbeing. A Pilot Randomised Controlled Trial’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00423.

Gilbert, E. (2015) *Big Magic*. Penguin Usa.

Goode, J., Lumsden, K. and Bradford, J. (2023) *Crafting Autoethnography*. Taylor & Francis.

Goralnik, L. and Nelson, M.P. (2012) ‘Anthropocentrism’, *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, pp. 145–155. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-373932-2.00349-5.

Grant, M.J. and Booth, A. (2009) ‘A Typology of reviews: an Analysis of 14 Review Types and Associated Methodologies’, *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 26(2), pp. 91–108.

Gray, D.E. (2009) *Doing Research in the Real World*. 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications.

Gross, S.A. and Musgrave, G. (2017) *Can music make you sick? A Study into the Incidence of Musicians’ Mental Health Part, 2.* University of Westminster: MusicTank Publishing, pp. 1–39.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 105–117.

Gunnell, K.E. *et al.* (2017) ‘Don’t be so hard on yourself! Changes in self-compassion during the first year of university are associated with changes in well-being’, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 107, pp. 43–48. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.11.032.

Hahn, T. and Tampe, M. (2021) ‘Strategies for regenerative business’, *Strategic Organization*, 19(3), p. 147612702097922. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127020979228.

Haig, M. (2022) *Comfort Book.* S.L.: Canongate Books Ltd.

Haynes, J. and Marshall, L. (2018) ‘Beats and tweets: Social media in the careers of independent musicians’, *New Media and Society*, 20(5), pp. 1973–1993. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817711404.

Hewitt, P.L. *et al.* (1998) ‘Dimensions of perfectionism, hopelessness, and attempted suicide in a sample of alcoholics.’, *PubMed*, 28(4), pp. 395–406.

Hewitt, P.L. *et al.* (2003) ‘The interpersonal expression of perfection: Perfectionistic self-presentation and psychological distress’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(6), pp. 1303–1325. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.6.1303.

Hewitt, P.L., Flett, G.L. and Mikail, S.F. (2017) *Perfectionism : a relational approach to conceptualization, assessment, and treatment*. New York The Guilford Press.

Hill, A.P. *et al.* (2020) ‘Perfectionistic self-presentation and emotional experiences in music students: A three-wave longitudinal study’, *Psychology of Music*, 48(6), pp. 766–776. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735618824155.

Holmes, A.G.D. (2020) ‘Researcher Positionality - a Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - a New Researcher Guide’, *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), pp. 1–10. Available at: https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232.

Hope, N., Koestner, R. and Milyavskaya, M. (2014) ‘The Role of Self-Compassion in Goal Pursuit and Well-Being Among University Freshmen’, *Self and Identity*, 13(5), pp. 579–593. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2014.889032.

Hubble, S. and Bolton, P. (2019) *Support for students with mental health issues in higher education in England*. House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: Number 8593. Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/34234/1/CBP-8593.pdf.

Hübner, F. (2022) ‘The Common Ground model for practice-based research design’, in C. Vear (ed.) *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*. Routledge.

Inwood, E. and Ferrari, M. (2018) ‘Mechanisms of Change in the Relationship between Self-Compassion, Emotion Regulation, and Mental Health: A Systematic Review’, *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 10(2), pp. 215–235. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12127.

Jones, R. and Heyman, L. (2021) *Sound Advice*. Shoreditch Press.

Joseph, S., Murphy, D. and Holford, J. (2020) ‘Positive education: A new look at Freedom to Learn’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 46(5), pp. 1–14. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1726310.

Kaufman, J.C. and Beghetto, R.A. (2009) ‘Beyond big and little: The four c model of creativity’, *Review of General Psychology*, 13(1), pp. 1–12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013688.

Kemp, J. (2021) *The ACT workbook for perfectionism build your best (imperfect) life using powerful acceptance & commitment therapy and self-compassion skills*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Kenny, D.T., Davis, P. and Oates, J. (2004) 'Music performance anxiety and occupational stress amongst opera chorus artists and their relationship with state and trait anxiety and perfectionism', *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 18(6), pp. 757–777. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2003.09.004.

Ketay, S., Beck, L.A. and Dajci, J. (2023) 'Self-compassion and social stress: Links with subjective stress and cortisol responses', *Self and Identity*, 22(3), pp. 486–505. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2022.2117733.

Keutler, M. and McHugh, L. (2022) 'Self-compassion buffers the effects of perfectionistic self-presentation on social media on wellbeing', *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2021.11.006.

Killham, M.E. *et al.* (2018) 'Women athletes' self-compassion, self-criticism, and perceived sport performance.', *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 7(3), pp. 297–307. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000127.

Kleon, A. (2012) *The steal like an artist journal : a notebook for creative kleptomaniacs*. New York: Workman Publishing Co., Inc.

Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning : Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Kolb, D.A. and Kolb, A.Y. (2013) *The Kolb Learning Style Inventory 4.0: Guide to Theory, Psychometrics, Research & Applications*. Experience Based Learning Systems.

Kuchar, A.L., Neff, K.D. and Mosewich, A.D. (2023) 'Resilience and Enhancement in Sport, Exercise, & Training (RESET): A brief self-compassion intervention with NCAA student-athletes', *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 67, p. 102426. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102426.

Kuchta, E.C. (2022) 'Rewilding the Imagination: Teaching Ecocriticism in the Change Times', *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education (CJEE)*, 25(0), pp. 190–206. Available at: https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/1696 (Accessed: 12 November 2022).

Liu, S., Wei, M. and Russell, D.W. (2023) ‘Effects of a brief self-compassion intervention for college students with impostor phenomenon.’, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 70(6). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000703.

López-Íñiguez, G., Burland, K. and Bennett, D. (2022) ‘Understanding the musical identity and career thinking of postgraduate classical music performance students’, *Musicae Scientiae*, 26(4), p. 102986492210898. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649221089869.

Loveday, C., Musgrave, G. and Gross, S.-A. (2023) ‘Predicting anxiety, depression, and wellbeing in professional and nonprofessional musicians’, *Psychology of Music*, 51(2), p. 030573562210965. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356221096506.

MacBeth, A. and Gumley, A. (2012) ‘Exploring compassion: A meta-analysis of the association between self-compassion and psychopathology’, *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32(6), pp. 545–552. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2012.06.003.

Macdonald, R.A.R., Kreutz, G. and Mitchell, L. (2012) *Music, health, and wellbeing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mantelou, A. and Karakasidou, E. (2017) ‘The Effectiveness of a Brief Self-Compassion Intervention Program on Self-Compassion, Positive and Negative Affect and Life Satisfaction’, *Psychology*, 08(04), pp. 590–610. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2017.84038.

Martin, S.C. (2019) *The CBT workbook for perfectionism : evidence-based skills to help you let go of self-criticism, build self-esteem, & find balance*. Oakland, Ca: New Harbinger Publications.

Maslow, A.H. (1943) ‘A Theory of Human Motivation’, *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp. 370–396. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346.

McRobbie, A. (2004) ‘Making a living in London’s small-scale creative sector’, in *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*. London: Routledge, pp. 130–143.

Mehr, K.E. and Adams, A.C. (2016) ‘Self-Compassion as a Mediator of Maladaptive Perfectionism and Depressive Symptoms in College Students’, *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 30(2), pp. 132–145. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2016.1140991.

Meir, D. (2018) *Workflow*. CRC Press.

Merriam-Webster (2025a) *Definition of EXEGESIS*, *Merriam-webster.com*. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exegesis.

Merriam-Webster (2025b) *Definition of INDIVIDUALISM*, *Merriam-webster.com*. Available at: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/individualism.

Mezirow, J. (1997) 'Transformative learning: Theory to Practice', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1997(74), pp. 5–12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401.

Mohebi, M. *et al.* (2020) 'Resilience and Emotional Reactions to Failure Mediated by Self-compassion and Emotion Regulation in Martial Artists', *Journal of Exercise Science and Medicine*, 12(1), pp. 245–250. Available at: https://doi.org/10.32598/jesm.12.1.12.

Mor, S. *et al.* (1995) 'Perfectionism, control, and components of performance anxiety in professional artists', *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 19(2), pp. 207–225. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02229695.

Morgan, D.L. (2007) 'Paradigms Lost and Pragmatism regained: Methodological Implications of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), pp. 48–76. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/2345678906292462.

Munn, Z. *et al.* (2018) 'Systematic Review or Scoping review? Guidance for Authors When Choosing between a Systematic or Scoping Review Approach', *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1), pp. 1–7. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0611-x.

Musgrave, G. (2024) 'Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire: Music Education, Mental Health, and Our Students' Futures', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Music Industry Studies*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 119–135.

Musgrave, G. (2025) *Sound Diplomacy*, *Sound Diplomacy*. Available at: https://www.sounddiplomacy.com/digest/prescribing-creativity-arts-unhealthy-relationship-with-health (Accessed: 2 June 2025).

Musgrave, G., Gross, S.A. and Carney, D. (2025) 'Determinants of Anxiety, Depression and Subjective Wellbeing Among Musicians in Denmark: Findings From the "When Music Speaks" Project', *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.13095.

Nadeau, M.M., Caporale‐Berkowitz, N.A. and Rochlen, A.B. (2021) 'Improving Women's Self‐Compassion Through an Online Program: A Randomized Controlled Trial', *Journal of*

Counseling & Development, 99(1), pp. 47–59. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12353.

Ndiaye, D.G. (2022) 'Buying our way into humanness: consumerism and the dehumanisation of the poor', *The Journal of Law, Social Justice and Global Development*, 26, pp. 29–37. Available at: https://doi.org/10.31273/lgd.2022.2604.

Neff, K. (2003) 'The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion', *Self and Identity*, 2(3), pp. 223–250. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309027.

Neff, K. and Germer, C.K. (2018) *The mindful self-compassion workbook : a proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. New York, Ny: Guilford Press.

Neff, K.D. (2011) 'Self-Compassion, Self-Esteem, and Well-Being', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(1), pp. 1–12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00330.x.

Neff, K.D. and Germer, C.K. (2013) 'A Pilot Study and Randomized Controlled Trial of the Mindful Self-Compassion Program', *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(1), pp. 28–44. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21923.

Nelson, R. (2022) *Practice as research in the arts (and beyond) : principles, processes, contexts, achievements*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nordin-Bates, S.M. (2012) 'Performance Psychology in the Performing Arts', in *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Oxford University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199731763.013.0005.

Nordin-Bates, S.M. (2020) 'Striving for Perfection or for Creativity?', *Journal of Dance Education*, 20(1), pp. 23–34. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15290824.2018.1546050.

Northover, C. *et al.* (2021) 'Developing Self-Compassion Online: Assessing the Efficacy and Feasibility of a Brief Online Intervention', *OBM Integrative and Complementary Medicine*, 6(4), pp. 1–1. Available at: https://doi.org/10.21926/obm.icm.2104056.

O'Connor, R.C., Rasmussen, S. and Hawton, K. (2010) 'Predicting depression, anxiety and self-harm in adolescents: The role of perfectionism and acute life stress', *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48(1), pp. 52–59. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2009.09.008.

Ong, C.W. *et al.* (2021) ‘Is perfectionism always unhealthy? Examining the moderating effects of psychological flexibility and self‐compassion’, *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77(11), pp. 2576–2591. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23187.

Pastore, O.L., Brett, B. and Fortier, M.S. (2023) ‘Self-Compassion and Happiness: Exploring the Influence of the Subcomponents of Self-Compassion on Happiness and Vice Versa’, *Psychological Reports*, p. 003329412210849. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941221084902.

Paterson, B.L., Gregory, D. and Thorne, S. (1999) ‘A Protocol for Researcher Safety’, *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(2), pp. 259–269. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/104973299129121820.

Pattison, P. (2009) *Writing better lyrics : the essential guide to powerful songwriting*. 2nd edn. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books.

Perryman, L. (2021) *The color bible : the definitive guide for artists and designers*. New York: Random House Inc.

Peters, M.D.J. *et al.* (2015) ‘Guidance for Conducting Systematic Scoping Reviews’, *International Journal of Evidence-Based Healthcare*, 13(3), pp. 141–146. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1097/xeb.0000000000000050.

Pressfield, S. (2003) *The war of art : break through the blocks and win your inner creative battles*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

Raworth, K. (2017) ‘Why it’s time for Doughnut Economics’, *IPPR Progressive Review*, 24(3), pp. 216–222. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/newe.12058.

Ridley, D. (2012) *The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students*. 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Rogers, C.R. (1969) *Freedom to Learn* . Columbus, Ohio: C.E. Merrill Pub. Co., Trade Division.

Rowley, C., Fook, J. and Glazzard, J. (2018) ‘Adopting a student-led pedagogic approach within higher education: the reflections of an early career academic’, *Reflective Practice*, 19(1), pp. 35–45. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2017.1351352.

Rubin, R. (2023) *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*. Penguin.

Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. (2020) ‘Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation from a self-determination Theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and Future Directions’, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61(1), pp. 1–11. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860.

Scott, E. (2025) *Copyright and artificial intelligence: Impact on creative industries*, *Parliament.uk*. Available at: https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/copyright-and-artificial-intelligence-impact-on-creative-industries/.

Shafran, R., Egan, S. and Wade, T. (2018) *Overcoming Perfectionism*. Robinson.

Siah, C.J.R. *et al.* (2023) ‘The effects of forest bathing on psychological well‐being: A systematic review and meta‐analysis’, *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 32(4). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13131.

Skains, R.L. (2018) ‘Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology’, *Media Practice and Education*, 19(1), pp. 82–97. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14682753.2017.1362175.

Skov, M. and Nadal, M. (2025) ‘Can arts-based interventions improve health? A conceptual and methodological critique’, *Physics of Life Reviews* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.plrev.2025.03.003.

Slade, D., Martin, A. and Watson, G. (2020) ‘Practitioner auto-ethnography: self-reflection for discovery and deeper understanding’, *Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education*, pp. 1–13. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/25742981.2020.1778496.

Snyder, H. (2018) ‘Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines’, *Journal of Business Research*, 104(1), pp. 333–339. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039.

Stewart, A. (2024) *The Damage Caused by a Decade of Arts Funding Cuts*, *musiciansunion.org.uk*. Available at: https://musiciansunion.org.uk/news/the-damage-caused-by-a-decade-of-arts-funding-cuts.

Stoeber, J. and Eismann, U. (2007) ‘Perfectionism in young musicians: Relations with motivation, effort, achievement, and distress’, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43(8), pp. 2182–2192. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.06.036.

Stoeber, J., Lalova, A.V. and Lumley, E.J. (2012) ‘Perfectionism, (self-)compassion, and Subjective well-being: a Mediation Model’, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 154. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109708.

Swift, J.K. and Wampold, B.E. (2018) ‘Inclusion and exclusion strategies for conducting meta-analyses’, *Psychotherapy Research*, 28(3), pp. 356–366. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2017.1405169.

Szymkowiak, A., Kubala, B.M. and Antoniak, M.A. (2020) ‘Music sales and artists popularity on social media’, *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*, 8(14). Available at: http://u3isjournal.isvouga.pt/index.php/ijmcnm/article/view/495.

Tayyab, O. *et al.* (2024) ‘Degrowth: a new logic for the global economy’, *BMJ*, 387. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2781.

Terzioğlu, Z.A. and Çakir-Çelebi, G. (2024) ‘The effects of the Mindfulness, Acceptance and Self-Compassion in Sport (MASCS) program on the sport anxiety and self-compassion of elite tennis players’, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, pp. 1–21. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2024.2370794.

Tharp, T. (2006) *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tullis, J.A. (2022) ‘Self and Others: Ethics in Autoethnographic Research’, in *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Routledge.

Tweedy, J. (2022) *How to Write One Song*. Penguin.

Tyndall, J. (2010) *AACODS Checklist*, *Policycommons.net*. Flinders University. Available at: https://policycommons.net/artifacts/4855940/untitled/5692885/.

Unwin, L. (2024a) *A Qualitative Enquiry into the Creative Process of Singer-songwriters: Investigating the Impact of Perfectionism*. Module BMPF7008, Unpublished Manuscript.

Unwin, L. (2024b) *Self-Compassion and Perfectionism in Undergraduate Singer-Songwriters: A Rapid Scoping Review of Interventions for Learning and Well-Being*. Module BMPF7013, Unpublished Manuscript.

Vaag, J., Bjerkeset, O. and Sivertsen, B. (2021) ‘Anxiety and Depression Symptom Level and Psychotherapy Use Among Music and Art Students Compared to the General Student

Population', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.607927.

Vermeersch, L. *et al.* (2023) *The Health and Wellbeing of Professional Musicians and Music Creators in the EU*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Walton, C.C. *et al.* (2025) 'A preliminary investigation into self-compassion and compassion-based intervention for mental health in the performing arts', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1512114.

West, A. (2016) *The art of songwriting*. London, Uk: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama An Imprint Of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Willis, M.E.H. (2023) 'Critical Realism and Qualitative Research in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 20(2), pp. 1–24. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2022.2157782.

Woodfin, V. *et al.* (2021) 'A Randomized Control Trial of a Brief Self-Compassion Intervention for Perfectionism, Anxiety, Depression, and Body Image', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.751294.

World Health Organization (2024) *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, *World Health Organization*. Available at: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/post-traumatic-stress-disorder.

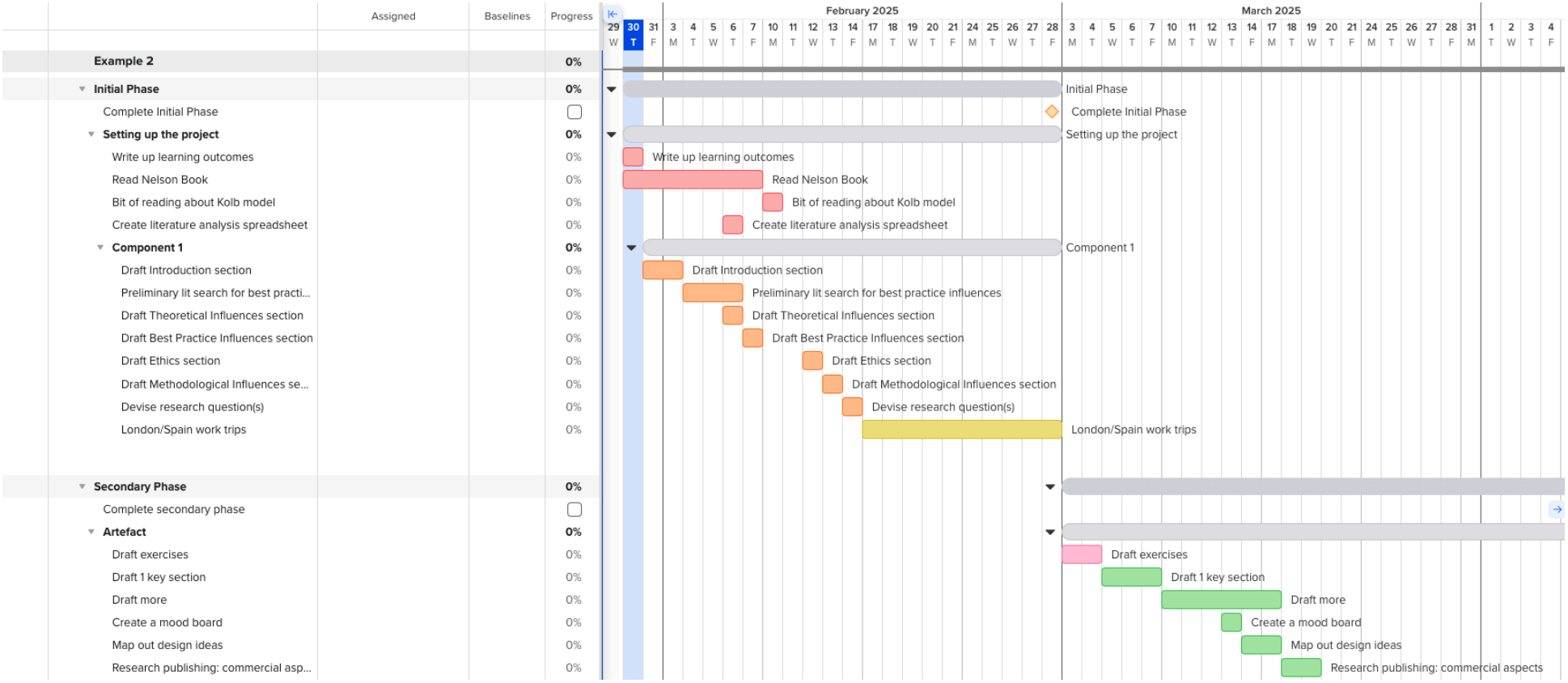
Yela, J.R. *et al.* (2021) 'Reductions in experiential avoidance explain changes in anxiety, depression and well‐being after a mindfulness and self‐compassion (MSC) training', *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 95(2). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12375.

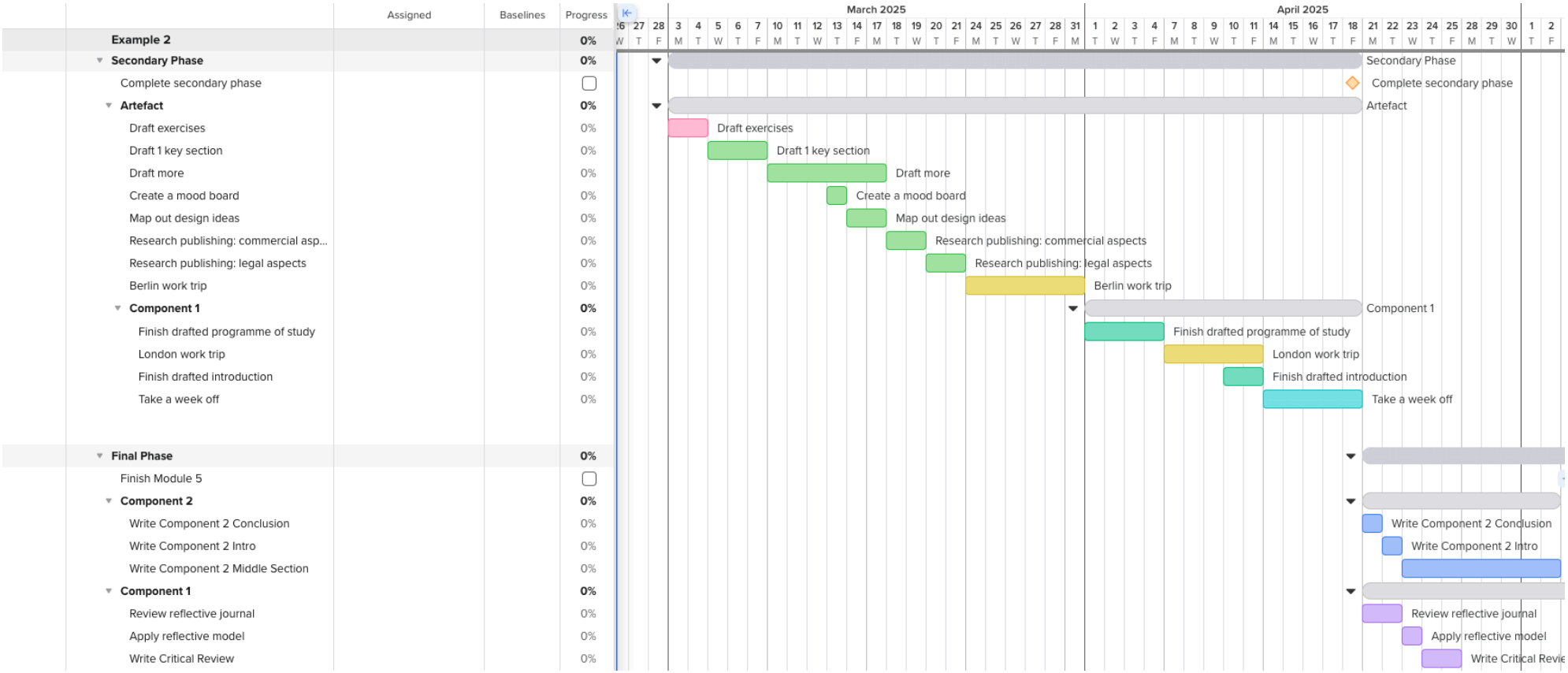
Yeshua, M., Zohar, A.H. and Berkovich, L. (2019) '"Silence! The body is speaking" – a correlational study of personality, perfectionism, and self-compassion as risk and protective factors for psychosomatic symptoms distress', *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 24(2), pp. 229–240. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2018.1546016.

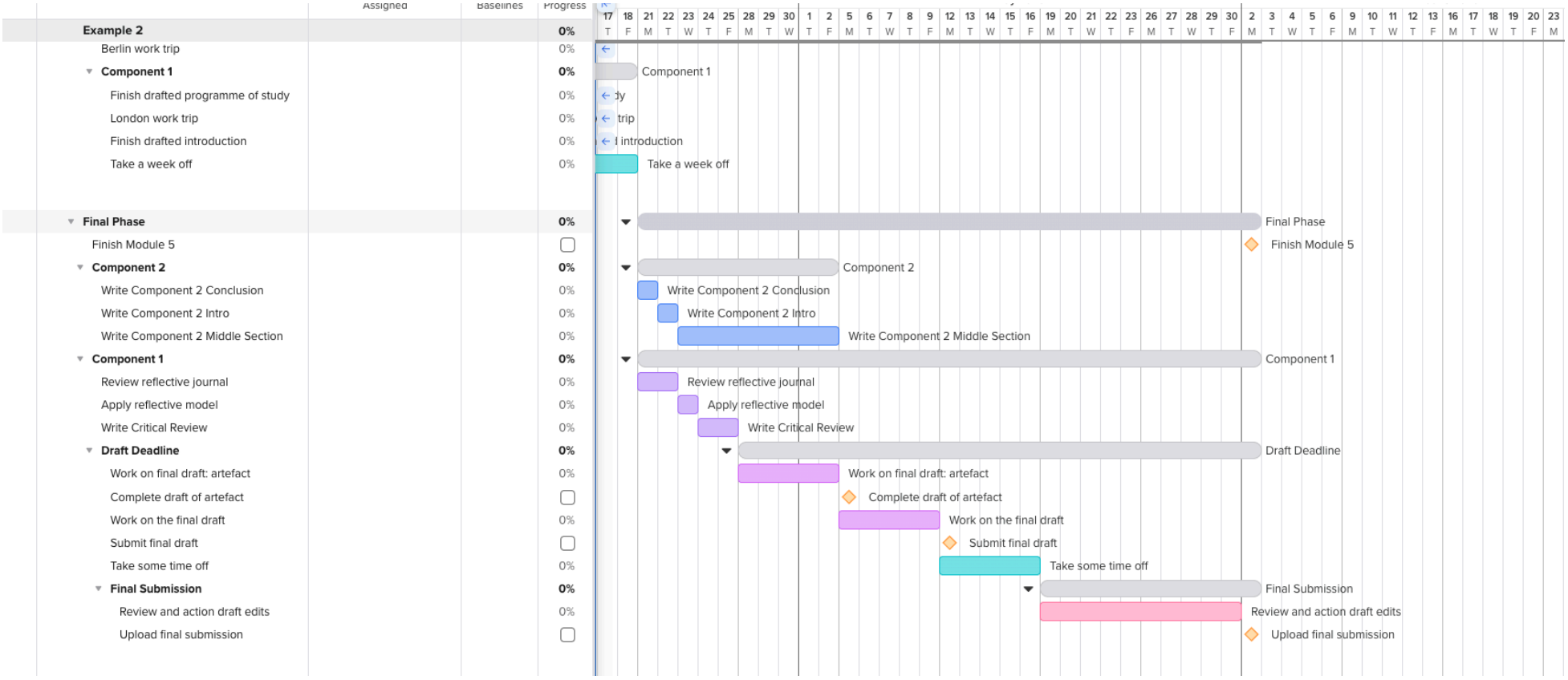
Zessin, U., Dickhäuser, O. and Garbade, S. (2015) 'The Relationship Between Self-Compassion and Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis', *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 7(3), pp. 340–364. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12051.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Gannt Chart




Assigned
Baselines
Progress
March 2025
April 2025
Example 2 0%
Secondary Phase 0%
Complete secondary phase
Artefact 0%
Draft exercises 0%
Draft 1 key section 0%
Draft more 0%
Create a mood board 0%
Map out design ideas 0%
Research publishing: commercial asp... 0%
Research publishing: legal aspects 0%
Berlin work trip 0%
Component 1 0%
Finish drafted programme of study 0%
London work trip 0%
Finish drafted introduction 0%
Take a week off 0%
Final Phase 0%
Finish Module 5
Component 2 0%
Write Component 2 Conclusion 0%
Write Component 2 Intro 0%
Write Component 2 Middle Section 0%
Component 1 0%
Review reflective journal 0%
Apply reflective model 0%
Write Critical Review 0%
Secondary Phase
Complete secondary phase
Artefact
Draft exercises
Draft 1 key section
Draft more
Create a mood board
Map out design ideas
Research publishing: commercial aspects
Research publishing: legal aspects
Berlin work trip
Component 1
Finish drafted programme of study
London work trip
Finish drafted introduction
Take a week off
Write Component 2 Conclusion
Write Component 2 Intro
Review reflective journal
Apply reflective model
Write Critical Revie


Assigned
Baselines
Progress
Example 2 0%
Berlin work trip 0%
Component 1 0%
Finish drafted programme of study 0%
London work trip 0%
Finish drafted introduction 0%
Take a week off 0%
Final Phase 0%
Finish Module 5
Component 2 0%
Write Component 2 Conclusion 0%
Write Component 2 Intro 0%
Write Component 2 Middle Section 0%
Component 1 0%
Review reflective journal 0%
Apply reflective model 0%
Write Critical Review 0%
Draft Deadline 0%
Work on final draft: artefact 0%
Complete draft of artefact
Work on the final draft 0%
Submit final draft
Take some time off 0%
Final Submission 0%
Review and action draft edits 0%
Upload final submission
Component 1
Final Phase
Finish Module 5
Component 2
Write Component 2 Conclusion
Write Component 2 Intro
Write Component 2 Middle Section
Review reflective journal
Apply reflective model
Write Critical Review
Draft Deadline
Work on final draft: artefact
Complete draft of artefact
Work on the final draft
Submit final draft
Take some time off
Final Submission
Review and action draft edits
Upload final submission

Appendix 2: Assessment Criteria Rubric (white and grey literature)

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	Big Magic (Gilbert, 2015)	Games for Actors and Non-actors (Boal, 2002)	The Calm Workbook (School of Life, 2021)	The Artist's Way (Cameron, 1995)	How community can help solitary creatives finish - chapter in the coach's guide to completing creatiive projects (Van Der Veer, 2023 in Maisel and Monk, 2023)	The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook (Neff and Germer, 2018)	Sound Advice (Jones and Heyman, 2021)	Oblique Strategies (Eno and Schmidt, 1975)	The War of Art (Pressfield, 2003)	The Comfort Book (Haig, 2022)	The Creative Act (Rubin, 2023)
Assessment Criteria												
1. Summary of scope/relevance		Personal experiences, combined with storytelling, written for laypeople, outlines a philosophy for living a fulfilled creative life.	Highly practical book about how theatre can be used as a force for change. Example of practice-based games to stimulate creativity.	A blend of philosophy, psychology and practical exerices in a self-help workbook aimed at fostering calm.	12-week pathway for creativity aimed at general creative laypeople, but celebrated by many high-profile artists as well.	Discusses how engaging with a community can help ccreatives complete their creative work.	Practical and informative research-informed workbook for laypeople. Outlines the MSC model and gives lots of exercises and prompts for reflection.	Well-being-informed advice for musicians seeking to build a career in music.	Designed for creative practitioners, these are a set of abstract prompt cards designed to help people gain new perspectives and overcome creative obstacles.	A tough love approach for laypeople who want to be creative. Strategies and philosophies for engaging with creativity, as well as a theme of discipline and routine.	Philosophical passages that aim to comfort the reader in an accessible way. A mixture of personal experience, along with the work of others.	A book that encourages fostering creativity in life, as well as the importance of play, mindfulness, open-mindedness and seeing creativity as a process rather than outcome.
1a. Limitations		Doesn't formally cite research or sources.	Doesn't formally cite research or sources, although there are footnotes to provide further context.	Doesn't formally cite research or sources.	Not formally evidence-based, but does include a reading list. Potentially too much of a time commitment to be widely accessible.	Doesn't formally cite research or sources.	It isn't specifically for singer-songwriters (not really a proper limitation).		May be too abstract to interpret and apply for some people, limiting their accessibility and user-friendliness.	Not much regard to research or compassion; lacks practical exercises and prompts.	Doesn't formally cite research or sources.	Doesn't formally cite research or sources; doesn't include practical exercises.

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	Big Magic (Gilbert, 2015)	Games for Actors and Non-actors (Boal, 2002)	The Calm Workbook (School of Life, 2021)	The Artist's Way (Cameron, 1995)	How community can help solitary creatives finish - chapter in the coach's guide to completing creatiive projects (Van Der Veer, 2023 in Maisel and Monk, 2023)	The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook (Neff and Germer, 2018)	Sound Advice (Jones and Heyman, 2021)	Oblique Strategies (Eno and Schmidt, 1975)	The War of Art (Pressfield, 2003)	The Comfort Book (Haig, 2022)	The Creative Act (Rubin, 2023)
2. Creativity		6	7	3	10	5	4	6	7	7	3	5
3. Well-being		8	4	9	8	5	10	10	6	6	9	7
4. Connection		7	9	5	6	10	7	8	3	3	5	4
5. Accessibility and Ethics		6	5	6	5	5	8	10	4	7	6	5
6. Learning Theories		8	7	8	9	7	8	10	8	6	6	7
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment		6	4	5	4	2	5	4	2	1	5	5
8. Most relevant elements to inform artefact design (blend with row 18)		Storytelling; personal insights and experiences; paradox of meaningless and meaningful creativity; micro-chapters.	Use of practical games		Structured creative practice routines; creative retreat structure; practical exercises; morning pages.		Practical exercises and reflective prompts; key influence for artefact design in terms of MSC exercises and wording; tone of writing informative for well-being-informed language; use of audio downloads; and further online resources.		Abstract and whimsical prompts; playful nature; quick and spontaneous.	Micro-chapters; highly accessible; encourages getting started quickly without overthinking; brief and assertive tone.		

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	Big Magic (Gilbert, 2015)	Games for Actors and Non-actors (Boal, 2002)	The Calm Workbook (School of Life, 2021)	The Artist's Way (Cameron, 1995)	How community can help solitary creatives finish - chapter in the coach's guide to completing creatiive projects (Van Der Veer, 2023 in Maisel and Monk, 2023)	The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook (Neff and Germer, 2018)	Sound Advice (Jones and Heyman, 2021)	Oblique Strategies (Eno and Schmidt, 1975)	The War of Art (Pressfield, 2003)	The Comfort Book (Haig, 2022)	The Creative Act (Rubin, 2023)
9. Codes for Reflexive Thematic Analysis		Personal storytelling, experiences and insights lead to inspiring reading; creativity as accessible; celebrating everyday (little c) creativity; developing a philosophy for creative living; benefit of using micro-chapters for accessibility; benefits of using fictional storytelling to demonstrate points; potential pitfalls of not drawing on research.	Practical games.	practical exercises; blending psychology and philosophy; use of self-compassion to deal with inner critic; using alternate language to tackle perfectionism and self-compassion.	Benefit of building a creative routine; morning pages writing as a creative task; benefit of having a creative retreat; benefit of practical exercises; potential pitfalls of not drawing on research.	benefits of community for creative work; accountability in others helps creative work.	Benefits of mixed-media delivery of intervention; benefits of reflective exercises; benefits of practical exercises through which to learn MSC; benefits of using well-being-informed language and tone of writing.	practical exercises to manage perfectionism; drawing on research; warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice; draws on the ideas of other artists, as well as research; strengths of being evidence-based.	Benefits of using prompt cards to overcome creative obstacles; benefits of being playful and whimsical in creativity; benefits of abstract prompts to generate creative ideas; benefits of extremely short interventions for creativity; potential pitfalls in being overly abstract for confusing meaning for users; potential pitfalls of not drawing on research.	Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility; developing a philosophy for creative living; benefits of creative routine and discipline; benefits of acting quickly without overthinking; potential pitfalls of not drawing on research.	use of micro-chapters; wielding personal experience as a way to promote common humanity; philosophical writing.	using philosophy as a mode of teaching; telling stories to illustrate learning points.
10. Notes		41 (overall score)	36	36	42	34	42	48	30	30	34	33

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	The Inner Game of Music (Green and Galway, 1986)	The Perfection Trap (Curran, 2023)	This is a Voice (Fisher and Kayes, 2018)	How to Write One Song (Tweedy, 2022)	Play (Daubney and Daubney, 2017)	The Creative Habit (Tharp, 2006)	Steal Like an Artist (Kleon, 2012)	Workflow: a practical guide to the creative process (Meir, 2018)	poemcrazy (Goldsmith Woolridge, 1996)	Music Habits (Timothy, 2020)	The CBT workook for perfectionism (Martin, 2019)
Assessment Criteria												
1. Summary of scope/relevance		Mind-training for musicians, drawn from sports psychology.	Delivers a wealth of perfectionism-related research science insights for laypeople.	Highly diverse toolkit of voice exercises aimed at all abilities, including beginners.	Practical exercises for songwriting that include mindset, with some personal experience woven in.	Mindset skills for performers rooted in science, full of practical exercises and accessible explanations.	Abstract musings on the philosophy of creativity, with practical exercises built in.	Philosophical view of good practice in creativity, as well as broad prompts for creativity. Highly engaging user design, and very quick to read.	Practical framework to follow for different stages of the creative process.	Playful poetry exercises and underpinning philosophy for creativity.	Comprehensive guide to making music, that draws on personal experience, covering technical but also mindset skills.	Practical exercises to manage perfectionism
1a. Limitations		Doesn't formally cite research or sources.	It is quite long and that may be off-putting for some people and mean they don't read it. Although it is for laypeople, it is still relatively dense reading.		Not evidence-based		Not evidence-based	Not formally evidence-based, but does include a reading list; it is not structured in a formal way, or targeted to singer-songwriters (not a proper limitation really).	Not evidence-based	Not evidence-based	Not evidence-based	

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	The Inner Game of Music (Green and Galway, 1986)	The Perfection Trap (Curran, 2023)	This is a Voice (Fisher and Kayes, 2018)	How to Write One Song (Tweedy, 2022)	Play (Daubney and Daubney, 2017)	The Creative Habit (Tharp, 2006)	Steal Like an Artist (Kleon, 2012)	Workflow: a practical guide to the creative process (Meir, 2018)	poemcrazy (Goldsmith Woolridge, 1996)	Music Habits (Timothy, 2020)	The CBT workook for perfectionism (Martin, 2019)
2. Creativity		7	3	7	9	4	7	8	5	9	4	2
3. Well-being		5	9	4	8	9	7	7	4	5	3	10
4. Connection		4	6	3	6	4	3	6	2	3	4	2
5. Accessibility and Ethics		4	4	8	8	9	4	10	4	6	4	7
6. Learning Theories		4	5	5	8	8	7	9	4	8	5	7
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment		2	10	2	4	3	4	3	2	5	2	5
8. Most relevant elements to inform artefact design (blend with row 18)			Research-based information; holistic and deep view of where perfectionism comes from (incl. society); using science as a way to build a rationale for change; highly credible arguments.					Broad creative prompts; inspiring and accessible user design that resonates with the book's purpose; some of the specific exercises; the tone of writing; micro-chapters; use of illustration and graphic design; use of typography; highly informal and humourous language.				

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	The Inner Game of Music (Green and Galway, 1986)	The Perfection Trap (Curran, 2023)	This is a Voice (Fisher and Kayes, 2018)	How to Write One Song (Tweedy, 2022)	Play (Daubney and Daubney, 2017)	The Creative Habit (Tharp, 2006)	Steal Like an Artist (Kleon, 2012)	Workflow: a practical guide to the creative process (Meir, 2018)	poemcrazy (Goldsmith Woolridge, 1996)	Music Habits (Timothy, 2020)	The CBT workook for perfectionism (Martin, 2019)
9. Codes for Reflexive Thematic Analysis		benefits of practical exercises to manage the inner critic; practical exercises for managing MPA and perfectionism; benefits of setting goals.	Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments; benefits of taking a holistic view to perfectionism; benefits of leveraging credibility; potential pitfalls of overly long and complicated writing.	includes references for exercises; benefits of using engaging colours, graphic design and typography; highly accessible language yet rooted in science; scaffolded and structured well to build competence; informative use of illustration to teach methods; creative use of typography to echo the desired message; benefits of being evidence-based.	warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice; practical exercises for creativity; micro-chapters; discusses the obstacle of inner critic; scaffolded and structured well to build competence.	values exercises for musicians; using alternate language to tackle perfectionism; engaging layout including images and interesting typography; Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments; benefits of leveraging author credibility; micro-chapters; benefits of having a signposting page for mental health links.	potential pitfalls of overly long writing; potential pitfalls of being too abstract to be accessible; practical exercises for creativity; some personal experience woven in from author; using philosophy as a mode of teaching.	Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility; developing a philosophy for creative living; benefits of creative routine and discipline; benefits of broad creative prompts; benefits of accessible and resonant user design; benefits of using illustration and graphic design; benefits of using interesting typography; benefits of using informal and humourous language; potential pitfalls of not drawing on research.	potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence; potential pitfall of being overly long and wordy; potential pitfalls of quite primative design and writing; exercise for managing inner critic.	storytelling to teach; practical exercises; reflective prompts; playful poetry exercises for creativity.	potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence; potential pitfalls of not having practical exercises; provides a philosophy for creative songwriting; potential pitfalls of being overly lonng and wordy.	using self-compassio n to reframe self-critical perfectionism; practical exercises; benefits of explaining how to use the workbook; benefits of drawing on research.
10. Notes		26	37	29	43	37	32	43	21	36	22	33

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	The perfectionism workbook for teens (Dobosz, 2016)	The ACT workbook for perfectionism (Kemp, 2021)	Overcoming perfectionism (Shafran, Egan and Wade, 2018)	For wilderness or wildness? decolonising rewilding (Ward, 2019) chapter	Rewilding creativity: a songwriting workbook for letting go of perfectionism (Unwin, 2025)	How does my artefact achieve this or not?
Assessment Criteria							
1. Summary of scope/relevance		Practical exercises for teens to manage perfectionism	ACT strategies for managing perfectionism	Research-informed book about overcoming perfectionism.	Advocating that instead of returning to a pure untouched nature (rewilding), we strive to co-create a new space where nature and humans can survive. This may be applied to rewilding creativity by instead of seeking to completely reject the inner critic/perfectionism, we find ways to work with it healthily.	A workbook with practical exercises for singer-songwriters that is grounded in literature and promotes well-being and creativity, as well as provides strategies for managing perfectionism. The workbook also serves as a philosophical approach to creative songwriting.	
1a. Limitations		Doesn't formally cite research or sources.				In this iteration, while it is indirectly encouraged, building connection (such as collaboration and community) is not thoroughly demonstrated. Furthermore, there is not a great deal of autoethnographic storytelling used.	
2. Creativity		3	2	2	2	9	Contains ample practical creative exercises and a few reflective prompts; encourages creative routine habits; is coherently structured to build competence (SDT); promotes autonomy (SDT) and is intended to boost motivation, although this is hard to know.
3. Well-being		7	9	9	5	8	Promotes mindful self-compassion both directly and indirectly; reduces perfectionism both directly and indirectly; facilitates a non-judgemental and safe space.
4. Connection		3	3	3	6	5	Seeks to foster belonging, collaboration and relatedness (SDT) through use of empathic 'we' language although this may not be prominent; sparsely encourages social connection and building community through creativity; supports solo creativity as well as group collaboration (although this is framed more as a next step to the reader).
5. Accessibility and Ethics		7	6	4	4	8	Includes accessible and inclusive language/design; user-friendly for intermediate-level singer-songwriters; avoids manipulation, exploitation and harmful ideologies; aims to do no harm, although this is hard to verify without testing.
6. Learning Theories		7	5	3	3	9	Promotes intrinsic motivation (SDT) directly through specific exercises; uses a facilitative tone (non-authoritarian; Rogers person-centred approach); encourages learners to co-create their learning (Rogers person-centred approach); highlights the importance of basic, safety and love needs for creativity (Maslow).
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment		6	5	6	8	10	Aligns with degrowth/anti-capitalist values; encourages balance and sustainability rather than endless productivity and growth; draws on, and celebrates, lessons from nature.

Grey Literature	Title and Citation	The perfectionism workbook for teens (Dobosz, 2016)	The ACT workbook for perfectionism (Kemp, 2021)	Overcoming perfectionism (Shafran, Egan and Wade, 2018)	For wilderness or wildness? decolonising rewilding (Ward, 2019) chapter	Rewilding creativity: a songwriting workbook for letting go of perfectionism (Unwin, 2025)	How does my artefact achieve this or not?
8. Most relevant elements to inform artefact design (blend with row 18)							
9. Codes for Reflexive Thematic Analysis		predictable structure that may ease anxiety; accessible language.	using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism; practical exercises; benefits of drawing on research.	using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism; practical exercises; benefits of explaining how to use the workbook; benefits of drawing on research; potential pitfalls of being overly wordy.	rewilding as a way to co-create a better future.		
10. Notes		33	30	27	28	49	

White Literature	Title and Citation	Neff and Germer (2013)	Mantelou and Karakasidou (2017)	Finlay-Jones, et al. (2018)	Eke, et al. (2020)	Yela, et al. (2021)	Nadeau, Caporale-Berkowitz, and Rochlen (2021)	Birni and Satici (2024)	Liu, Wei, and Russell (2023)	Dundas, et al. (2017)	Woodfin, et al. (2021)	Jiminez-Gomez, et al. (2022)
Assessment Criteria												
1. Summary of scope/relevance		MSC program shown to increase self-compassion, mindfulness and well-being. It also showed decreases in depression, anxiety, stress and avoidance.	Self-compassion may improve well-being and mental health outcomes.	MSC intervention may be relevant for chinese populations.	Highlights the benefits of discussing body self-compassion as a way to positively impact body functionality perceptions, reduce social comparisons and build resilience in the context of negative experiences in sport.	Showed that self-compassion improved well-being, and reduced anxiety/depression and experiential avoidance. Highlights how MSC can help with experiential avoidance through exposure to feelings.	10 week self-compassion intervention has advantageous benefits for well-being.	8-week self-compassion intervention shown to reduce perfectionism, fear of self-compassion, as well as increase self-compassion.	Self-compassion intervention may reduce imposter phenomenon and perfectionism in university students.	Study shows that a self compassion training intervention can: increase self-compassion; motivation to learn; and healthy self-regulation; as well as reduce self-critical attitudes; anxiety and depression.	Combination of MSC and MBSR intervention sees increased self-compassion, as well as decreases in anxiety, depression and perfectionism	Comparing the impact of MSC vs MBSR training for preventing mental health problems
1a. Study Design		MSC 8 week program; 6 and 12 month follow up measures	5 week self-compassion training (not specifically MSC), questionnaires	MSC intervention	Narrative inquiry; journals to facilitate interview discussions.		10 week course (not specifically MSC), questionnaires; RCT with self-compassion intervention	8 week compassion intervention, questionnaires	4 week self-compassion intervention, questionnaires	2 week self-compassion course based on MSC, MBSR and CMT, questionnaires; RCT	3 week intervention: seminars, retreat incl. lectures and practices from MSC and MBSR, questionnaires; RCT	MBSR and MSC 8 week interventions, questionnaires
1b. Methodology		Quant	Quant	Quant	Qual	Quant	Quant	Quant	Quant	Quant	Quant	Quant
1c. Procedure (population, methods and sample size)		Community adults; 8 week MSC program, questionnaires; 73.	42 undergraduate students; questionnaires.	MSC 8 week intervention, questionnaires; 44 female adults	Adolescent female athletes; semi-structured interviews and journalling activities; 7.	Adults; MSC 8 week intervention, questionnaires; 50.	10 week course (not specifically MSC), questionnaires; 57 women.	8 week compassion intervention, questionnaires; 22 undergraduate students	4 week self-compassion intervention, questionnaires; 227 university students	2 week self-compassion course based on MSC, MBSR and CMT, questionnaires; 85 university students	3 week intervention: seminars, retreat incl. lectures and practices from MSC and MBSR, questionnaires; 89 university students	MBSR and MSC 8 week interventions, questionnaires; 88 students
1d. Limitations		Lacks generalisability to other populations due to small sample size and lack of diversity within the sample.	Lacks generalisability to other populations lack of diversity within the sample.	Self-selecting, lacking in diversity population. lack of control group.	Participants not fully understanding self-compassion definitions; small and limited diversity sample.	Self-selecting sample lacking in diversity; no control group.	Overly homogeneous sample	Small sample, only 8 in the intervention group.	Overly homogeneous sample	Overly homogeneous sample and no control group	Overly homogeneous sample	Overly homogeneous sample
2. Creativity		6	4	2	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

White Literature	Title and Citation	Neff and Germer (2013)	Mantelou and Karakasidou (2017)	Finlay-Jones, et al. (2018)	Eke, et al. (2020)	Yela, et al. (2021)	Caporale-Berkowitz, and Rochlen (2021)	Birni and Satici (2024)	Liu, Wei, and Russell (2023)	Dundas, et al. (2017)	Woodfin, et al. (2021)	Jiminez-Gomez, et al. (2022)
2a. Why/how?												
3. Well-being		10	8	8	6	8	8	8	7	8	9	8
4. Connection		7	4	4	2	1	4	3	3	6	6	4
5. Accessibility and Ethics		8	5	5	4	7	7	4	4	5	7	5
6. Learning Theories		5	3	3	4	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment		4	2	2	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
8. Most relevant elements to inform artefact design (see coding points)		MSC as a way to enhance well-being			Ensure self-compassion (and other concepts) are clearly defined, potentially finding ways to check understanding. Use of journals may be useful for module 6 study design.	MSC for reducing experiential avoidance.						
9. Codes for Reflexive Thematic Analysis		MSC improves well-being; MSC improves self-compassion; MSC improves mindfulness; MSC reduces anxiety; MSC reduces depression; MSC reduces stress; MSC reduces avoidance.	self-compassion as a way to improve well-being	MSC may improve mental health in chinese women population	Self-compassion is beneficial for athletes' mindset.	MSC improves well-being; MSC reduces anxiety/depression; MSC reduces experiential avoidance.	self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion; self-compassion intervention reduces self-judgement; self-compassion intervention reduces shame; self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism.	self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism; self-compassion intervention reduces fear of self-compassion; self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion	self-compassion intervention reduces imposter phenomenon; self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism	self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion; self-compassion intervention increases motivation to learn; self-compassion intervention increases healthy self-regulation; self-compassion intervention reduces self-critical attitudes; self-compassion intervention reduces anxiety; self-compassion intervention reduces depression.	Combining MSC and MBSR may lead to effective interventions; self-compassion intervention increased self-compassion, self-compassion intervention decreases anxiety, self-compassion intervention decreases depression; self-compassion intervention decreases perfectionism.	MSC intervention reduces experiential avoidance
10. Notes		40	26	24	21	24	26	19	18	23	26	21

White Literature	Title and Citation	Northover, et al. (2021)	Terzioglu and Çakir-Çelebi (2024)	Kuchar, Neff, and Mosewich, 2023	Argyle (2020)	Gee, Hawes and Cox (2019)	Walton, et al (2025)	Kuchta (2022)
Assessment Criteria								
1. Summary of scope/relevance		Online compasionate mind training beneficial impacts on well-being including increasing self-compasson, increasing well-being, reducing self-criticism. Beneficial impacts for mental health.	A MBI intervention with elite tennis players focusing on mindfulness, acceptance and self-compassion results showed a decrease in somatic anxiety and disrupted concentration, as well as increased self-compassion.	Adapted for the population and condensed from the 8-week MSC program, shows increases in self-compassion and perceived performance, while also decreasing self-criticism, fear of self-compassion, depression, anxiety and stress. The authors highlight that this may be relevant to apply in a music setting.	Attendance aided mutual recovery, and enhanced social capital for group members.	Songwriting intervention may act preventatively to rising depression levels, and increase social connection.	Looking at the potential impacts self-compassio n interventions may have on the mental health of performers.	Discusses the need for a pradigmatic shift away from anthropocentrism in education. Offers some nature-based interventions that help connect people to more-than-humans. Discusses that more-than-humans have been marginalised in similar ways to other oppressed groups and how the tide needs to turn.
1a. Study Design		5 week compassionate mind training videos, diaries, questionnaires	12 week Mindfulness, acceptance and self-compassion in sport (MASCS) program, questionnaires		Arts-based intervention with interviews to evaluate	RCT using songwriting as a therapeutic intervention for self-identifying undergrads who experience poor mental health. 5 weeks of songwriting intervention.	Self-compassio n intervention	Journal paper with intervention suggestions
1b. Methodology		Quant	Quant	Quant	Qual	Quant	Mixed	N/A
1c. Procedure (population, methods and sample size)		5 week compassionate mind training videos, diaries, questionnaires; 81	12 week Mindfulness, acceptance and self-compassion in sport (MASCS) program, questionnaires; 16 elite tennis players	Student athletes; 6 x 1 hour RESET training (based on MSC), questionnaires; 250 (148 treatment).	Community groups with members identified at risk for developing mental health problems; interviews; relatively small sample.	New undergrads who experience poor mental health; songwriting intervention, scales used to measure; 68.	211 performing artists; questionnaires, intervention and interviews	N/A
1d. Limitations		Participant dropoff during the study.	Very small sample	Short-term nature prevents longer-term insights being developed.	Small sample; only initial findings, more research needed; unable to evaluate long-term efficacy; unsure whether it is the creative practice, or group variable that is advantageous.	Self-selecting all female sample (not very diverse); relatively small sample to make generalisations.	Sample lacking in diversity; imposter participants that had to be removed and minimised the sample size.	It is not a study, so it is hard to say if it would actually be effective.
2. Creativity		1	1	8	7	7	3	5

White Literature	Title and Citation	Northover, et al. (2021)	Terzioglu and Çakir-Çelebi (2024)	Kuchar, Neff, and Mosewich, 2023	Argyle (2020)	Gee, Hawes and Cox (2019)	Walton, et al (2025)	Kuchta (2022)
2a. Why/how?					Supports intrinsic motivation and competence-building (SDT); practical exercises; creative routine habits.	Practical creative exercises or reflective prompts; encourages creative routine habits; is coherently structured to build competence (SDT); promotes autonomy (SDT).		
3. Well-being		7	7	10	8	2	8	7
4. Connection		2	2	7	8	8	4	6
5. Accessibility and Ethics		3	3	8	6	4	5	6
6. Learning Theories		2	2	7	6	6	5	8
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment		1	3	4	3	1	2	10
8. Most relevant elements to inform artefact design (see coding points)				Use of language altered to be more population-friendly, and not overtly self-compassion; use of practices such as 'self-compassion break' which require less meditation experience.	Drawing and painting as more accessible than writing; therapeutic nature of (group) creativity.	5-week songwriting intervention for well-being and social connection; intervention design and citations to chain.	Relevant to my singer-songwriter reserach population; using self-compassion interventions to improve mental health in performers.	Philosophical underpinnings.
9. Codes for Reflexive Thematic Analysis		Online compassionate mind training has beneficial impacts on well-being and mental health; compassion intervention increases self-compasson; compassion intervention increases well-being, compassion intervention reduces self-criticism.	MBI decreases somatic anxiety; MBI decreases disrupted concentration, MBI increases self-compassion.	MSC improves self-compassion; MSC improves perception of performance; MSC leads to decreses in self-criticism; MSC leads to decreases in fear of self-compassion; MSC leads to decreases in depression; MSC leads to decreases in anxiety; MSC leads to decreases in stress; MSC is effective in performance settings; MSC is effective in shorter programs than 8 weeks; use of more accessible MSC practices is worthwhile; MSC is beneficial for atheletes' mindset.	Creative practice as a route to well-being; creative practice in groups as a route to social cohesion; the therapeutic aspects of creativity; the theraputic aspects of group creativity.	Therapeutic songwriting intervention acts as a preventative mechanism for worsening depression; therapeutic songwriting intervention increases social connection.	self-compassion intervention as a way to improve mental health in performers.	potential pitfalls of anthropocentrism; potential benefits in shifting away from a anthropocentric worldview; potential benefits in teaching skills that foster social skills and a connection with nature, rather than technical skills; benefits of underpinning education with environmentally aware philosophies; benefits of teaching that supports all life, rather than just human; criticism of marginalising 'more-than-human' knowledge and experience; benefits of decentring human instructors and co-creating with nature; nature interventions as a way to move away from anthropocentrist values; benefits of underpinnng work to be guided by ecological principles.
10. Notes		16	18	44	38	28	27	42

Assessment Criteria Breakdown

Quantitative	Qualitative
Likert Scale Codes 1-10	**2. Creativity**
1-3: minimal/not evident	May include: practical creative exercises or reflective prompts; encourages creative routine habits; is coherently structured to build competence (SDT); promotes autonomy (SDT); boosts motivation.
4-6: moderate/partially evident	**3. Well-being**
7-9: strong/consistently evident	May include: promotes mindful self-compassion (mindfulness, sense of common humanity, self-kindness); reduces perfectionism; facilitates a non-judgemental and safe space.
10: central/exemplary	**4. Connection**
	May include: fosters belonging, collaboration, relatedness (SDT); encourages social connection and building community through creativity; supports solo creativity as well as group collaboration.
	5. Accessibility and Ethics
	May include: accessible and inclusive language/design; user-friendly for intermediate-level singer-songwriters; avoids manipulation, exploitation and harmful ideologies; aims to do no harm.
	6. Learning Theories
	May include: promotes intrinsic motivation (SDT); uses a facilitative tone (non-authoritarian; Rogers person-centred approach); encourages learners to co-create their learning (Rogers person-centred approach); highlights the importance of basic, safety and love needs for creativity (Maslow).
	7. Socio-philosophical Alignment
	May include: aligns with degrowth/anti-capitalist values; encourages balance and sustainability rather than endless productivity and growth; draws on, and celebrates, lessons from nature.

Appendix 3: Autoethnograpic Practice: ethical statement

Boundaries of what I will write about

Protecting the identity of others:

- Refer to people as ‘a teacher/colleague/friend/family member’ etc.
- Keep family history private that might be upsetting to family members if I share.
- Focus on my experiences, rather than making assumptions about the experiences of others (for example, in the music industry), even if I have a pretty strong hunch that it is the case.
- Consider how best to share music industry experiences, and be mindful not to ‘out’ people’s experiences.

Protecting my well-being:

- Do not collect personal memory data on traumatic memories, or write about them (heavy intensity emotionally).
- Do collect data on experiences that I have had time to process or feel are in the past (light/medium intensity emotionally).
- Be very cautious when writing about situations of which I am an insider (friend groups, workplaces, places I call home).
- Leave time before sharing personal anecdotes, and double check I am still happy to go ahead with sharing. Consult a trusted friend with this.
- Make note of anything that has triggered a significant emotional response in me, and seek support where necessary.
- Focus on solutions and positive change in the music idustry/world, and be mindful about making enemies by calling people out. Capture people’s attention by asking questions, showing a potential path, rather than making accusations. In the spirit of humanism, let people learn it themselves without giving them all of the answers.
- Be mindful of anything I say that could be viewed negatively by my workplaces. Consider how to navigate this carefully.

Appendix 4: Start With Why Process for the Artefact (Sinek, 2011)

Problem to solve

1. Perfectionism negatively impacting creativity and well-being
2. My hypothesis is: Living a creatively free life = good well-being. Or, lessening perfectionism = improved well-being and creativity.

Why

1. Help people be creative and happy, and not ruled by perfectionism.
2. I want to provide a framework for people to follow that helps them live creative and meaningful lives (career or hobby), drawing on research (mainly perfectionism and MSC).
3. To bridge the gap between theory and practice: there is lots of helpful research out there, but little that is accessible to laypeople. There needs to be something that combines grey literature with research in an engaging and accessible way.

Vision

To become a leading expert in sustainable, happy and free creative lives, as well as careers. Using creativity as a mode of expression and source of well-being.

Finding playful, and meaningful creative expression (decompose:deconstruct, creativity in any medium) as a way to live a purposeful life, or have a healthy beating heart in a sustainable creative career.

Mission

To become a leading expert in sustainable, happy and free creative lives through (mission) using creativity, singing, and songwriting as modes of expression and sources of well-being and developing resources that support this.

Values

sustainability, freedom, creativity, play, kindness/love, community/connection, authenticity/vulnerability, story

Vision Mission Values statement

To become a leading expert in sustainable, happy and free creative lives (vision) through using creativity as a mode of expression, source of well-being and developing resources that support this (mission), guided by sustainability, freedom, creativity, play, kindness/love, community/connection, authenticity/vulnerability, story (values).

Motivations

1. I've been there, and know I wish I had this knowledge back then
2. Passing on what I know, and giving back to the next generation/others
3. I believe it will help others, and I am coming to a place in my teaching/coaching/mentoring where I need a pedagogical text to refer them to that outlines my philosophy
4. I'm interested in documenting all of this for my own CPD and personal development
5. I feel like it's the next logical step for my ideas and what is needed out there in the world
6. It feels like a necessary artefact to develop 'in these times' (social media, AI, politics, capitalism, etc.)
7. I conducted a tutorial with a soon to be graduating singer-songwriting student who would have really benefitted from the artefact. This is something I regularly encounter.

Problems/Obstacles

1. It is quite a broad 'why', which may mean it will take quite a lot of work to make it useful for a wide range of people.
2. Because my artefact is quite ambitious, it may be quite a big expectation in terms of workload, alongside the module
3. The artefact would take significant inspiration from grey literature, which may pose problems as this is an academic module.
4. I feel relatively anxious and cautious about putting my knowledge 'out there', but also recognise I need to 'get out of my own way' and start sharing my ideas.

How

Draw on research, particularly perfectionism and MSC, to inform a pedagogy/philosophy that people can use asynchronously to live a meaningful and creative life.

What

Synthesise the research I have done so far in the MA, as well as grey literature in this field, to produce an inspiring and accessible book (or part of) that also includes interactive exercises.

Appendix 5: Reflexive thematic analysis of findings from literature

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)	Sub-themes (7)	Main themes (3)
Personal storytelling, experiences and insights lead to inspiring reading	☑	**MSC and self-compassion benefits**	MSC improves well-being	**Benefits of mindfulness and self-compassion interventions**	**WHAT: bridging the gap between theory and practice**
Creativity as accessible			MSC improves well-being	MSC and self-compassion benefits	Research-informed practice
Celebrating everyday (little c) creativity	☑		MSC improves self-compassion	Self-compassion interventions effects	Developing a philosophy that is guided by ecological principles
Developing a philosophy for creative living			MSC improves self-compassion		
Benefit of using micro-chapters for accessibility	☑		MSC improves mindfulness	**Applications of self-compassion in specific contexts**	**WHY: The benefits of creative and mindful self-compassion interventions for singer-songwriters**
Benefits of using fictional storytelling to demonstrate points			MSC reduces anxiety	Self-compassion for athletes and performers	Benefits of mindfulness and self-compassion interventions
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research	☑		MSC reduces anxiety/depression		Applications of self-compassion in specific contexts
Practical games			MSC reduces depression	**Creative approaches to well-being**	Creative approaches to well-being
Practical exercises	☑		MSC reduces stress	Creative practice benefits	
Blending psychology and philosophy			MSC reduces avoidance		**HOW: a pathway to engaging user design for creative interventions**
Use of self-compassion to deal with inner critic	☑		MSC reduces experiential avoidance	**Effective communication strategies**	Effective communication strategies
Using alternate language to tackle perfectionism and self-compassion			MSC intervention reduces experiential avoidance	Philosophy and storytelling approaches	Practical implementation approaches
Benefit of building a creative routine	☑		Self-compassion as a way to improve well-being	Design and accessibility features	
Morning pages writing as a creative task			MSC may improve mental health in chinese women population	Author voice and tone	
Benefit of having a creative retreat	☑		Online compassionate mind training has beneficial impacts on well-being and mental health	Potential pitfalls in design and writing	
Benefit of practical exercises			Compassion intervention increases well-being		
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research	☑		MSC improves perception of performance	**Practical implementation approaches**	
Benefits of community for creative work			MSC is effective in performance settings	Practical and reflective exercises	
Accountability in others helps creative work	☑		MSC is effective in shorter programs than 8 weeks		
Benefits of mixed-media delivery of intervention			Use of more accessible MSC practices is worthwhile	**Research-informed practice**	
Benefits of reflective exercises	☑		Combining MSC and MBSR may lead to effective interventions	Research and evidence-based approaches	
Benefits of practical exercises through which to learn MSC					
Benefits of using well-being-informed language and tone of writing	☑	**Self-compassion interventions effects**	Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion	**Developing a philosophy that is guided by ecological principles**	
Practical exercises to manage perfectionism			Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion	Ecological and nature-based approaches	

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)		Sub-themes (7)		Main themes (3)
Drawing on research	☑		Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion				
Warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice			Self-compassion intervention increased self-compassion				
Draws on the ideas of other artists, as well as research	☑		Compassion intervention increases self-compasson				
Strengths of being evidence-based			MBI increases self-compassion				
Benefits of using prompt cards to overcome creative obstacles	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces self-judgement				
Benefits of being playful and whimsical in creativity			Self-compassion intervention reduces shame				
Benefits of abstract prompts to generate creative ideas	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism				
Benefits of extremely short interventions for creativity			Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism				
Potential pitfalls in being overly abstract for confusing meaning for users	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism				
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research			Self-compassion intervention decreases perfectionism				
Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces fear of self-compassion				
Developing a philosophy for creative living			Self-compassion intervention reduces imposter phenomenon				
Benefits of creative routine and discipline	☑		Self-compassion intervention increases motivation to learn				
Benefits of acting quickly without overthinking			Self-compassion intervention increases healthy self-regulation				
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces self-critical attitudes				
Use of micro-chapters			Self-compassion intervention reduces anxiety				
Wielding personal experience as a way to promote common humanity	☑		Self-compassion intervention reduces depression				
Philosophical writing			Self-compassion intervention decreases anxiety				
Using philosophy as a mode of teaching	☑		Self-compassion intervention decreases depression				
Telling stories to illustrate learning points			Compassion intervention reduces self-criticism				
Benefits of practical exercises to manage the inner critic	☑		MBI decreases somatic anxiety				
Practical exercises for managing MPA and perfectionism			MBI decreases disrupted concentration				
Benefits of setting goals	☑		MSC leads to decreses in self-criticism				
Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments			MSC leads to decreases in fear of self-compassion				
Benefits of taking a holistic view to perfectionism	☑		MSC leads to decreases in depression				
Benefits of leveraging credibility			MSC leads to decreases in anxiety				

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)	Sub-themes (7)	Main themes (3)
Potential pitfalls of overly long and complicated writing	☑		MSC leads to decreases in stress		
Includes references for exercises			Self-compassion intervention as a way to improve mental health in performers		
Benefits of using engaging colours, graphic design and typography	☑				
Highly accessible language yet rooted in science		**Self-compassion for athletes and performers**	Self-compassion is beneficial for athletes' mindset		
Scaffolded and structured well to build competence	☑		MSC is beneficial for atheletes' mindset		
Informative use of illustration to teach methods			Use of self-compassion to deal with inner critic		
Creative use of typography to echo the desired message	☑		Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism		
Benefits of being evidence-based			Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism		
Warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice	☑		Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism		
Practical exercises for creativity			Using alternate language to tackle perfectionism and self-compassion		
Micro-chapters	☑		Using alternate language to tackle perfectionism		
Discusses the obstacle of inner critic			Exercise for managing inner critic		
Scaffolded and structured well to build competence	☑		Benefits of practical exercises to manage the inner critic		
Values exercises for musicians			Discusses the obstacle of inner critic		
Using alternate language to tackle perfectionism	☑		Practical exercises for managing MPA and perfectionism		
Engaging layout including images and interesting typography			Benefits of taking a holistic view to perfectionism		
Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments	☑				
Benefits of leveraging author credibility		**Creative practice benefits**	Creative practice as a route to well-being		
Micro-chapters	☑		Creative practice in groups as a route to social cohesion		
Benefits of having a signposting page for mental health links			The therapeutic aspects of creativity		
Potential pitfalls of overly long writing	☑		The theraputic aspects of group creativity		
Potential pitfalls of being too abstract to be accessible			Therapeutic songwriting intervention acts as a preventative mechanism for worsening depression		
Practical exercises for creativity	☑		Therapeutic songwriting intervention increases social connection		
Some personal experience woven in from author			Creativity as accessible		
Using philosophy as a mode of teaching	☑		Celebrating everyday (little c) creativity		

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)	Sub-themes (7)	Main themes (3)
Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility			Benefits of community for creative work		
Developing a philosophy for creative living	☑		Accountability in others helps creative work		
Benefits of creative routine and discipline			Benefits of being playful and whimsical in creativity		
Benefits of broad creative prompts	☑		Benefit of building a creative routine		
Benefits of accessible and resonant user design			Benefits of creative routine and discipline		
Benefits of using illustration and graphic design	☑		Benefits of creative routine and discipline		
Benefits of using interesting typography			Morning pages writing as a creative task		
Benefits of using informal and humourous language	☑		Benefit of having a creative retreat		
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research			Benefits of acting quickly without overthinking		
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence	☑		Benefits of setting goals		
Potential pitfall of being overly long and wordy			Benefits of using prompt cards to overcome creative obstacles		
Potential pitfalls of quite primative design and writing	☑		Benefits of abstract prompts to generate creative ideas		
Exercise for managing inner critic			Benefits of broad creative prompts		
Storytelling to teach	☑		Playful poetry exercises for creativity		
Practical exercises			Provides a philosophy for creative songwriting		
Reflective prompts	☑				
Playful poetry exercises for creativity		**Philosophy and storytelling approaches**	Developing a philosophy for creative living		
Potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence	☑		Developing a philosophy for creative living		
Potential pitfalls of not having practical exercises			Developing a philosophy for creative living		
Provides a philosophy for creative songwriting	☑		Philosophical writing		
Potential pitfalls of being overly lonng and wordy			Using philosophy as a mode of teaching		
Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism	☑		Using philosophy as a mode of teaching		
Practical exercises			Personal storytelling, experiences and insights lead to inspiring reading		
Benefits of explaining how to use the workbook	☑		Benefits of using fictional storytelling to demonstrate points		
Benefits of drawing on research			Wielding personal experience as a way to promote common humanity		
Predictable structure that may ease anxiety	☑		Telling stories to illustrate learning points		
Accessible language			Storytelling to teach		
Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism	☑		Some personal experience woven in from author		
Practical exercises					

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)	Sub-themes (7)	Main themes (3)
Benefits of drawing on research	☑	**Practical and reflective exercises**	Practical games		
Using self-compassion to reframe self-critical perfectionism			Practical exercises		
Practical exercises	☑		Benefit of practical exercises		
Benefits of explaining how to use the workbook			Practical exercises to manage perfectionism		
Benefits of drawing on research	☑		Practical exercises for creativity		
Potential pitfalls of being overly wordy			Practical exercises for creativity		
Rewilding as a way to co-create a better future	☑		Practical exercises		
MSC improves well-being			Practical exercises		
MSC improves self-compassion	☑		Practical exercises		
MSC improves mindfulness			Benefits of reflective exercises		
MSC reduces anxiety	☑		Reflective prompts		
MSC reduces depression			Benefits of practical exercises through which to learn MSC		
MSC reduces stress	☑		Benefits of extremely short interventions for creativity		
MSC reduces avoidance			Values exercises for musicians		
Self-compassion as a way to improve well-being	☑				
MSC may improve mental health in chinese women population		**Design and accessibility features**	Benefit of using micro-chapters for accessibility		
Self-compassion is beneficial for athletes' mindset	☑		Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility		
MSC improves well-being			Benefits of micro-chapters for accessibility		
MSC reduces anxiety/depression	☑		Use of micro-chapters		
MSC reduces experiential avoidance			Micro-chapters		
Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion	☑		Micro-chapters		
Self-compassion intervention reduces self-judgement			Benefits of accessible and resonant user design		
Self-compassion intervention reduces shame	☑		Benefits of using engaging colours, graphic design and typography		
Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism			Benefits of using illustration and graphic design		
Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism	☑		Informative use of illustration to teach methods		
Self-compassion intervention reduces fear of self-compassion			Benefits of using interesting typography		
Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion			Creative use of typography to echo the desired message		
Self-compassion intervention reduces imposter phenomenon			Engaging layout including images and interesting typography		

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)		Sub-themes (7)		Main themes (3)
Self-compassion intervention reduces perfectionism			Benefits of using informal and humourous language				
Self-compassion intervention increases self-compassion			Highly accessible language yet rooted in science				
Self-compassion intervention increases motivation to learn			Accessible language				
Self-compassion intervention increases healthy self-regulation			Benefits of mixed-media delivery of intervention				
Self-compassion intervention reduces self-critical attitudes			Benefits of having a signposting page for mental health links				
Self-compassion intervention reduces anxiety			Predictable structure that may ease anxiety				
Self-compassion intervention reduces depression			Scaffolded and structured well to build competence				
Combining MSC and MBSR may lead to effective interventions			Scaffolded and structured well to build competence				
Self-compassion intervention increased self-compassion			Benefits of explaining how to use the workbook				
Self-compassion intervention decreases anxiety			Benefits of explaining how to use the workbook				
Self-compassion intervention decreases depression							
Self-compassion intervention decreases perfectionism		**Research and evidence-based approaches**	Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research				
MSC intervention reduces experiential avoidance			Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research				
Online compassionate mind training has beneficial impacts on well-being and mental health			Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research				
Compassion intervention increases self-compasson			Potential pitfalls of not drawing on research				
Compassion intervention increases well-being			Potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence				
Compassion intervention reduces self-criticism			Potential pitfalls of not drawing on evidence				
MBI decreases somatic anxiety			Drawing on research				
MBI decreases disrupted concentration			Strengths of being evidence-based				
MBI increases self-compassion			Benefits of being evidence-based				
MSC improves self-compassion			Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments				
MSC improves perception of performance			Benefits of drawing on science to evidence arguments				
MSC leads to decreses in self-criticism			Benefits of drawing on research				
MSC leads to decreases in fear of self-compassion			Benefits of drawing on research				
MSC leads to decreases in depression			Benefits of drawing on research				
MSC leads to decreases in anxiety			Includes references for exercises				
MSC leads to decreases in stress			Blending psychology and philosophy				
MSC is effective in performance settings			Draws on the ideas of other artists, as well as research				

INITIAL CODES (179)			Clusters (11)	Sub-themes (7)	Main themes (3)
MSC is effective in shorter programs than 8 weeks					
Use of more accessible MSC practices is worthwhile		**Author voice and tone**	Warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice		
MSC is beneficial for atheletes' mindset			Warm, encouraging and realistic tone of author voice		
Creative practice as a route to well-being			Benefits of using well-being-informed language and tone of writing		
Creative practice in groups as a route to social cohesion			Benefits of leveraging credibility		
The therapeutic aspects of creativity			Benefits of leveraging author credibility		
The theraputic aspects of group creativity					
Therapeutic songwriting intervention acts as a preventative mechanism for worsening depression		**Potential pitfalls in design and writing**	Potential pitfalls in being overly abstract for confusing meaning for users		
Therapeutic songwriting intervention increases social connection			Potential pitfalls of being too abstract to be accessible		
Self-compassion intervention as a way to improve mental health in performers			Potential pitfalls of overly long and complicated writing		
Potential pitfalls of anthropocentrism			Potential pitfalls of overly long writing		
Potential benefits in shifting away from a anthropocentric worldview			Potential pitfall of being overly long and wordy		
Potential benefits in teaching skills that foster social skills and a connection with nature, rather than technical skills			Potential pitfalls of being overly lonng and wordy		
Benefits of underpinning education with environmentally aware philosophies			Potential pitfalls of being overly wordy		
Benefits of teaching that supports all life, rather than just human			Potential pitfalls of quite primative design and writing		
Criticism of marginalising 'more-than-human' knowledge and experience			Potential pitfalls of not having practical exercises		
Benefits of decentring human instructors and co-creating with nature					
Nature interventions as a way to move away from anthropocentrist values		**Ecological and nature-based approaches**	Rewilding as a way to co-create a better future		
Benefits of underpinnng work to be guided by ecological principles			Potential pitfalls of anthropocentrism		
			Potential benefits in shifting away from a anthropocentric worldview		
			Potential benefits in teaching skills that foster social skills and a connection with nature, rather than technical skills		
			Benefits of underpinning education with environmentally aware philosophies		
			Benefits of teaching that supports all life, rather than just human		
			Criticism of marginalising 'more-than-human' knowledge and experience		
			Benefits of decentring human instructors and co-creating with nature		
			Nature interventions as a way to move away from anthropocentrist values		
			Benefits of underpinnng work to be guided by ecological principles		

Appendix 6: Chapter outline iterations

Version 1

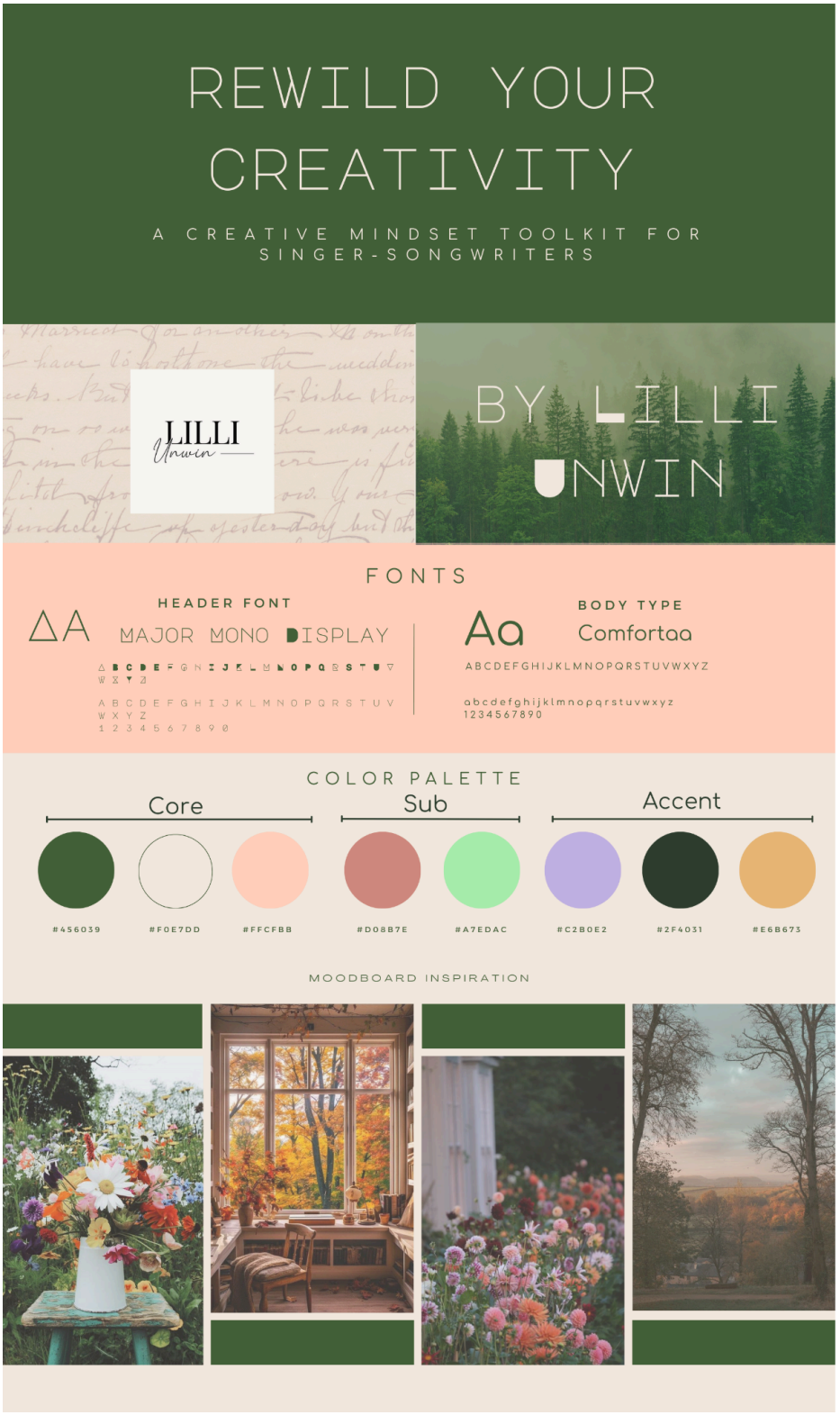
Creative Mindset Toolkit **1**
- Part I 2
- Introduction 2
  - Who I am 2
  - My story 2
- Rationale / Why 2
  - Perfectionism 2
  - Roots of perfectionism 2
  - Perfectionism & well-being 2
  - Perfectionism & creativity 2
  - Perfectionism & social media 2
  - Capitalism, the music industry and money 2
- Part II 2
  - Reflecting on your creative identity - career vs hobby 2
  - Visualisation: flow theory, intrinsic motivation, values and defining success 2
  - You have the power to change your mindset 2
    - Growth Mindset 2
    - Inner Critic 2
  - MSC 2
- Part III 3
  - Building your routine 3
  - Daily: Creative warm-ups 3
  - Regular: Creative games 3
    - decompose:deconstruct 3
    - Creativity in any medium 3
    - Connecting with nature 3
  - Creative block interventions 3
    - MSC based perfectionism re-frame 3
    - Schema Therapy 3
  - Seasonal mindset, not capitalism 3
  - Goal-setting 3
    - Journaling prompts 3
- Part IV 3
- What’s next? 3
  - Solo practice / movement 3
    - Templates: daily planner, weekly planner, monthly, seasonal, yearly 3
  - Community / collaboration 3
    - anonymous letters / creative book group 3

Version 2

Rewild Your Creativity: A Creative Mindset Toolkit for Singer-Songwriters 1
Part I 4
Introduction 4
Who this book is for and how to use it 4
Who I am 6
Part II 7
Rewild Your Creativity 7
Meeting Your Creative Self 9
Working out your values (exercise) 9
Part III 11
Building your routine 11
Daily: Creative warm-ups 12
Looking after the human behind the creative 12
Mindful Self-Compassion 12
Singing 12
Warm up your body (exercise) 13
Warm up your voice 13
Vocal Palette Inspiration Playlist (exercise) 14
Creative warm-ups for songwriting 15
Morning Pages (exercise) 15
Object writing (exercise) 16
Poetry 1: cut up technique (exercise) 16
Poetry 2: wordsearching (exercise) 16
Poetry 3: writing in key (exercise) 17
Poetry 4: image (exercise) 17
Poetry 5: wordjar (exercise) 17
Music 1: prose (exercise) 17
Music 2: poetry (exercise) 17
Music 3: visual storytelling (exercise) 17
Music 4: film (exercise) 17
Music 5: your inspiration (exercise) 17
DAW 1: collecting field recordings (exercise) 18
DAW 2: creating with field recordings (exercise) 18
DAW 3: draw what you hear/hear what you draw (exercise) 18
DAW 4: chopping samples (exercise) 18
DAW 5: storytelling through FX (exercise) 18
The final warm-up game, for now (exercise) 19
Part IV 20
Regular: Creative games 20
decompose:deconstruct (game) 20
Creativity in any medium (games) 20
Creativity in any medium 1: inspired by (game) 21
Creativity in any medium 2: identity (game) 21

Creativity in any medium 3: story (game) 21
Creativity in any medium 4: nature (game) 21
Creativity in any medium 5: different viewpoints of the same landscape (game) 21
Connecting with nature (game) 21
Tech-free creative retreat (game) 21
Seasonal 22
Seasonal creative retreat in nature (game) 22
Visualisations 22
Creative block interventions 23
1. Getting to know the inner critic (exercise part one) 23
2. Reframing perfectionistic, inner critic thoughts through self-compassionately (exercise part two) 24
Setting goals 26
What's next? 26
Part V 28
Solo practice resources 28
Templates: daily planner, weekly planner, monthly, seasonal, yearly 28
Daily: 28
Weekly: 28
Monthly: 28
Seasonal: 28
Yearly 29
Movement / Community / Connection / Collaboration 29
Links to support well-being 29
Values 29
Notes

Appendix 7: User experience design: graphics, type, colour (designed in Canva app)



Appendix 8: Literature Review Strategies

Keywords/phrases	Boolean search terms	Search date	Search engine/database	Filters	Results	Notes	Included? (downloaded initially)	Excluded?
	creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND well-being OR mental health	12/5/25	Google Scholar		5,150,000	Searched 2 pages on scholar	5	
	creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND well-being OR mental health	12/5/25	UWTSD Library	Peer-reviewed, since 2015, english	25,522	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	0	
	creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND perfectionism	12/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	17,400	Searched 2 pages on scholar	4	
	creative practice OR songwriting OR artistic process AND perfectionism	12/5/25	UWTSD Library	Peer-reviewed, since 2015, english	25,489	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	0	
	self-compassion OR mindful self-compassion AND workbook OR toolkit OR guide	12/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	17,500	Searched 2 pages on scholar	1	
	self-compassion OR mindful self-compassion AND workbook OR mindful self-compassion AND toolkit OR mindful self-compassion AND guide	26/5/25	UWTSD Library	Since 2015, English	7,095	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	1	
	creativity OR artistic process AND workbook OR artistic process AND toolkit OR artistic process AND guide	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	53,500	Searched 2 pages on scholar	2	

Keywords/phrases	Boolean search terms	Search date	Search engine/database	Filters	Results	Notes	Included? (downloaded initially)	Excluded?
	creativity OR artistic process AND workbook OR artistic process AND toolkit OR artistic process AND guide	26/5/25	UWTSD Library	Since 2015, English	97,537	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	0	
	songwriting OR composition AND workbook OR composition AND toolkit OR composition AND guide	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	17,800	Searched 2 pages on scholar	1	
	songwriting OR composition AND workbook OR composition AND toolkit OR composition AND guide	26/5/25	UWTSD Library	Since 2015, English	12,635	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	0	
	creativity AND artistic process AND workbook AND self-compassion OR creativity AND artistic process AND toolkit AND self-compassion OR creativity AND artistic process AND guide AND self-compassion	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	1,790	Searched 2 pages on scholar	1	
	creativity AND artistic process AND workbook AND self-compassion OR creativity AND artistic process AND toolkit AND self-compassion	26/5/25	UWTSD Library	Since 2015, English	4	Searched 2 pages on UWTSD Library	0	
	creativity AND artistic process AND guide AND self-compassion	26/5/25	UWTSD Library	Since 2015, English	0	N/A	0	

Keywords/phrases	Boolean search terms	Search date	Search engine/database	Filters	Results	Notes	Included? (downloaded initially)	Excluded?
- perfectionism and creativity and workbook - perfectionism and creativity and guide - perfectionism and creativity and toolkit - perfectionism and artistic process and workbook - perfectionism and artistic process and guide - perfectionism and artistic process and toolkit	(creativity OR artistic process) AND (workbook OR toolkit OR guide) AND perfectionism	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	17,100	Searched 2 pages on scholar	6	
	(songwriting OR composition) AND (workbook OR toolkit OR guide) AND self-compassion	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	5,310	Searched 2 pages on scholar	0	
	(songwriting OR composition) AND (workbook OR toolkit OR guide) AND perfectionism	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	14,200	Searched 2 pages on scholar	2	
	(sustainable creativity OR creative sustainability) AND (perfectionism OR burnout)	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	18,000	Searched 2 pages on scholar	0	
	(sustainable creativity OR creative sustainability) AND (self-compassion OR mindful self-compassion)	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	16,700	Searched 2 pages on scholar	5	
	rewilding AND (creativity OR creative practice) AND (metaphor OR philosophy)	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	3,960	Searched 2 pages on scholar	5	

Keywords/phrases	Boolean search terms	Search date	Search engine/database	Filters	Results	Notes	Included? (downloaded initially)	Excluded?
	self-determination theory AND (creativity OR songwriting)	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	43,200	Searched 2 pages on scholar	3	
	(the artist's way OR creative journaling) AND (self-compassion OR motivation OR perfectionism)	26/5/25	Google Scholar	Since 2015	18,300	Searched 2 pages on scholar	0	

Ideas of keywords/phrases to search
What best practices can be combined from both grey literature on creativity, and white literature on self-compassion interventions, to create an accessible workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters which increases connection, creativity and well-being, while reducing perfectionism? and How might the use of rewilding as a metaphor (and subsequently, a philosophy) in creativity help singer-songwriters sustain creativity in a society that promotes perfectionism?
creativity
creative process
creative routine
artistic process
creative practice
singer-songwriters
pop musicians
musicians
songwriters
composers
artists
vocalists
singers
perfectionism
self-oriented perfectionism
socially prescribed perfectionism
high standards
self-criticism
excellence
striving for excellence
unrelenting standards
mental health
well-being
resilience

Ideas of keywords/phrases to search
What best practices can be combined from both grey literature on creativity, and white literature on self-compassion interventions, to create an accessible workbook for intermediate singer-songwriters which increases connection, creativity and well-being, while reducing perfectionism? and How might the use of rewilding as a metaphor (and subsequently, a philosophy) in creativity help singer-songwriters sustain creativity in a society that promotes perfectionism?
athletes
performing arts
sport
self-compassion
mindful self-compassion
self-kindness
self-worth
compassion
mindfulness
workbook
toolkit
guide
rewilding
sustainable creativity
creative sustainability
metaphor
philosophy
self-determination theory
motivation
the artist's way

Appendix 9: Assessment Criteria: my artefact

Assessment criteria: my artefact (expanded version)

Assessment Criteria	Rewilding creativity: a songwriting workbook for letting go of perfectionism	Justification for score
1. Summary of scope/relevance	A workbook with practical exercises for singer-songwriters that is grounded in literature and promotes well-being and creativity, as well as provides strategies for managing perfectionism. The workbook also serves as a philosophical approach to creative songwriting.	
1a. Limitations	Building connection and shortage of autoethnographic writing	
2. Creativity	9	Contains ample practical creative exercises and a few reflective prompts; encourages creative routine habits; is coherently structured to build competence (SDT); promotes autonomy (SDT) and is intended to boost motivation, although this is hard to know.
3. Well-being	8	Promotes mindful self-compassion both directly and indirectly; reduces perfectionism both directly and indirectly; facilitates a non-judgemental and safe space.
4. Connection	5	Seeks to foster belonging, collaboration and relatedness (SDT) through use of empathic 'we' language although this may not be prominent; sparsely encourages social connection and building community through creativity; supports solo

		creativity as well as group collaboration (although this is framed more as a next step to the reader).
5. Accessibility and Ethics	8	Includes accessible and inclusive language/design; user-friendly for intermediate-level singer-songwriters; avoids manipulation, exploitation and harmful ideologies; aims to do no harm, although this is hard to verify without testing.
6. Learning Theories	9	Promotes intrinsic motivation (SDT) directly through specific exercises; uses a facilitative tone (non-authoritarian; Rogers person-centred approach); encourages learners to co-create their learning (Rogers person-centred approach); highlights the importance of basic, safety and love needs for creativity (Maslow).
7. Socio-philosophical Alignment	10	Aligns with degrowth/anti-capitalist values; encourages balance and sustainability rather than endless productivity and growth; draws on, and celebrates, lessons from nature.
TOTAL SCORE	49	

Appendix 10: Artefact (final version)



PART I
Introduction

PART II
Rewild your creativity
Meeting your creative self

PART III
Building your routine
Daily: creative warm-ups

PART IV
Regular: creative games
Seasonal practices
Creative block interventions
Setting goals

PART V
Solo practice resources
Well-being support

Notes

PART I

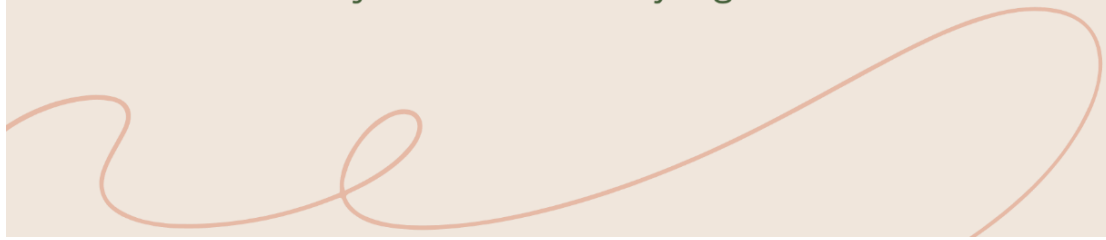
Introduction

Who this book is for and how to use it

Welcome. I'm so glad you're here! I have written this book to act as a creative companion for singer-songwriters. Often when we study music, be that with a private teacher or in a conservatoire, the main thing we learn is the musical skills. Trouble is... things like scales, repertoire, rhyme schemes and microphone technique only get you so far when you're creatively blocked. From my experience as a singer-songwriter, but also teaching singer-songwriters, it's the lonely moments when we're blankly staring at the page, without a mentor, when creative wobbles take place. Sometimes the musical skills that we possess only go so far if we can't actually motivate ourselves to set aside time to be creative, or unpick moments of imposter syndrome that hold us from sharing our creative efforts with the world.

This book is intended to be a creative place that you can retreat to, learn from, grow with, and design the creative life you love. In a world that is full of busy-ness, this is a chance to slow down and listen out for creativity. It can be dipped into, or used chronologically. The term use being important. This is a highly practical set of creative mindset exercises I have developed, with the hopes that they will enhance your creative experiences. If those experiences lead to great songs, that's cool, but the point of this book is not to guide you to a finished product, but an invitation to explore the creative process itself.

I will be focusing on the act of being creative in this book, rather than any particular outcomes. I will also be speaking to those of you who do music as a hobby, as well as professionals (or aspiring to be). There are a lot of things both groups can learn from each other. For example, sometimes with hobbying singer-songwriters the expectation is that there is a ceiling for learning, knowledge and creativity. I'd like to bust that myth now, please! Just because you aren't paid for your creativity doesn't mean you can't dig really deep, as well as have profound creative experiences. Similarly, there are some expectations for when people 'go pro' with a creative pursuit, like failure being a bad thing. I'd encourage anyone reading this that is professional (or intends to be) to allow yourself to experiment, fail, have fun and feel like a beginner again. We're in a safe space, and I invite you to leave self-judgement at the door.



A few pointers before I introduce myself properly:

- This book is designed to promote creativity, and while it may touch on psychology subjects, it is not in any way a substitute professional medical/psychological advice.
- If anything touches you emotionally that feels triggering, I highly recommend you seek support (list of UK-based support organisations included at the end of the book).
- To get the most out of this book, I recommend you try to limit distractions (particularly in the form of notifications, social media, smartphones, etc.) while you are engaging with it, and your creativity.
- This book is ultimately focused on the process of creativity within songwriting, rather than any particular outputs. It designed to feel like a creative retreat, and in that spirit I would ask you to leave the concept of 'good' at the door before you come in. None of the warm-ups, games or interventions have a predetermined outcome, or require you to do them well. Let this be an invitation to let go of expectations.
- You are the boss here. You decide the pace at which you go, and please be mindful that not all exercises will suit everyone. They are simply an offering. You are encouraged to use this book *creatively*!

Who I am

I am a singer-songwriter, teacher, researcher and general creative person.

“Do not think that the person who is trying to console you lives untroubled among the simple, quiet words that sometimes make you feel better... But if it were any different, he could never have found those words.”

Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet

I grew up finding peace in being creative; from singing along to brazilian music in my attic bedroom aged seven, to sewing dresses after school in my teens, or teaching myself the piano late at night as I began to work towards building a career in music. I had been focusing on many different creative outlets in my teenage years, when after seeing an inspiring concert, I spoke to my parents about my desire to become a professional singer. Although they were apparently unsurprised, and had perhaps seen it coming (as I had not), they were highly encouraging. They also however, as musicians themselves, understood the challenging career path I was embarking on, and were sure to check I understood it wouldn't all be plain sailing before helping me with my next steps. Naturally, as a seventeen year old, I didn't really take much notice, and just cracked on. And off into studying at music college I went, and subsequently into a professional career.

Only, the niggling emotional difficulty of turning what was once a hobby into a career, and a quite demanding one at that, kept popping up every so often. As a way to navigate this journey, I actually ended up finding solace in the creative process itself. I found a way to retreat from the outside world and connect with myself. Many times my creative retreats were enhanced by connecting to nature as well, and learning from the cyclical nature of the seasons, some of these musings you will find woven in the ideas and pages as you journey through. Throughout the book, I'll tell you a bit more about my experiences in the hopes that they might normalise the more challenging aspects of creativity for you, and highlight the profound joy having a creative practice, a *creative retreat*, can bring.

WELCOME.

LET'S GET STUCK IN!

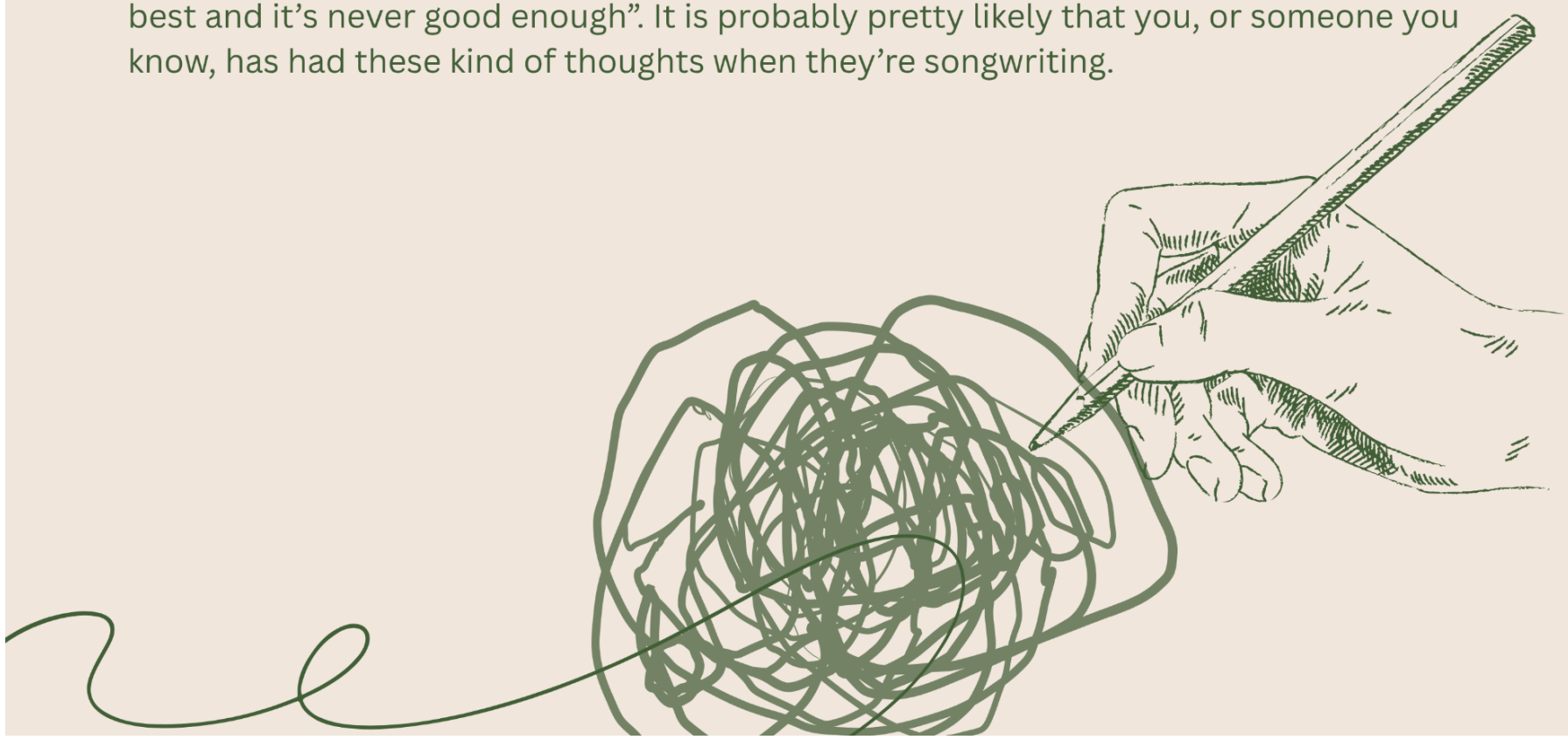
PART II

Rewild your creativity

In the last few years during my research journey, I have had quite a lot of chats with people about perfectionism. It turns out there are quite a few misconceptions about what it is, and whether it is helpful. In my own journey, I've certainly had my fair share of perfectionistic thoughts ("*Is this [insert word] good enough?*"), and what I found was that by learning about perfectionism helped me to move beyond some of the more harmful sides of it, mostly(!).

Academics conceptualise it as a multidimensional personality style by which a person tries to reach unattainably high standards that they either expect of themselves, or believe others expect of them (more reading highlighted in the 'notes' section at the end of the book, if you are interested). It can develop as a coping response to unmet needs in childhood, and is essentially a way of trying to connect with others, which is ironic as most perfectionistic behaviours can be quite isolating. Perfectionism itself, in my experience, is a tough subject to raise in a social setting, which adds to the problem. It's also been shown to be related to imposter syndrome (offically known as *imposter phenomenon* in academia) which is also to do with a feeling of being found out to be a phony.

There a few dimensions that I feel are quite relevant to singer-songwriters, and also popped up regularly in a qualitative pilot study I did exploring this, *self-oriented perfectionism* and *socially prescribed perfectionism*. Self-oriented perfectionism is when we expect unattainably high standards of ourselves, the key word being **unattainable**. Many great artists hone their work and reach for excellence, but it's when that striving for excellence (known as *excellencism* in academia) tips into feeling upset with ourselves that we haven't reached the standards we set ourselves. Where excellencism says "I did my best and that's good enough", perfectionism says "I did my best and it's never good enough". It is probably pretty likely that you, or someone you know, has had these kind of thoughts when they're songwriting.



Socially prescribed perfectionism on the other hand, is where we believe that everyone has very high expectations of us. This, according to leading researchers, is the most insidious type of perfectionism, and is steadily rising. Consider how the impact of spending time on social media may play into this type of perfectionism showing up, or it's relative *perfectionistic self-presentation* where we try to not only hide our imperfections in public, but actively try to promote our perfection. It's highly likely (in my opinion) that we don't try to act out this kind of behaviour, but it's worth knowing that it could be happening, and maybe it might help to spot and change it.

There is a large evidence base, in the form of many scientific studies, which has found perfectionism to show up in performance and creative settings, and also be a significant contributor to poor mental health. Some academics argue about whether aspects of perfectionism can be helpful, productive, healthy or adaptive as they call it, but the adaptive perfectionism they define sounds an awful lot like excellencism to me. Therefore, I take the view that while excellencism may not be a harmful behaviour, ultimately when it slips into perfectionism, the downsides, costs and hangover of it really outweigh any positives. Based on my research, I'd recommend becoming more curious about if/where perfectionism shows up in your creative process when songwriting, community and society and seeing if there are ways you can move away from that kind of mindset.

While doing my research I became increasingly frustrated that perfectionism being a hindrance was becoming normalised, both in the amount of studies that just documented its occurance without offering strategies to manage it, and the acceptance of it being a normal part of the industry. Another way that perfectionism may arguably be developed is through the ever-productive, ever-growing capitalist society in which we live.

Capitalism encourages us to always be on,

always making more, being more, doing more.

It is very much an ethos in which perfectionism thrives. Capitalism also supports growth beyond sustainable means, and arguably plays a large role in the climate crisis. I know from experience that it can feel very overwhelming to comprehend the state of things, and submit to hopeless apathy instead of finding small, yet meaningful, ways to make positive change.

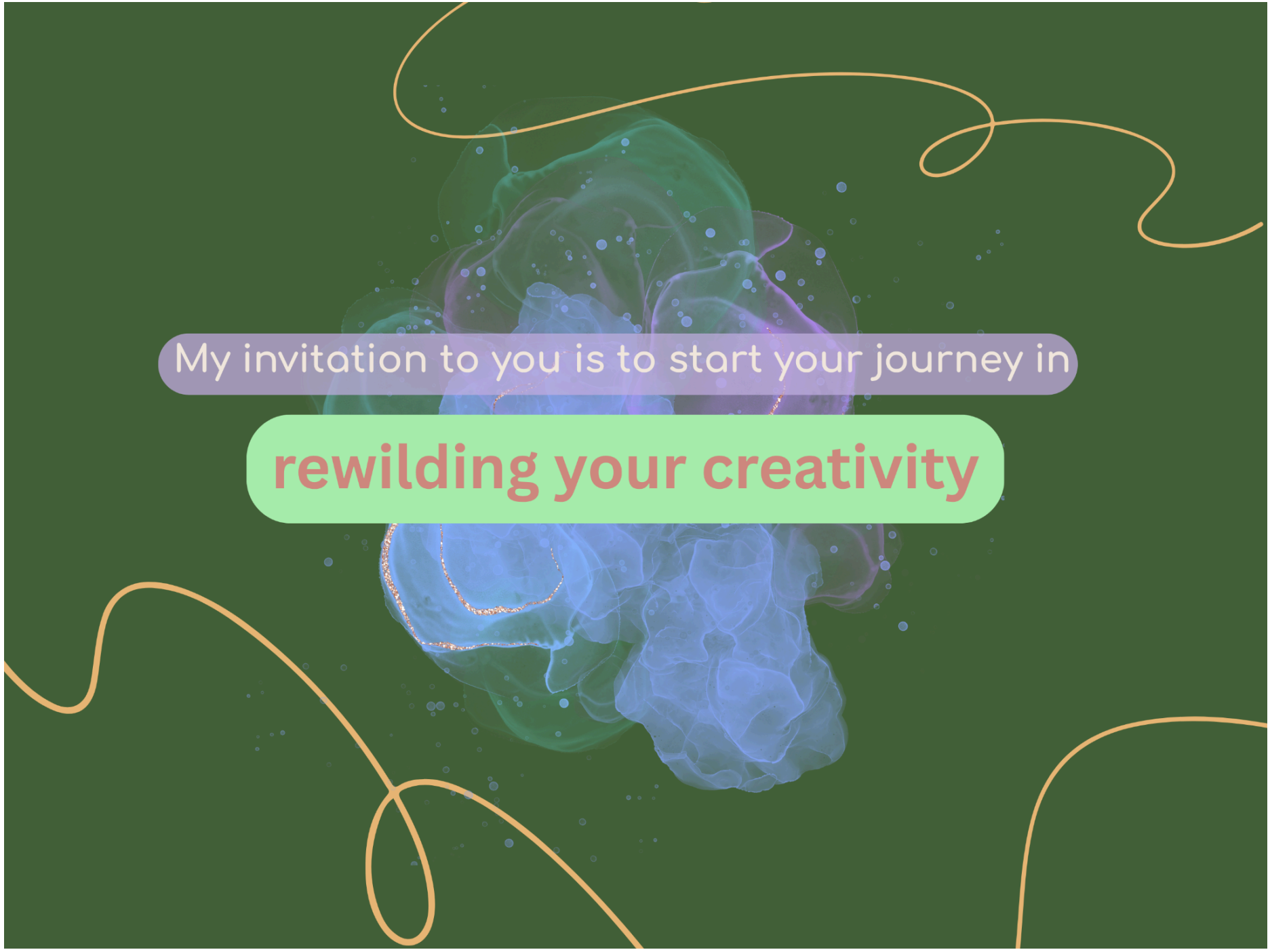
But what if we learnt from nature, and the people who are advocating to protect it, and rather than trying to be *more* as singing-songwriting creatives, we actually do *less*.

In nature terms, **rewilding** can mean restoring land back to an uncultivated state, and letting nature do its thing. If we transpose that into our context, that might mean peeling away the layers of perfectionism, imposter syndrome, isolation and general crap that has built up from being human and disrupted our primal creative instincts. It will look different for everyone, but the jist of it is, 'what if we saw ourselves, at the core, as good enough, with creativity not being something we are trying to grow into more and more, but rather something we had all along?'.

Many creatives cite their most fulfilling experiences as moments that felt playful and free, yet how come it becomes harder to play with a childlike mindset the more you know?

As Picasso said:

"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.".


My invitation to you is to start your journey in
rewilding your creativity

Meeting Your Creative Self

There are so many different reasons people choose to express themselves creativity through the mode of singing and songwriting. You might enjoy writing songs on the weekend as a way to decompress from the day job, you might be a student at music college thinking ahead to their future music career, or someone who is wanting to make more time for their music-making now they are retired. These are just some of the ways singer-songwriters identify, although there will be a diverse range of different situations. There are many benefits to engaging in creative activities, making music and songwriting, not to mention the calling many feel to write songs and/or sing. As you embark on a journey of discovering, or rediscovering, your creative self, I invite you to think about the role creativity plays in your life. I want you to consider, away from all the outside noise, what it is about being creative, singing and songwriting that really resonates with you deep inside. Alongside its many brilliant qualities, being creative and songwriting can actually be quite challenging and frustrating! Now, while I'm not advocating we avoid learning challenges in any way, I am suggesting that to get the most out of creative activities (like singing and songwriting) we must work out what inspires us most, and hold that dearly. There's a music therapist who recommends musicians choose how to 'use' music, and work out what role they want it to play in their lives as a way to gain the most well-being benefits.

Let’s start by firstly by thinking about values. Reflecting on values is a common exercise used in coaching as a way to discern if the way you are spending your time and energy actually is where you want it to be. I’m sure there’s a lot of people who say they value creativity, but does this value actually show up in their actions, in where they spend their time and energy?
Working out your values (exercise)

1. Take a look at the list of values at the end of the book (adapted from Brene Brown’s website).
2. Note down your top ten.
3. Narrow it down to your top three.
4. Reflect on the extent to which you are currently living by these values.
5. Make a note of anything you could change, do more/less of, or work towards to live in a more aligned way with your values

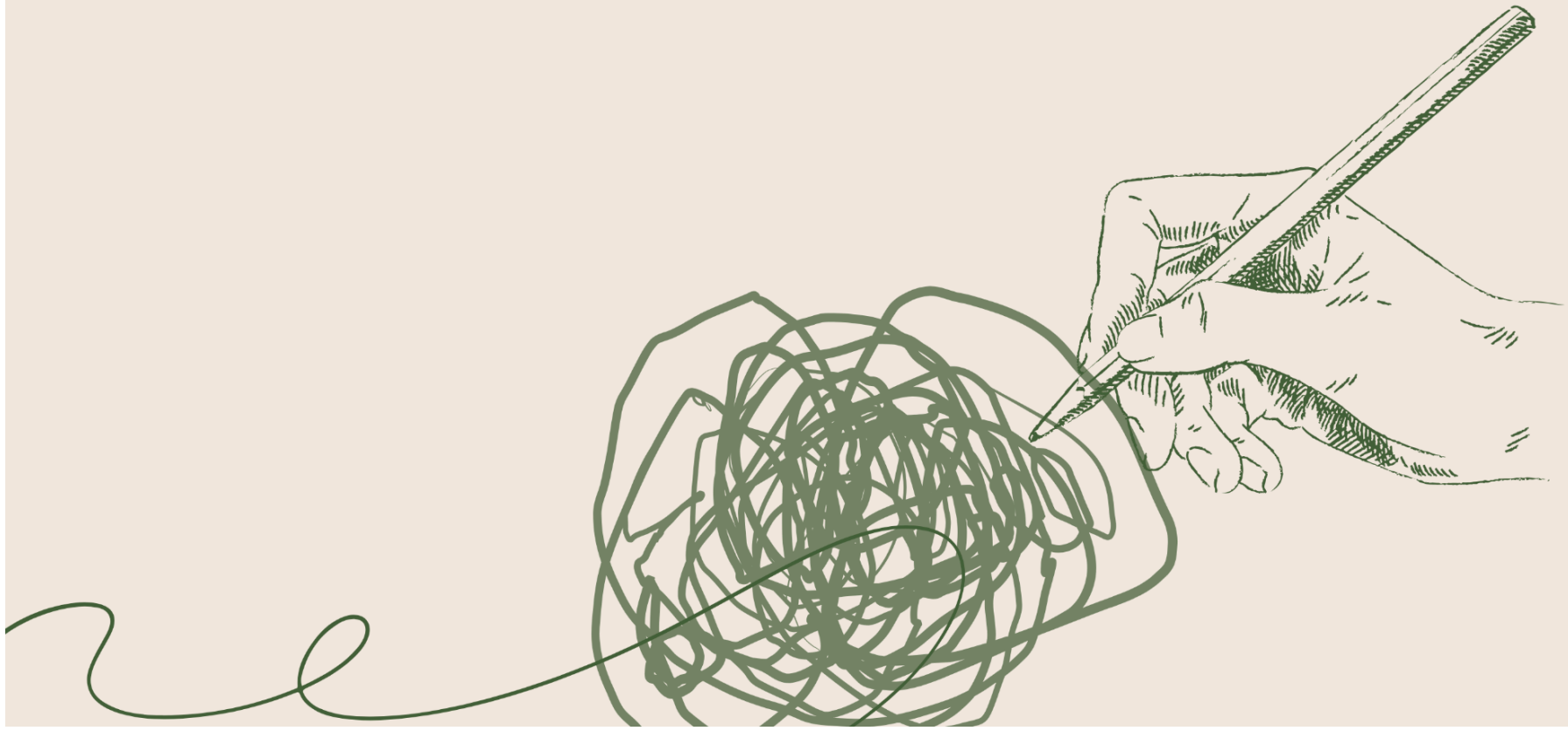
Here’s how it could apply to you:

- You love singing and songwriting, but somehow the song never gets finished, spending time on this hobby never really is prioritised amongst everything else you have going on, and you long to carve out space in your life for regular singing and songwriting. Let’s say you whittle it down to ‘adventure’, ‘teamwork’ and ‘well-being’. A possible way you could increase your motivation and enjoyment as a singer-songwriter could be to make sure you keep switching up how you get your inspiration, and take yourself on regular creative adventures. Also, you could try taking your usual solo songwriting sessions and find some collaborators to bring in more teamwork. Finally, you might remind yourself that your songs don’t need to be fully polished and perfect, rather that you are doing songwriting because you enjoy it and it raises your sense of well-being.

Or, another example:

- You might be in your final year studying songwriting and performance at university, and feeling a bit worried about how to transition your passion into a viable, and most importantly enjoyable, career. Let's say you narrow the values down to 'nature', 'family' and 'humour'. I want you to think about how you can design a career to fit into the life you want to lead, not the other way around. There are many stories of touring artists who realise deep into tour life that they actually really miss their family, and might be happier being creative locally, sleeping in their own bed most nights. While you're planning the kind of career that might be well aligned with your values you could consider finding a place to live that you live that gives you good access to nature. Perhaps the family value inspires you to think of career paths that allow you the space to spend time with family, or build a family one day if you choose. Finally, you reflect on the kind of collaborators you have fun with, the people that make you laugh and the creative influences you find humorous.

You might use these guiding values as a reminder of the kind of creative life you want to live in the long run, and as a bit of a path to get there if you aren't yet. Something I have found helpful is to remember is that everyone defines success differently, and that's ok! It's worth thinking "what would a successful creative life look like for me?" "What is my version of success?" It's never too late to let go of things you thought you 'should' do, to make more space for things you really want to do.



PART III

Building your routine

For centuries now creativity has often remained a mystery, with many famous artists known for having idiosyncratic rituals for creativity. What this ultimately boils down to is the benefit in building a routine for your creative work. Whether it is setting aside a (semi)regular time on a Sunday afternoon to sing and write songs as your hobby, or building a 9-5 schedule during the weekdays to launch a career as a singer-songwriter, it is likely that having a routine will be an inspiring creative space to retreat to. Mind you, that doesn't mean it should feel boring or restrictive. I encourage you to draw on the values exercise as you begin to experiment with what kind of routine feels most inspiring, and achievable for you. It's important to see the routine on one hand as something that is consistent, but also on the other hand as something that develops, shapeshifts, and grows with you.

In this section I will give lots of practical exercises from which you can take inspiration and build a creative routine that suits you. Word of warning, they are not all meant to be used in one go, although I would recommend doing warm-ups each time if you have time.

Daily: Creative warm-ups

Looking after the human behind the creative

As much as being creative can feed into improved well-being, it's important to remember to take care of your well-being as it will likely improve your singing and songwriting. Historically, there has been an idea that to be an artist means you need to be 'tortured', as if genius only comes with hard times. I think it's about time we change the narrative and rewrite the song on that one. Please remember that before you became a creative, a singer, a songwriter, you became a human first. I strongly encourage tending to your human needs (such as feeding your body nutritiously, being physically active, spending time in nature, connecting socially, prioritising sleep and rest, etc.) before your creative pursuits such as being a singer-songwriter.

My personal favourites to set up my day for creativity: going for a walk in nature, listening to uplifting music, and doing a few yoga stretches.

Mindful Self-Compassion

There is a lot of evidence to support the use of mindfulness as a way to improve well-being and creativity. A particular branch of mindfulness that I want to draw your attention to is a theory developed primarily by Kristen Neff, mindful self-compassion. Mindful self-compassion is made up of three main elements: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. The way that mindful self-compassion acknowledges that being imperfect is a natural part of being human that we all share, and should be met with self-kindness feels like a well-matched approach to minimise perfectionism. Aside from my intuition and experience in using mindful self-compassion, there is some early support in the science world for my hunch, although more research needs to be done in this emerging area. There are lots of really good resources online if you wish to learn more about this, but for now I just ask you to hold the three main elements (self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness) in your mind, as a guiding philosophy, as we progress through this book.

Singing

There are so many things to say about singing, but this is not a book about singing technique. What I will do is share a few things that may help you cultivate a regular singing practice that feels healthy, nourishing and authentic.

Warm up your body (exercise)

Unlike many other instruments which you can take out of a case, this one (the voice) goes everywhere with you, and picks up all sorts of physical tensions in the same way you do. It is important to find ways to reset your body before singing.

In a way that works for your body, see if you can stretch out and relax the muscles that surround the voice such as:

- Rolling your shoulders both ways (focusing on releasing shoulder tension).
- Stretching up and feeling the sides of the ribs opening up a bit (focusing on releasing ribcage tension).
- Tilting your head to one side and feeling a stretch in the other side of the neck, then repeating on the other side (focusing on releasing neck tension).
- Pretend you are chewing a ginormous piece of toffee (focusing on releasing jaw tension).
- Move your tongue around your mouth in circles, and then stick it out for a few second as far as you can (focusing on releasing tongue tension).

Aim to sing in a relaxed, yet powerful, posture. Try to find a middle ground between slouching and standing up rigidly straight. Things like Alexander Technique and Yoga might be good things to look into if you need some help in this area.

Warm up your voice

Ok, there is so much to say here. There are so many different schools of thought, and it can be really helpful to learn some essential techniques with a trusted singing teacher (whether that's in a one to one lesson, in a choir, or via YouTube). I will include some other resources that may be helpful to you in the 'notes' section. So, instead of comprehensively covering singing warm-ups (which is not the purpose of this book), I am going to give you some top tips and recommendations to look up instead:

1. Starting by warming up your breathing is a good idea (after your body warm-up). The 'accent method' is a great way to learn breathing techniques for singing, as well as bringing resonance to your speaking voice (which is crucial for singing).
2. Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises (aka SOVTEs) such as lip trills and straw phonation are a game changer, and a good thing to do after breathing exercises, starting in a mid-low part of your range and gradually widening throughout the range. SOVTEs are also used as a way to rehabilitate the voice, so if your voice is feeling a little tired SOVTEs will be your friend!
3. Follow SOVTE work with moving through your range on vowels (sounds like 'zee' and 'wee' are great), while maintaining techniques you built up in the first two steps.
4. Tongue twisters are fun, but they are also a great way to warm up the articulators required for singing.
5. When you finish singing, it's a good idea to cool down (almost like a micro warm-up but the other way round, so for example, SOVTEs across as a gradually decreasing range).

Other things to consider:

- Singing shouldn't feel painful generally, and if you are having any persistent symptoms such as hoarseness in your voice (that are unrelated to an illness), it's worth speaking to a voice specialist like an ENT doctor.
- I'd encourage you to enjoy the feeling of singing mindfully. Notice the sensations in your body as the sound comes out of you.
- A great and annoying part of singing is that it is like going to the gym. It's unlikely you will get a six-pack after two sessions at the gym, but if you go regularly you may see improvements. Similarly, to feel stability, consistency and development in your voice, you will need to develop a routine and build up the muscles in your voice. Frustratingly, that can mean your voice won't sound how you want it to straight away if you are 'out of practice', but the good news is that just by chipping away at it regularly (little and often), you are likely to notice changes before too long! In other words, you are in control to build the voice you want.
- Singing can feel like a type of meditation. Lean into the mindful aspect of it and soak up all the happy hormones your body is creating while you sing.

Vocal Palette Inspiration Playlist (exercise)

Imagine an artist's palette, with all kinds of colours that can be chosen as they are or blended with each other to create new shades. Now imagine your voice has the capabilities to have many different colours and shades to it. We don't just have to use the voice we start with, in fact I encourage you to go out there and collect your palette so that you have many different options to play around with. Like most things, if you study and seek your inspiration widely you will likely find yourself able to express your creativity in a fairly free way, with fewer barriers. When we don't broaden our horizons in singing, our vocal technique can feel stuck, it gets boring, and we often feel like there are barriers (technical, musical, mental) that hold us back. I encourage you to make a 'vocal palette inspiration playlist' for yourself, enjoy singing along with your favourite singers and learn new vocal techniques.

1. Create a playlist of some of your favourite vocal moments. Listen out for tone, technique, resonance, articulation, phrasing, etc. We're listening out for the sounds the singer is making, rather than if we love that song (that's another playlist).
2. Try to mimic the sounds you are hearing, as if you were trying to making your voice sound like the voice you are hearing. It can work well to do this in a call and response fashion.

Creative warm-ups for songwriting

In the same way that for singers it is helpful to warm-up the instrument, songwriting may also be seen as an instrument, as well as the software used to produce songs. As such, it becomes important to add in a variety of songwriting warm-ups into the mix. Increasingly digital audio workstations (DAWs; such as Logic Pro, Ableton Live and Pro Tools) used for recording and producing music have not only become an integral part of songwriting, but another avenue through which singer-songwriters can play and express their creativity. I encourage you to explore using instruments and software that is new to you with an open mind, and use your musical ears to guide you as a starting point without worrying about not knowing fully how something works. Similarly, the focus here is not on being a 'great' poet, but using poetry as a mode of expression, no matter what level you are at.

The following poetry exercises can be done using paper and pen (or digitally if preferred), the musical warm-ups using instruments (such as voice, piano, guitar, etc.), and the DAW warm-ups can even be done using free online software, if you do not have a DAW already. By doing creative warm-ups across various songwriting disciplines we are not only building routine and songwriting techniques, but getting our mind into a conducive space for songwriting. It is important to go with your first instincts, without overthinking. These exercises are meant to be very quick, and nothing that comes out of it is meant to be good, or for the purpose of keeping (although you are very welcome to!). The daunting prospect songwriters are often faced with is a blank page and the desire to write a great song. Instead of this, I'd say (to myself as well!) just start by doing regular creative warm-ups and see what emerges from there. Oh, and set five, ten, fifteen, or twenty minute timers for the exercises to follow.

Morning Pages (exercise)

A fantastic exercise recommended by the esteemed creativity author Julia Cameron, is the concept of writing ‘stream of consciousness’ prose for three pages before you start your day.

Some things that really work about this exercise:

- It can help to build a routine.
- It promotes a ‘turn up and write’ mentality which is helpful for songwriting, try not to edit yourself or delete anything.
- It doesn’t need to be something you ever look at again, although you may find it feeds your creative work. It is actually recommended that you don’t tend to look back at it much. The gold is in the doing, not what you have done.
- It helps ‘clear out the cobwebs’ before you start working on singing and songwriting.
- It is important to remember these are not seen as art in any way, it is pretty much just journaling.

Object writing (exercise)

A well-loved exercise of songwriters is Pat Pattison's 'object writing'. The principle here is that you pick an object (car, window, table, etc.) and you write freely about it and draw on your senses as you write. You may end up writing about something you have imagined, or a memory, or something in between. Just remember to keep tapping into your senses and write about how it felt, tasted, sounded, looked, smelled. Important part: you must time this. Set a timer for five or ten minutes and make sure you spend all the time writing (without overthinking), and 'put your pens down' as soon as the timer goes.

Poetry 1: cut up technique (exercise)

Choose a prompt word randomly and write four lines of poetry about it. It doesn't need to rhyme. Choose another related word and write four lines of poetry, no rhyming needed. Choose a final related word and write four more lines of poetry, still no rhyming needed. Tear up with paper so all the lines are separated and laid out in front of you. Make all of the lines into a new order. The lines may not sit next to their old neighbours. Set a three or five minute timer for each section of the exercise and don't disobey the timer! Repeat next time with a different word.

Poetry 2: wordsearching (exercise)

Skim through a book and write down your favourite 15 words. Create a poem with these. Or skim through the same book and randomly land on a page, choosing the first 10 words that make you feel uneasy. Make a poem with these prompt words. You may add in other words to your poems, but you must not miss out any of the original words you chose (timer: ten minutes).

Poetry 3: writing in key (exercise)

If you are needing to write another section of your song, for example the second verse, firstly write out all words that relate to your title. Then build a verse using this type of language. This is another exercise inspired by the work of Pat Pattison (timer: fifteen minutes).

Poetry 4: image (exercise)

Find an image and write a poem inspired by it (timer: ten minutes).

Poetry 5: wordjar (exercise)

Create a jar for words you like. Put a few words on little pieces of paper into it regularly and then randomly pick a small handful for a poem (timer: five minutes).

Music 1: prose (exercise)

Grab some of your favourite books and randomly select a page from one of them. Take this page now as the inspiration for sketching out a short musical moment (rhythmically, melodically, harmonically, structurally, etc.,), (timer: twenty minutes).

Music 2: poetry (exercise)

Take a poem as a prompt and create a musical sketch to evoke it, either directly, or abstractly, or somewhere inbetween (timer: ten minutes).

Music 3: visual storytelling (exercise)

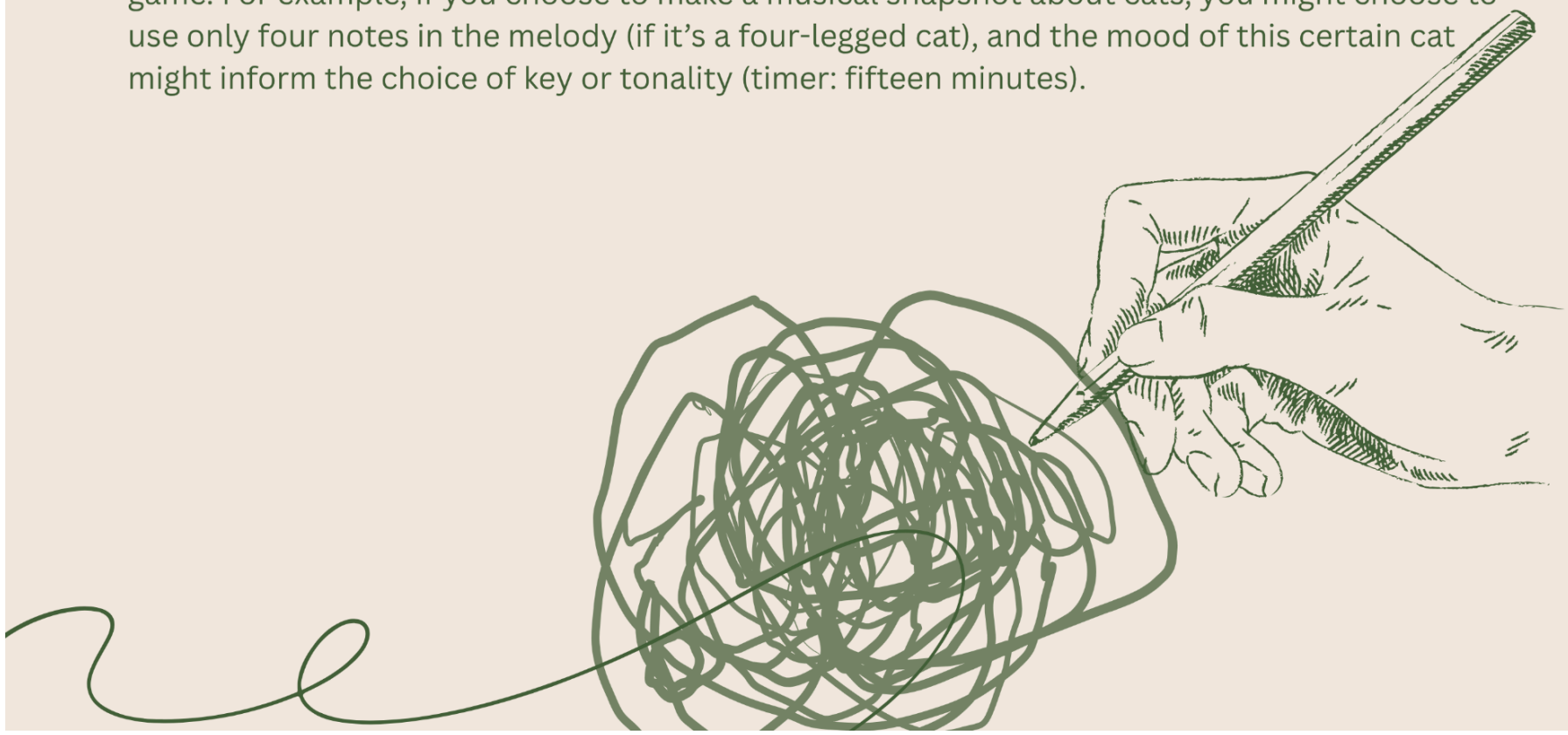
Find some pictures (postcards or tearing some pages out of a magazine). Lay them out in front of you, and then create an order which tells a story. Use this story as a prompt for a musical sketch (timer: fifteen minutes).

Music 4: film (exercise)

Choose a short film or video clip (or make your own) and make something musical that captures the essence of it (timer: ten minutes).

Music 5: your inspiration (exercise)

Take something that inspires you (art, nature, philosophy, politics, cats, etc.) and build a short musical sketch that is inspired by it. The inspiration should inform the choices you make like a game. For example, if you choose to make a musical snapshot about cats, you might choose to use only four notes in the melody (if it's a four-legged cat), and the mood of this certain cat might inform the choice of key or tonality (timer: fifteen minutes).



DAW 1: collecting field recordings (exercise)

Take an audio recorder (most smartphones have an voice memo function) on an adventure round your home or outside. Listen out mindfully for what you hear, and when you feel inspired, capture these sounds by hitting ‘record’. Hear the music in the sounds of the world around you! Enjoy the adventure, no set time.

DAW 2: creating with field recordings (exercise)

Choose something you are passionate about in life (for example a particular type of film, or niche outdoor activity) and build a soundscape (using field recordings only) that evokes it (timer: fifteen minutes).

DAW 3: draw what you hear/hear what you draw (exercise)

Choose a song randomly, and while you listen to it, draw out what you are hearing. This can either be done in a timeline way (bearing resemblance to a graphic score), or in an abstract way. Now use your picture to inspire the creation of a soundscape or musical sketch within your DAW (timer: twenty minutes).

DAW 4: chopping samples (exercise)

Choose a prompt (a word, title, poem, book, film, piece of art, etc.). Download some samples from online and choose a few which you then drop into your DAW project. Now take the scissors tool, chop them up and rearrange them to evoke the prompt you chose (timer: fifteen minutes).

DAW 5: storytelling through FX (exercise)

Briefly familiarise yourself with the location/function of audio FX (such as reverb, EQ, delay and distortion) on your chosen DAW (ask a friend, google or Youtube). Create a short musical sketch in your DAW that takes inspiration from either a mood, emotion, season, weather or time of day using any of the FX above (timer: twenty minutes).

Of course if you have more time to dedicate to these exercises, you could combine one from each category as a way to draft up the skeleton of a song. For example, you could start with object writing on 'midnight', then build that into a poem using a poetry warm-up, sketch it out some musical ideas using a music warm-up, finishing off using a DAW warm-up to realise it sonically. Hopefully you will have found the benefit of using a timer, so go ahead and set timers (perhaps 20 minutes each micro-task) as a way to manage your time, but also avoid overthinking. Remember this is just a starting sketch to get ideas 'on the page'. Try not to let your 'inner editor' into the room yet, and just focus on getting a draft of the main idea. Once you feel ready, work together with your inner editor to take it to another draft.


The final warm-up game, for now (exercise)
Create your own wild exercises. Repeat.

PART IV

Regular: Creative games

Following on from building a regular singing and songwriting routine through creative warm-ups, I invite you to supplement this by longer creative sessions, or games as I've chosen to call them. The word game is important here. Creativity can be really fun, often that's when we feel most inspired. So if you feel guilty for being too playful, and having too much fun - don't! That means you're in a good space for exploration and learning. Here are a few games to try out every week, or every couple of weeks, depending on how much time you have available to invest.

decompose:deconstruct (game)

The principle of this game is to ‘decompose’ and ‘deconstruct’ (recycle, you could say) existing works (art, compositions, texts, etc.) into fragments, harvest these ideas, and use them to build new works. It might take the form of breaking down things we already know into smaller components and see how these fragments can be stitched together in new ways. As highlighted in the book ‘Steal like an artist’ by Austin Kleon, there are ways to do this without plagiarising the work of others. You can use this game as a way to study, honour, credit and celebrate the work of others. By applying the decompose:deconstruct game to many pieces of work, we can learn from what inspires us, and use it to be a springboard into new, original work through remixing, and transforming it.

Creativity in any medium (games)

Singing and songwriting can be seen as the primary mode through which we express our creativity, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t explore other creative mediums (such as photography, film, drawing, creative writing, movement, collaging, painting, etc.). Often as creatives, we can get stuck and feel uninspired, so these games could very well have gone in the creative block section. In short, they can be used as a way to maintain/discover or recover/rediscover. If you ever feel totally stuck with singing or songwriting, I suggest you take some time to rejuvenate by being creative in other mediums before you go back to your primary discipline. It doesn’t matter if you are a complete beginner, or feel you have limited abilities, as that can in some ways help you to explore and play, with low expectations of yourself. To begin with, I suggest you start by writing down all of the mediums I suggested (as well as adding any others of your own) and putting them in a jar.

Creativity in any medium 1: inspired by (game)

Choose a preferred creative medium from your jar, and then create a piece inspired by something, or someone, that inspires you.

Creativity in any medium 2: identity (game)

Randomly choose a medium, and then create a piece that captures your sense of identity at the moment.

Creativity in any medium 3: story (game)

Select the medium you feel least familiar with, and then create a piece that evokes a story that is meaningful to you.

Creativity in any medium 4: nature (game)

Select a medium that you haven't tried yet (or used in a while), and then by either taking it outside, or bringing the outside in, create a piece that is inspired by something you appreciate in nature.

Creativity in any medium 5: different viewpoints of the same landscape (game)

Choose a medium, and then create a piece which takes the theme from one of your songs but explores it from a different viewpoint.

Connecting with nature (game)

This one is quite simple. Get outside and enjoy nature for a short, or extended time. Keep it simple and just be present. Or, bring things to read, listen to, learn about or ways to capture (voice memos, sketchbooks, notebooks, camera). Really simple, but can be quite profound, I've found at least.

Tech-free creative retreat (game)

As a way to build on the recommendation I gave at the beginning to limit distractions, I want to encourage you to try designing a creative retreat for yourself away from technology. See it as an experiment, as a game, and be curious about what works for you. For example, you could find creative ways to hide your phone from yourself (like in a box that is labelled 'do not open') for a few hours in a morning while you go through some warm-up exercises and creative games from this book. If a few hours feels too much, start with minutes. If you feel like a tech-free pro, try a few days of creativity away from technology. Of course, you may want to use technology such as a phone camera, or a DAW on a computer, so I suggest you take the time to set this up for yourself by letting loved ones know you will be off the radar, switching on airplane mode, or closing communication channels on a computer. Some of my most inspiring, productive and enjoyable creative moments as a singer-songwriter have been when I have set clear boundaries with my notifications, phone, and social media.

Seasonal practices

As much as we might feel the pressure (usually societal) to feel creative all the time, it is worth reconising that just as nature has seasons, we do too. We might have a highly prolific phase in our singing and songwriting that, like a garden in summer, bears many creative fruits, as well as other times where we can reflect on our journey so far and slow down, like nature does in winter. Based on my experience as a human, as a singer-songwriter, as a teacher, and as a researcher, I recommend honouring both the seasons in nature, as well as your own internal seasons, as a way to sustain creativity, so that it can continue to sustain you. By engaging with these kind of rhythms we quietly can quietly disrupt the societal expectations set upon us, as well as use creativity as a form of resistance in an increasingly complex world. Living an authentic and rich creative life is at least something (somewhat) in our control. It is these kinds of slow, persistent rituals that can connect us more to nature (in a time of ecological breakdown) and may see the world changing for the better, one step at a time.

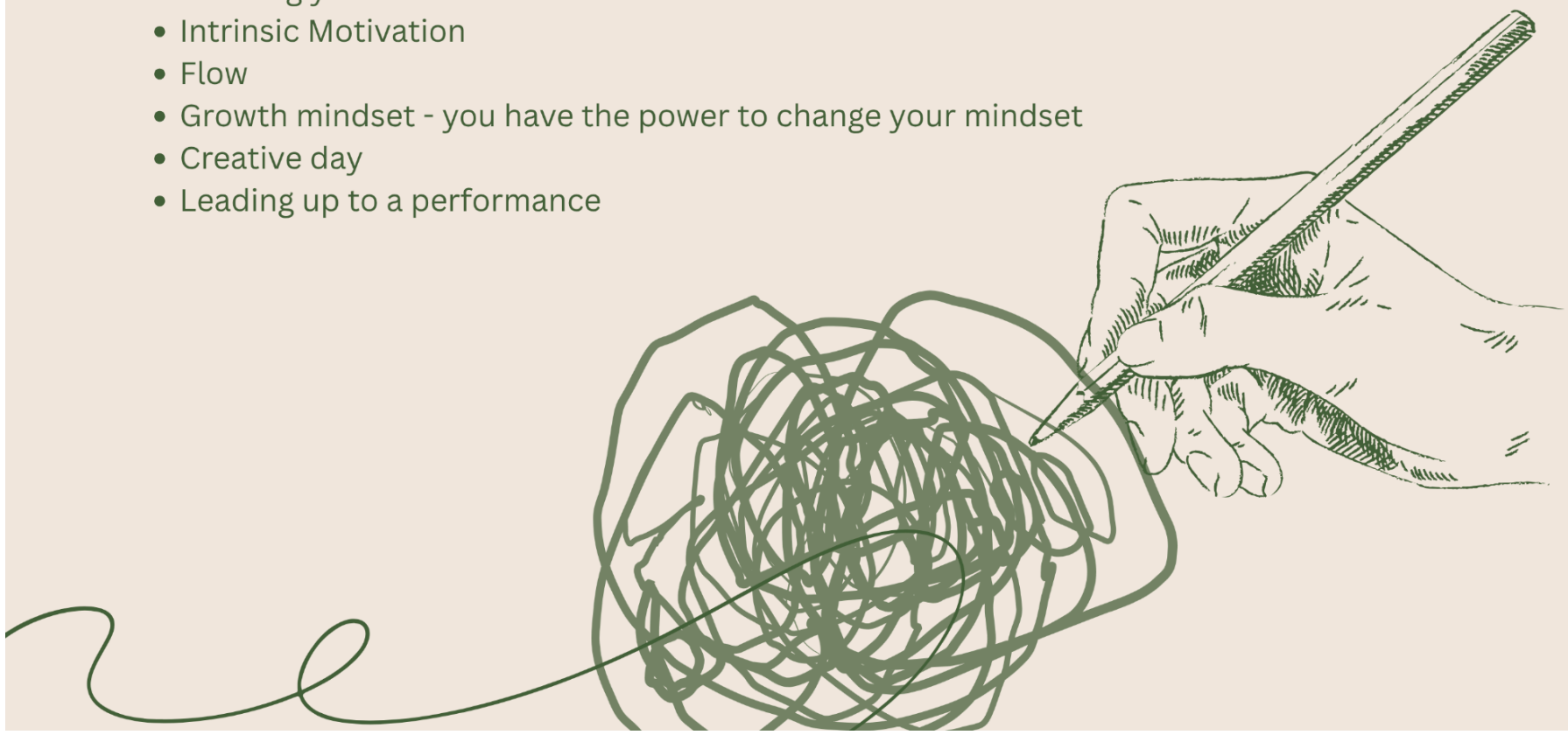
The following games can be used seasonally as a way to reflect, and connect with yourself.

Seasonal creative retreat in nature (game)

Building on the ‘connecting with nature’ game from earlier, I invite that you take the time to mark the changing seasons, through spending time in nature, and taking inspiration from the distinct seasons (as well as the transitions) to inform new creative works (including songs).

Visualisations

- Defining your version of success
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Flow
- Growth mindset - you have the power to change your mindset
- Creative day
- Leading up to a performance



Creative block interventions

It is my hope that by retreating to this creative space regularly, the need for interventions will become less needed, but once in a while they can be helpful exercises to set up a more fulfilling creative process, or begin to confront some deeper patterns that can hold us back creatively. Due to this part of the book potentially reaching a little deeper than other aspects, I need to reiterate key points from the beginning:

- Use your best judgement to try these exercises only if you feel in a good space to, at a pace and level of depth that is safe for you to do.
- Not everything in this book will suit everyone, and it may not be the right time for you to dig deeper into negative thought patterns that show up in your creative process.
- These exercises should not be used as a substitute professional medical/psychological advice, and professional support should be sought if anything is triggering (see list of UK-based support organisations included at the end of the book).

That being said, I hope you find these exercises useful! Let's dive in.

1. Getting to know the inner critic (exercise part one)

There are myriad ways people have labelled the negative internal voice (which can disrupt creativity) that many of us are familiar with. Inner chimp, the censor, fear, the critic, resistance, self 1, the voice of doubt, monkey mind, the self-saboteur, the editor, self-criticism, perfectionism, the inner critic. Whatever we call it (in this case the inner critic), it is worth getting to know the flavour of inner critic you are dealing with so that you can learn to liaise with that part of you more effectively. I have a theory that inner critics aren't actually out to get us, but deep down they are trying to save us from humiliation and mistakes. They just tend to go about it in a fairly stressful, chaotic way. As I previously mentioned, perfectionistic behaviours are often used (probably not consciously) as a coping strategy to an unmet need, such as the need to be accepted by others. For the purpose of this exercise I will label it as the inner critic, but I also view it as perfectionism here. As a way to manage the inner critic, and perfectionism, I suggest we try to understand their motivations and fears, so we might have a better chance at working harmoniously with them.

My invitation to you is to take some time to visualise what an inner critic looks like, and then draw or collage it. I like to visualise a 'critical penguin'; nothing to be scared of, has a good heart, but also ultimately a furrowed brow and a big dose of skepticism. Everyone's will look different. Feel free to be creative with it and invite whatever type of character you want to.

Once you have drawn an inner critic, yours or a general inner critic, I want you to think of the kind of phrases it would say when it crops up in a singer-songwriter context, and write them down as well, preferably on the same page.

Some examples of the kind of inner critic, perfectionistic phrases we might hear internally as singer-songwriters:

- “I can’t make mistakes, everything is riding on this performance.”
- “This song is rubbish, and nobody will like it.”
- “Every song I write needs to be better than the last, and show my songwriting skills at their very best.”
- “If I share my songs with others, they will see how terrible I really am and judge me.”
- “My singing voice will never be like [*insert favourite singer, usually famous*], so what’s the point in even trying?”

Perhaps you see my theory here about inner critics trying to kindly save us from humiliation… Trouble is a lot of us can recognise how an inner critic and/or perfectionism are getting in the way. So let’s go on to part two of this exercise and apply Kristen Neff’s mindful self-compassion model (from earlier) as a way to reframe, and ultimately soothe, our inner critic. This is a particularly important step in finishing off this process you have started.

1. Reframing perfectionistic, inner critic thoughts through self-compassionately (exercise part two)

As a reminder, the three main elements of mindful self-compassion are: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. A great way to check if something is self-compassionate is to ask ourselves: “is this something I would say to a friend?” or “how would I feel if a friend said this to me?”. Often we can then realise that we hold ourselves to much higher, often harsher, unrealistic standards than we would a friend, and expect ourselves to be superhuman, when in reality we are just human (like everybody else)! One thing that I can feel as I re-read the inner critic phrases above, is that it is a lot of pressure to carry round, and if those phrases were aimed at a friend it wouldn’t be a surprise if they didn’t feel creatively inspired. So, perhaps we shouldn’t expect ourselves to feel overjoyed, and ready to meaningfully dive into creative pursuits such as singing and songwriting, if we have those kind of things rattling round our minds...

I’m now going to workshop the inner critic phrases and show you how it may be possible to reframe those kind of perfectionistic thoughts:

- Instead of: “I can’t make mistakes, everything is riding on this performance.”, try: “This is stressful (mindfulness). It’s really normal to make mistakes (self-kindness), everybody does (common humanity). All I can do is try my best, and if something goes wrong I can learn from it”.

- Instead of: “This song is rubbish, and nobody will like it.”, try: “I can tell I’m feeling upset about this song right now (mindfulness), but I want to remember that many songwriters get frustrated (common humanity), because writing songs isn’t easy, and I want to go easy on myself right now (self-kindness). I also want to just stay in the present right now, focus on the process, and write because I enjoy it, rather than thinking about what other people will think (moving away from perfectionism)”.

- Instead of: “Every song I write needs to be better than the last, and show my songwriting skills at their very best.”, try: “I’m putting a lot of potentially unrealistic expectations (noticing perfectionism) on myself right now (mindfulness) which might not be helping me. I’d like to take the pressure off myself by just focusing on the process of songwriting, rather than the end result (self-kindness)”.

- Instead of: “If I share my songs with others, they will see how terrible I really am and judge me.”, try: “I’m feeling nervous about how other people will see me (mindfulness). This is something a lot of people worry about, so I’m not alone in this experience (common humanity), but I want to remember that I have a unique gift to share with other people (self-kindness)”.

- Instead of: “My singing voice will never be like [*insert favourite singer, usually famous*], so what’s the point in even trying?”, try: “This feels upsetting (mindfulness), but I want to remember that many singers compare themselves to others and often don’t feel good enough (common humanity). What might help me more is to remind myself how far I’ve already come in my vocal development (self-kindness), and how much I love singing. That’s what’s really important to me, rather than self-comparison (moving away from perfectionism)”.

Now, if you feel ready, why not try workshopping it on some of the phrases you wrote earlier, in the first part of the exercise, and see how that feels? The idea is to try and fuse it with aspects of mindful self-compassion (self-kindness, shared sense of common humanity and mindfulness), applying a supportive tone, and the same level of care for yourself that you would give to a friend. I've also infused this with some phrases that bring into question perfectionistic thinking. If you're not sure about how to do that, it might help to re-read the earlier section where I define perfectionism (rewild your creativity) as a starting point. If you found that in any way helpful, I'd recommend seeking out further resources on Kristen Neff's website (see notes section), although these are not music-specific.

Setting Goals

The final practical skills I want to impart are about planning how to prioritise things that are important to you through setting goals, if it's helpful for keeping you on track. Setting long-term goals, with smaller sub-goals that get you there laid out, can be useful if you have particular aspirations. My main advice here, based on research and experience, is that you ensure any goals you set are deeply meaningful to you, not what you think anyone thinks you should do. It can be helpful to think back on your values as a way to get started. Not everyone will want to set goals for themselves (nor should they!), but sometimes having a goal to work towards can provide a bit of motivation and momentum. For example, if you have been writing songs for fun but never finishing any (even though you would very much like to), perhaps you could set yourself a goal to finish one by X month? Or if you have an ambition to release a small collection of songs publicly, you could use goal-setting to create a timeline for yourself. Something that is important to remember, is that 'life happens'! As appropriate, you must give yourself understanding and adjust your goals and expectations to support your well-being as necessary. If you'd like to do a bit of planning and reflecting on how you could find more time for singing and songwriting in your life, I've created some templates to get you started. Use them creatively. Use one, some, or all.

What's Next

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned about longevity - in life and creativity - is that simplicity, connection and belonging matter more than accomplishments. A few years ago I watched an enlightening documentary about a research initiative that examined the lifestyle factors of people in certain 'blue zone' locations globally where a highly concentrated number of very old people are living healthy and happy lives. What struck me most about their lives was often how simple they are. Many of them live very modest lives, but they are rich with social connections, as well low in stress, among other things. It has inspired me to find balance in my life where I can, and relish the simplicity in everyday life. None of these old people are famous, or are particularly extraordinary, but they are certainly happy and healthy. So I see this as a reminder that it's ok (and perhaps preferable) to enjoy following our own creative rhythms, instead of chasing somebody else's version of success.

While creative pursuits such as singing and songwriting can be a wonderful way to connect with ourselves, and enjoy solitude (which I encourage you to return to regularly), it can also provide us a place to belong. Creativity often blooms out of solitude, but it doesn't have to end there. I invite you to take the next step now and see how these skills help you connect with others, collaborate, and build community. When we honour simplicity and trust our own rhythms, we begin to rewild our creativity - letting it grow in its own natural, sustaining way. Learning how to sustain our creativity is also what allows it to sustain us - through play, through ritual, and through connection.

PART V

Solo practice resources

Daily Planner

Three thankful thoughts:

Three things for today (singing, creative, other):

Three wins for the day:

Hourly schedule (planning out the day):

Weekly Planner

What went well this week?

What was challenging and why?

Top three focuses for the week ahead

Monthly Planner

What went well this month?

What was challenging and why?

Top three focuses for the month ahead

Seasonal Planner

What went well this season?

What was challenging and why?

Where am I in alignment with my values and goals?

What tweaks could I make to be more in alignment with my values and goals?

Yearly Planner

How have I developed this year?

What steps have I taken to get where I am now this year?

What held me back this year?

What kind of values do I want to live by this coming year?
What main goal is important to me this year?
What are five sub-goals that will help me reach this goal?

Yearly Planner

What kind of values do I want to live by this coming year?

What main goal is important to me this year?

What are five sub-goals that will help me reach this goal?

Movement / Community / Connection / Collaboration

In future iterations of this artefact, this section may include some ways that a user could share the philosophy of this artefact with others. For example, they could share creative work they have made through using this artefact with others in person, or online and tag it as #rewildingcreativity. This may also be a good way to practise showing up online and embracing imperfections, as that may be the prompt that is given here.

In future iterations of this artefact, this section may include ways to connect with me and the community I am building online. For example, alongside usual routes such as a mailing list URL, a prompt may be given which invites the reader/user to write and upload an anonymous letter about their creative experiences as a singer-songwriter to an online portal as a way to connect with the community using this artefact. Another avenue could be making the suggestion that if users feel so inclined they set up creative community book groups to use the artefact together, discuss themes raised, or share their creative journey with likeminded others.

Well-being support

- Local GP
- Call 111 for help quickly (physical/mental)
- Go to A & E if it is an emergency, or call 999. This includes if you are having a mental health emergency (worried for your own safety)

- Music Minds Matter (24/7 confidential mental health support line for musicians - 0808 802 8008)
- Help Musicians UK (charity that supports musicians) - can offer financial support to get injuries treated (voice/RSI, etc)
- British Association of Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) - health care for performers
- Mind (mental health charity)

Values

Accountability
Achievement
Adaptability
Adventure
Altruism
Ambition
Authenticity
Balance
Beauty
Being the best
Belonging
Career
Caring
Collaboration
Commitment
Community
Compassion
Competence
Confidence
Connection
Contentment
Contribution
Cooperation
Courage
Creativity
Curiosity
Dignity
Diversity
Environment
Efficiency
Equality
Ethics
Excellence
Fairness
Faith
Family
Financial stability
Forgiveness
Freedom
Friendship
Fun
Future generations
Generosity
Giving back
Grace
Gratitude
Growth
Harmony
Health
Home
Honesty
Hope
Humility
Humor
Inclusion
Independence
Initiative
Integrity
Intuition
Job security
Joy
Justice
Kindness
Knowledge
Leadership
Learning
Legacy
Leisure
Love
Loyalty
Making a difference
Nature
Openness
Optimism
Order
Parenting
Patience
Patriotism
Peace
Perseverance
Personal fulfillment
Power
Pride
Recognition
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Respect
Responsibility
Risk-taking
Safety
Security
Self-discipline
Self-expression
Self-respect
Serenity
Service
Simplicity
Spirituality
Sportsmanship
Stewardship
Success
Teamwork
Thrift
Time
Tradition
Travel
Trust
Truth
Understanding
Uniqueness
Usefulness
Vision
Vulnerability
Wealth
Well-being
Wholeheartedness
Wisdom
Write your own:

Notes

TBC. Would include some of the theoretical influences and best practices referred to in the workbook.