Artistic Minds

CAPACITY BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING FOR CCS EXPERTS AND PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH IDS

WP3 – T3.1

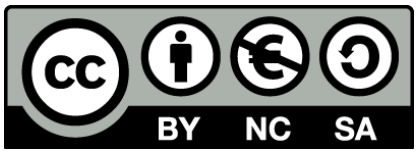
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KEY INFORMATION

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Deliverable	Capacity Building Sustainability Training Course to professionals working with young people with ID (D3.1)
Deliverable description	This deliverable, which comes as an e-book, contains the outline of the ArtisticMinds training programme for CCS experts and Mental Health professionals. The programme consists of one introductory module and fourteen modules that aim to improve the competences of those working in the project with young artists with intellectual disability and/or neurodivergent.
Deliverable type	Document - Report
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ABOUT THIS TRAINING

This e-book constitutes Deliverable D3.1 – Capacity Building Sustainability Training Course under Work Package 3 (WP3) of the ArtisticMinds project. It contributes to Pillar II (Capacity Building) and prepares professionals for the implementation of Pillar IV (Cultural & Creative Model Programme) in WP4.

This training serves as the preparation phase for the Creative Mentors who will support young artists within Work Package 4 (WP4) – Cultural & Creative Model Programme. Competences developed here will be applied directly during the mentorship activities and the implementation of the Model Programme in each Cultural Living Hub. The young artists who will be included in the Cultural Living Hubs are people with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent profiles (including autism or dyslexia), aged between 18 and 25.

The course is structured as 15 hours of training (1 hour per module), delivered through national workshops and online modules. Participants will receive 15 micro-credentials (1 per module) and an additional overall certification upon completion of the final assessment. Certificates will be issued via the ArtisticMinds Cultural Platform.

Each module is structured as follows:

- **Learning Objectives**: this section describes what participants will be able to know, understand, or do at the end of the module.
- **Content Description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges):** this section provides a clear and concise overview of the content covered in the module, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with the topic. The aim is to provide a

balanced picture that helps participants develop a critical understanding of the subject.

- **Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work**: this section proposes practical activities and exercises to be conducted individually or in groups, which are useful for consolidating the knowledge acquired and applying it to concrete situations with young artists with disabilities.
- **Impact of the Learned on Activities with Young Artists (Including Guidance and Recommendations)**: the section analyses the effects and applications of the knowledge acquired in working with young artists. It includes practical guidance, suggestions, and recommendations for putting learning into practice in real contexts, with a focus on the needs and skills development of young people.
- **Additional Resources & References:** here the learner will find additional materials, links, and bibliographical references for further study of the topic. This section allows participants to continue their study independently and access authoritative sources.
- **Assessment Questions:** this section contains 5 final self-assessment questions to measure the level of understanding of the content.

Although the training is delivered as a unified 15-module curriculum, it incorporates two tailored learning paths:

- Cultural and Creative (CCS) Experts Path and
- Mental Health (MH) Professionals Path.

Each path prioritises certain modules while keeping others as recommended or optional, enabling flexible cross-learning and exchange of methodologies as foreseen in WP3.

To facilitate navigation of the training programme, below is a summary table of all modules, indicating the designated learning target for each module.

	Mandatory	Recommended
Module 01: Introduction to the Capacity Building Training Course	CCS Experts/MH Professionals	
Module 02: Using art & culture to facilitate self-expression and resilience for all	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 03: Using art & culture to improve individual well-being for all	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 04: Using digital technologies to improve Art and Culture	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 05: Valuing Diversity: challenges and opportunities	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 06: Creative Mentorship – approaches and strategies	CCS Experts/MH Professionals	
Module 07: Supporting artists with Intellectual disability and/or neurodivergent	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 08: Supporting artists with mental health challenges	CCS Experts	MH Professionals
Module 09: Area of application of the learned - Art Therapy	MH Professionals	CCS Experts
Module 10: Area of application of the learned - Music Therapy	MH Professionals	CCS Experts
Module 11: Area of application of the learned - Drama Therapy	MH Professionals	CCS Experts

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Module 12: Area of application of the learned – Digital art and smart culture	MH Professionals	CCS Experts
Module 13: Area of application of the learned – Photo Therapy	MH Professionals	CCS Experts
Module 14: Area of application of the learned – Dance Therapy	MH Professionals	CCS Experts
Module 15: Accessibility and Design of Artistic and Cultural environments	CCS Experts/MH Professionals	

GLOSSARY

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AR	Augmented Reality
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technologies
CCS/CCI Experts	Culture and Creative Sector/Industries Experts
CRPD	Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities
DMT	Dance/movement therapy
EU	European Union
ID	Intellectual Disability
MACT	Musical Attention Control Training
MH professionals	Mental Health professionals
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
NMT	Neurologic Music Therapy
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
VR	Virtual Reality
WP	Work Package
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations

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Module 01

Introduction to the Capacity Building Training Course

MODULE 01: INTRODUCTION TO THE CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING COURSE

Learning objectives

This module introduces the training course developed within the Artistic Minds project and dedicated to both experts in the Artistic and Creative Sector (CCS) and Mental Health (MH) professionals that support, or will support, young artists with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent. By attending the following module, you will:

- **Learn** about the ArtisticMinds project and its expected outcomes,
- **Have a better understanding of** the general objectives of the capacity-building training course, its structure, and the skills it aims to develop,
- **Get to know** the other participants in the course and create a collaborative atmosphere.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

The ArtisticMinds project, co-founded by the Creative Europe programme, aims to transform the creative and cultural landscape by breathing new life into the sector and by allowing talent and innovation to flourish. The project offers concrete opportunities for young people with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent to earn recognition in the sector, fosters job opportunities and contributes to the growth of more inclusive and accessible cultural industries.

ArtisticMinds is committed to overcoming the barriers that lead to marginalisation as it welcomes and values young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with disabilities, so that they can

participate fully and with dignity in the world of arts. This commitment reflects the principles enshrined in international human rights legislation, most notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). Article 30 of the Convention **explicitly recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life**, including the right to:

- **access cultural materials in accessible formats**,
- **access cultural activities, performances, and cultural sites**, and
- **develop and utilise their creative, artistic, and intellectual potential**, not only for personal fulfilment but also for the enrichment of society.

By placing the artistic and cultural participation of young people with disabilities at the centre of its mission, ArtisticMinds directly contributes to the practical implementation of United Nation (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 30, promoting a cultural environment where access, creativity and artistic identity are recognised as fundamental components of human dignity and citizenship.

The project acknowledges the impact of a global phenomenon such as digitalisation in the world of arts, the adoption of digital technologies and tools in the sector and aims to strengthen the skills of young artists to express their talents with new digital means, if this is what they prefer, in their search for new creative and professional perspectives.

The project's objective is to enhance **inclusivity** and **accessibility** within the cultural sector, particularly for young people with disabilities, by empowering organisations and mentors to create tangible opportunities for growth, employment, and artistic and social participation.

The three main target groups of ArtisticMinds are:

- Young artists with intellectual disability and/or neurodivergent (e.g with autism or learning difficulties), aged between 18 and 25.
- Experts in the Creative and Cultural sectors and industries (e.g., curators, artists, art therapists, artistic directors).
- Mental Health professionals who support young people with disabilities (e.g., educators, occupational therapists).

One of the central aspects of ArtisticMinds is the idea that **creativity** can contribute to people's mental and social well-being, including those with ID and/or neurodivergent, by reducing stress and preventing the development of related illnesses (Conner, De Young & Silvia, 2018). Through workshops and collaborations with professionals in the creative sector, the project aims to:

- Strengthen the confidence and self-esteem of learners belonging to the target groups.
- Stimulate artistic expression and communication.
- Encourage encounters between emerging talents and experienced professionals in the world of art and culture.

The main results of the project will narrate a rich and complex journey that takes shape through several fundamental stages. Firstly, the consortium has conducted transnational research and produced **two reports on the inclusiveness and effectiveness of cultural and social policies and practices** around Europe. These reports analyse key issues such as inclusion, digitalisation, access, and support for disadvantaged young artists, particularly in the cultural and creative sector. Policies and practices have been collected and made available via an interactive e-mapping tool — a dynamic, accessible digital resource.

The **Artistic Mind Competences Framework** is the second important project result. It is a methodological document for CCS experts and MH professionals that highlights the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be developed by young artists. The framework describes competences in four interconnected domains — a personal, social, artistic, and professional domain — and distinguishes between three proficiency levels (Core, Intermediate, Advanced), to reflect the different training needs.

Another outcome is the development of a **Digital Toolkit** consisting of operational tools and practical online resources designed to support organisations, trainers, and cultural operators in their daily work. The toolkit offers the chance to explore cultural sites around the world virtually and to try out immersive games for creating digital comics using the following two original tools:

- The **3D Comic Creator Tool Game** is an immersive application for VR headsets, mobile, and PC. It empowers young artists, especially those with intellectual disabilities, to turn their ideas into 3D digital stories, combining culture, creativity, and inclusion.
- The **Cultural Trails App** (RWSIE) is an immersive mobile experience that brings the world's cultural sites to your fingertips. Through interactive 360° environments, personalised avatars, and accessible navigation, the app transforms how users explore and connect with culture — from museums to heritage landmarks — in a fully inclusive digital space.

It also provides a selection of digital tools dedicated to artistic disciplines such as digital drawing and digital music. All these resources are available free of charge on the **ArtisticMinds Cultural Platform**.

One of most tangible achievements is the creation of the **ArtisticMinds Cultural and Creative Living Hubs**. These Hubs are more than just physical spaces—they are living ecosystems where creativity, mentorship, learning, digital tools, and community all converge to foster inclusive expression and personal growth. They will be set up in five European partner countries: Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Poland. Specifically, the Hubs will:

- Provide **physical and virtual access** to artistic tools and digital technologies.
- Host the **ArtisticMinds Cultural and Creative Model Programme**, where artists are mentored by CCS professionals.
- Facilitate inclusive cultural productions, events, exhibitions, and digital storytelling.
- Act as **community-based ecosystems** for networking, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.
- Encourage long-term stakeholder collaboration via Memoranda of Collaboration.

Each Hub reflects **local cultural, institutional, and social contexts**, but follows a unified model adaptable across Europe and beyond.



Figure 1 Two adult women are painting inside an art studio.
AI - generated image - Midjourney v6, 2025

Within these hubs, young people will be guided by expert mentors and will participate in **ArtisticMinds' Cultural and Creative programme**. This program is divided into four stages: cultural experiences including physical and virtual visits to museums, studios, and creative spaces; the creation of interactive digital stories in collaboration with peers; the use of innovative digital tools for artistic production; and finally, direct collaboration with industry experts to organise events, exhibitions, and performances.

Finally, a key outcome of the project is the development of the following **Capacity Building Training Course**. This course is available as an e-book and as a free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on the project's Cultural Platform[1]. The curriculum design is based on the profile of young artists, developed as outlined in the ArtisticMinds Competences framework. It is also aligned with European Union (EU) competence frameworks such

[1] Link: www.artisticminds-platform.eu

as LifeComp (2020), Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2019), and DigComp (2022).

Although the training is delivered as a unified 15-module curriculum, it incorporates two different learning pathways: the CCS expert pathway and the MH professional pathway. Each pathway prioritises certain modules, while maintaining the others as recommended, enabling a learning experience characterised by:

- **Flexibility:** The modules can be tackled by learners in any order, as they are stand alone and not structured in a mandatory sequence.
- **Inclusive:** it aims to stimulate learning by bringing together CCS experts and MH professionals in groups, both online and in person.
- **Tailored:** each person can focus on the content that is relevant to their professional experience.

The focus of the learning programme is to build a common understanding of the opportunities and challenges when enhancing the artistic competences of artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, valuing the input of all participants involved in the training programme.

Each module is structured as follows:

  - Learning Objectives
  - Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)
  - Suggested activities for individual or group work
  - Impact of the learned on activities with young artists (including guidance and recommendations)
  - Additional Resources & References
  - Assessment Questions

At the end of each module, participants will find five self-assessment questions. Upon completing each module, they will receive a certificate

open-badge attesting the competences they have acquired. Finally, upon successfully completing a final questionnaire, they will be able to obtain certification for completing the entire training course.

Methodological foundations of the Capacity Building Training Course

The design of the 15 modules is based on several reference frameworks that guide both the structure and the training content. Firstly, the modules are based on the **ArtisticMinds Competence Framework**, which is a methodological document for CCS experts and MH professionals. It highlights the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes for young artists with disabilities to develop within the Cultural Programme (WP4). The framework describes competencies within four interconnected domains — **personal, social, artistic, and professional** — and distinguishes three levels of three proficiency levels (Core, Intermediate, Advanced), to reflect the diversity of training needs and learning rhythms.

The design process also considers important European references on the development of transversal and digital competences. In particular, the modules' structure aligns with the main EU competence frameworks:

- **LifeComp (2020)**– the European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competences, which emphasises the personal and social competences necessary for well-being, self-regulation and continuous learning;
- **Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2019),** which define the key competences necessary for active citizenship, social inclusion and personal fulfilment; and

- **DigComp (2022)** – the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, which identifies the digital competences that are essential for living and working in the digital age.

Integrating the ArtisticMinds Competence Framework with these European references enables the creation of coherent, innovative, fully contextualised modules at a European level while ensuring a balance between artistic development, personal growth, and professional skills for young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent.

The table below shows the link between the four areas of competence of the ArtisticMinds Competence Framework — Artistic, Personal, Social and Professional — and the course modules.

Module Title	Personal	Social	Artistic	Professional
Module 1: Introduction to Artistic Minds	●	●	○	○
Module 2: Self-expression and Resilience	●	○	●	○
Module 3: Well-being for all	●	○	○	○
Module 4: Digital Technologies in CCS	○	○	●	●
Module 5: Valuing Diversity	●	●	○	●
Module 6: Creative Mentorship	●	●	○	●
Module 7: Supporting Artists with ID	●	●	○	○
Module 8: Supporting Artists with Mental Health challenges	●	○	○	○
Module 9: Art Therapy	●	○	●	○
Module 10: Music Therapy	●	○	●	○
Module 11: Drama Therapy	●	○	●	○
Module 12: Digital Art and Smart Culture	○	○	●	●
Module 13: Photo Therapy	●	○	●	○
Module 14: Dance Therapy	●	○	●	○
Module 15: Accessibility and Design of CCS	●	●	●	●

The diagram highlights how each module has an impact on the consolidation and development of the skills of young artists with disabilities, integrating creative, reflective, relational, and professional skills into the training programme.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: Connection Map

Purpose: To encourage mutual understanding among group participants and identify areas of common interest across different professional fields.
Method: Work in small groups of 4–5 people, followed by a plenary discussion. This activity can also be conducted online on collaborative platforms (e.g., Miro, Padlet, Jamboard).
Duration: 30–45 minutes.
Materials: Large sheets of paper or posters; coloured sticky notes; markers; a whiteboard.
Instructions: Each group will receive a large sheet of paper and sticky notes. Each person's task is to write or draw words, concepts or experiences that represent their work, interests or the values that guide their professional practice. Then, together with the other group members, they will draw lines and connections between similar or complementary ideas to create a visual map that highlights the points of convergence between art, creativity, and inclusion. At the end of the creative phase, each group will present their map to the other participants and explain the most significant connections and insights that have emerged. Finally, the trainer will identify the main themes and summarise them in a collective map.

Activity n.2: Creative Digital Speed Networking

Purpose: To encourage active listening by facilitating quick and meaningful initial contact between training participants.
Method: Pair and plenary activities, both in person and via videoconferencing platforms with breakout rooms (e.g., Zoom or Teams).
Time: 30 minutes.

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Materials: videoconferencing platform with breakout rooms (e.g., Zoom or Teams); shared online document (e.g., Google Docs or Padlet); paper and pens.

Instructions: Divide participants into mixed pairs (CCs experts and MH professionals). Each participant has 3–4 minutes to introduce themselves and answer the following guiding questions:

- What is the project of which you are most proud?
- What challenges do you face in your daily work?

Each participant should note down a key concept learnt from their partner in the shared online document or on their own sheet of paper. After rotating the pairs three or four times, return to the plenary and share the most interesting or surprising themes that have emerged.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Young artists with disabilities encounter many difficulties in gaining recognition within the artistic and cultural sector due to prejudices, as well as physical, organizational, and structural barriers that limit their participation in cultural spaces and their fruition of cultural works (Grassini, 2018; Shapiro, 2006; UNESCO, 2020). Research in the fields of cultural inclusion and disability studies shows that these barriers are rooted in ableist assumptions and discriminatory practices that exclude people with disabilities from both creation and consumption of artistic and cultural experiences (Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Campbell, 2009).

For this reason, the project aims to contribute to a more inclusive sector. It will do this by involving, empowering, and giving a voice to young artists with ID and/or who are neurodivergent. The project pursues this goal through art, culture, creativity, the digital technologies, and the promotion of mental well-being—dimensions that are considered essential for the development of agency, identity, and professionalization in the creative

and cultural sectors (Nussbaum, 2011; WHO, 2021). Participation in the project's training programmes will enable these artists to develop cultural awareness as well as personal, social, professional, and digital skills and competences that will help them reach their full potential as emerging artists and grow professionally, while counteracting discrimination and marginalisation (European Commission, 2019; UNESCO, 2022).

With your expert support, young artists with disabilities will develop a range of skills in line with the main international reference frameworks, such as LifeComp (2020), DigComp (2022), Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2019) and Card (2022). These skills are categorised under four main domains:

- **Personal competences**: these are skills related to individual development and personal growth. Examples include flexibility and the ability to self-regulate one's emotions. These are essential qualities for dealing with different work situations in a balanced way.
- **Social competences:** these skills facilitate effective interaction with others, building positive relationships and collaboration in various contexts. Examples include empathy and cultural awareness.
- **Artistic competences:** these represent a complex set of technical, creative, and communication skills that enable artists to express themselves through various art forms. They include the ability to critically analyse one's own ideas, the ideas of others and artistic works.
- **Professional competences**: these include the management and organisational skills necessary to establish oneself as a professional who is aware of their own rights and the rights of others. These are key skills for successfully navigating the world of arts.

To promote the development of the above skills, this training course will equip you with the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to effectively support young artists with disabilities. Over the next few modules, you will learn how to use digital technologies to enhance art and culture and explore specific artistic disciplines such as dance therapy. This will enable you to enhance your professional skills and expand your experience in the creative sector. By the end of the course, you will be fully trained to act as a **Creative Mentor**, guiding and supporting young people in various artistic and cultural fields and offering them unlimited opportunities for self-expression and professional growth.

Additional resources

- Helping People with Disabilities Become Working Artists (Video): learn about a creative programme that help artists with special needs create and sell their artworks.
- Giving Artists with Disabilities a Space to Thrive (Video): The story of an America centre that provides tools, space and inspiration needed to grow into professional artists.
- How Oakland's Creative Growth enabled generations of artists (Video): Short You Tube documentary about an arts center where artists with disabilities can devote themselves to art.
- The Artist who Couldn't Draw: an animated film by Danny Gregory (Video): This animated film follows a creatively gifted individual who arbors a secret about his drawing abilities.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. The ArtisticMinds project is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

2. The training modules must be completed in strict, fixed order.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

3. What is the main goal of the ArtisticMinds project?
   - Promote tourism
   - Foster inclusion and accessibility in arts
   - Support only professional artists

4. What is the focus of the capacity building course?
   - To teach economic management
   - To build shared understanding and inclusion
   - To train journalists and critics

5. What key skill area includes empathy and collaboration?
   - Artistic competences

- Professional competences
- Social competences

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Module 02

Using Art & Culture to facilitate self-expression and resilience for all

MODULE 02: USING ART & CULTURE TO FACILITATE SELF-EXPRESSION AND RESILIENCE FOR ALL

Learning Objectives

This module explores the transformative potential of arts and culture as vehicles for self-expression and resilience-building among young people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and/or neurodivergent. At the same time, it provides practical guidance for Creative and Culture Sector (CCS) experts and Mental Health (MH) professionals to collaborate effectively in designing and implementing inclusive, accessible arts-based interventions. Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- **Understand** the theoretical foundations connecting artistic practice to resilience development in young people with ID and/or neurodivergent, drawing on research from disability studies, positive psychology, and arts-based therapeutic approaches.
- **Articulate** how arts and cultural engagement addresses multiple dimensions of resilience, including emotional regulation, social connection, positive identity formation, sense of purpose, and adaptive coping strategies.
- **Recognize** the various barriers and challenges that may prevent young people with disabilities from accessing cultural and artistic life.

Content Description: Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges

Arts and cultural engagement offer young people with ID and/or neurodivergent effective pathways to self-expression and resilience development that accommodate diverse cognitive and communication abilities. Creative expression represents a universal human need and right,

yet young people with disabilities have historically faced significant barriers to full participation in artistic and cultural life. Understanding both the concrete opportunities and persistent challenges is essential for practitioners, both CCS experts and MH professionals, seeking to facilitate meaningful arts engagement with this population.

Arts practice provides accessible channels for emotional expression and regulation when verbal communication may be limited or challenging. Many young people with ID and/or neurodivergent struggles to identify and articulate complex emotions through language alone. Creating visual art, music, movement, or dramatic expression allows externalization of internal experiences without requiring sophisticated verbal abilities. The creative process itself often generates emotional regulation, as focused engagement activates present-moment awareness and provides psychological distance from distressing feelings (Heenan, 2006). Research demonstrates significant positive impacts on emotional well-being following arts participation, including decreased anxiety, improved mood, and enhanced emotional expression (Martin et al., 2018).

Resilience, within the context of art and culture, emerges as the capacity to transform difficult experiences into meaningful expression, to find alternative pathways and to construct coherent narratives of self.

For young people with ID and/or neurodivergent individuals, especially, artistic engagement fosters resilience by validating non-verbal ways of knowing, creating tangible evidence of personal agency, providing opportunities, and connecting individuals to broader cultural communities that affirm their worth and belonging. The creative process itself mirrors resilience-building, requiring experimentation and tolerance of ambiguity.

Social Connection, Identity, and Empowerment through Art

Artistic engagement creates natural contexts for social connection and community belonging, directly addressing the profound isolation that many young people with disabilities may experience. When young artists participate in group creative activities, attend cultural events, or collaborate on projects, they develop relationships organized around shared interests, hobbies, or talents. Arts participation also facilitates connection to broader cultural communities, providing access to age-appropriate cultural experiences and supporting development of cultural literacy and mainstream social participation (Johnson, 2009).

Through artistic practice, people with disabilities also can develop their sense of identity, both as artists and as individuals. People with disabilities commonly internalize negative societal messages about their worth and capabilities, resulting in stigmatized self-concepts that emphasize limitation and dependence (Ali et al., 2012). When young artists create meaningful work, receive recognition for their creative contributions, and participate in artistic communities, they gain access to social identities that emphasize capacity and creativity rather than handicap. In this sense, the arts and culture sector can be considered particularly welcoming, as it offers everyone the opportunity to express themselves and affirm their value through creative practice.

Skills development

Arts engagement develops multiple concrete skills supporting adaptive functioning and quality of life. Fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, planning and sequencing, problem-solving, sustained attention, and communication abilities all develop through structured creative practice. These competencies transfer beyond artistic contexts to support

independence in daily living, vocational functioning, and community participation. Cognitive skills, including metacognitive awareness and self-regulation, strengthen as young artists learn to plan projects, monitor their progress, adjust approaches when difficulties arise, and reflect on their creative processes (Nota et al., 2007).

Collections of work created over time document growth and development, supporting autobiographical memory and coherent life narratives that are often challenging for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Valiente et al., 2017). Young artists can revisit their work independently, reinforcing learning and supporting ongoing reflection beyond formal program time.

Despite these opportunities, substantial challenges constrain the realization of arts engagement's potential for young people with disabilities. Historical and ongoing exclusion from mainstream arts and cultural institutions creates systemic barriers to participation. Many arts organizations lack physical, communicative, and cognitive accessibility for people with specific needs. Staff may lack training in supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent or harbor unconscious biases about who can be an artist, resulting in rejection, inadequate support, or tokenistic inclusion that fails to provide genuine artistic engagement.

At the same time, issues of autonomy and control present constant challenges. Young people with ID and/or neurodivergent often have limited opportunities for self-determination in daily life, with decisions made by family, legal guardians, or service providers (Shogren et al., 2015). In arts contexts, support persons may inadvertently take over activities, making choices about creative directions than following the young artist's lead. Establishing genuine co-creation where young artists maintain primary

authorship while receiving appropriate support requires skill, intention, and ongoing practitioner reflection.



Figure 2 In the front, a table with decorative materials (e.g. beads, glue, pencils, scissors). In the background, two women and one man seated, doing creative crafts. AI - generated photo - Midjourney v6, 2025

Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work

The following activities have been designed to facilitate and practice self-expression and resilience building. Each activity emphasizes authentic artistic practice, provides multiple access points for diverse abilities, and creates opportunities for skill development, social connection, and meaningful creative expression.

Activity n. 1: Personal Symbol Creation

Purpose: To enable CCS experts and MH professionals to understand and practice facilitating identity exploration activities with young people with ID and/or neurodivergent. This training activity helps professionals learn how to support self-representation through visual symbols while developing skills in adaptive instruction and individualized support.

Method: Individual activity with peer support, followed by group reflection and discussion (in person).

Duration: 30 minutes.

Materials: Various art supplies, including markers, colored pencils, collage materials, textured papers, scissors, glue, paper or small canvas boards, examples of symbols and logos from various cultures and contexts, tablets, or phones for reference images.

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Facilitator briefly introduces the concept of personal symbols (3 minutes), showing diverse examples and explaining how this activity supports identity development for young people with IDs and/or neurodivergent, who may struggle with verbal self-expression.
- **Step 2:** Participants quickly identify two to three elements that represent their professional identity or values (favorite approaches to working with young people, core professional values, or meaningful aspects of their practice) (5 minutes).
- **Step 3:** Each professional creates a simple personal symbol using available materials, experiencing firsthand the creative process they will facilitate with young artists (15 minutes). Emphasis is on experimentation rather than perfection.
- **Step 4:** Brief gallery walk where participants view each other's symbols (3 minutes).
- **Step 5:** Facilitated group reflection (4 minutes) discussing: What challenges did you experience? How might these challenges be amplified for young people with IDs and /or neurodivergent? What adaptations or support strategies would make this activity more accessible? How can you scaffold this activity across multiple

sessions? Participants are reminded to consider how this activity builds self-esteem and provides non-verbal communication opportunities for young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent.

Activity n. 2: Cultural Heritage Exploration Project

Purpose: To equip CCS experts and MH professionals with skills to design and facilitate culturally responsive arts activities that strengthen cultural identity and resilience among young people with ID and/or neurodivergent. This activity demonstrates how cultural connection serves as a protective factor and builds community belonging.

Method: Individual or paired work, culminating in group discussion and resource sharing (in person).

Duration: 30 minutes.

Materials: Art supplies including markers, colored pencils, fabric scraps, cultural reference materials (books, printed images of cultural art forms), paper, tablets or phones for research, worksheets for activity planning.

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Facilitator presents the rationale for cultural heritage work with young people with IDs and/or neurodivergent (3 minutes), emphasizing how cultural connection builds identity, resilience, and intergenerational relationships. Discuss considerations for working with diverse cultural backgrounds and avoiding stereotyping.
- **Step 2:** Participants identify one cultural tradition, art form, or practice from their own background or one they have encountered professionally (2 minutes). Working individually or in pairs, they create a quick visual representation or prototype of how this cultural element could be taught to young artists with IDs (12 minutes). Consider: What materials are needed? What adaptations ensure accessibility? How can family/community members be involved?

- **Step 3:** Small group sharing (10 minutes) where each participant briefly presents their cultural activity idea and receives feedback from colleagues. Groups discuss practical considerations: How do we respectfully engage with cultures different from our own? What community partnerships support authentic cultural learning? How can we ensure activities honor culture rather than appropriate or tokenize it?
- **Step 4:** Facilitator leads brief closing reflection (3 minutes) on key takeaways: strategies for culturally responsive practice, importance of involving families and cultural community members, ways to adapt complex cultural practices for varying ability levels, and how cultural pride contributes to resilience for young people with IDs and/or neurodivergent.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Arts and cultural engagement profoundly impact the lives and development of young people with ID and/or neurodivergent across multiple dimensions essential for resilience and wellbeing. Understanding these impacts and implementing programming that maximizes benefits while addressing challenges requires attention to both individual developmental needs and broader systemic factors that shape opportunities and outcomes for this population.

Identity Formation and Self-Concept Development

Arts and cultural engagement directly support positive identity development by providing young people with alternative social identities as artists, musicians, dancers, or creative practitioners. When young artists with intellectual disabilities create work, exhibit or perform publicly, and participate in artistic communities, they gain access to social roles and identities that emphasize capacity and contribution. Research by Parr

(2006) on arts participation and mental health demonstrates that creative practice supports the construction of valued identities that enhance wellbeing and reduce the negative impacts of stigmatized labels.

Emotional Regulation and Mental Health

Arts-based approaches provide accessible pathways for emotional expression and processing that accommodate diverse cognitive and communication abilities. Expression through visual art, music, movement, or drama enables young people to externalise emotional experiences that are difficult to understand or express verbally. The creative process itself often generates emotional regulation, as focused engagement with artistic materials activates present-moment awareness and provides psychological distance from distressing thoughts or feelings (Heenan, 2006).

Social Connection and Belonging

Arts and cultural programming create natural contexts for social connection, organized around shared creative interests. When young people with intellectual disabilities participate in arts groups, attend cultural events together, or collaborate on creative projects, they develop relationships based on common interests and mutual enjoyment of creative activities. These relationships can evolve into genuine friendships characterized by reciprocity, shared experiences beyond the program context, and emotional bonds that enhance life satisfaction.

Additional Resources

- "A Disabled Artist who Communicates by Painting" (Video): This YouTube interview features an artist with a physical disability who uses painting as a primary mode of self-expression. It offers vivid

testimony of how art becomes a medium for identity, voice, and resilience.

- "Arts and Culture for Inclusion: A Systematic Review on Children with Disabilities" (Paper): This systematic review 2025 by UNICEF examines arts- and culture-based programmes for children with disabilities, looking at settings, outcomes and evidence gaps. Useful for understanding the empirical backing of inclusive arts and culture initiatives.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Artistic practice can help develop emotional regulation and social connection in young people with ID and/or neurodivergent.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

2. Art as therapy and art as authentic creative practice are the same and serve identical purposes.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

3. Which area of resilience is supported through arts participation?
   - Increased competition among peers
   - Emotional regulation and coping strategies
   - Reduced communication abilities

4. What is a main goal when facilitating inclusive arts activities?
   - Focusing only on technical skills
   - Prioritizing verbal explanations

- Encouraging authentic self-expression

5. How does art engagement support identity formation?
   - By promoting the artist identity as capable and creative
   - By reinforcing dependence on caregivers
   - By minimizing self-awareness

Artistic Minds

Module 03

Using art & culture to improve individual well-being for all

Module 03: Using Art & Culture to Improve Individual Well-being for All

Learning objectives

This module explores the potential of art and culture to improve people's mental and physical wellbeing, thereby helping to reduce stress and mental health problems. Art and culture improve individual well-being, such as enhancing brain health via creative expression, reducing stress and anxiety, building self-esteem, building social connections, and providing therapeutic outlets for emotional processing.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- **Identify** how participation in art and cultural activities can promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being.
- **Apply** creative practices to enhance self-esteem, social connection, and stress reduction in diverse groups.
- **Design** simple, inclusive art-based activities that foster well-being among young people, including those with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Art and culture play a vital role in supporting people's well-being. Creative activities – such as painting, music, theatre, dance, storytelling, visual arts, and more – offer individuals a means to express emotions, develop self-awareness, and experience joy and belonging. This engagement with the arts not only provides personal fulfillment but also enhances mental health, social connection, and community cohesion.

Co-funded by the European Union

Empirical research consistently demonstrates the positive effects of active participation in cultural and artistic practices. For instance, studies have shown that art therapy can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, improve emotional regulation, and promote overall psychological well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Moreover, engaging in artistic practices has been linked to enhanced cognitive functioning, emotional balance, and increased life satisfaction (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the United States found that individuals who engage in cultural activities experience better mental health outcomes, improved social connections, and a greater sense of belonging within their communities (Clift & Camic, 2016).

The World Health Organization has recognized cultural participation as a key determinant of health, stating that it promotes cognitive stimulation, social inclusion, and emotional well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). This is particularly true for marginalized populations, such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing chronic illnesses. In these contexts, art-based activities can serve as powerful tools for building social connections and fostering a sense of purpose. The creative process itself often acts as a form of mindfulness, offering participants a respite from stress and anxiety.

In the case of individuals with disabilities, art provides alternative forms of self-expression. Non-verbal modes of communication through art, dance, or music allow participants to express emotions, desires, and experiences that may be difficult to articulate with words. Studies have shown that art therapy can foster a sense of agency, independence, and self-worth in people with physical or developmental disabilities (Creech et al., 2013). For example, a program in the UK called Arts for Health uses creative workshops to support mental health in people with learning disabilities,

leading to improved self-esteem and greater social interaction among participants (Fancourt, 2020).



Figure 3 Artist with disability who smile and models clay.
AI generated photo - Midjourney v6, 2025

Similarly, the integration of cultural activities in healthcare settings has proven beneficial. Programs that incorporate art, such as painting, music therapy, and drama, have been used in hospitals and mental health facilities to reduce stress and enhance emotional resilience in patients (Bosch, 2015). Art can provide a sense of control and autonomy for patients who are otherwise limited by illness or institutionalization. The process of creating or experiencing art can offer therapeutic benefits by shifting focus away from pain or anxiety, fostering relaxation, and improving emotional regulation (Creech et al., 2013).

However, several challenges remain. Structural barriers, such as limited accessibility to cultural spaces, insufficient training of facilitators in inclusive methodologies, and a lack of institutional recognition of art's

therapeutic potential, continue to impede the widespread implementation of arts-based well-being programs. For instance, individuals in rural or economically disadvantaged areas may have limited access to cultural resources, and marginalized groups may struggle to find facilitators who are trained in inclusive practices that can meet their unique needs. Furthermore, the evaluation of well-being outcomes in arts-based interventions remains complex, often requiring interdisciplinary approaches that assess both subjective and objective measures of impact (Creech et al., 2013). This can include tracking mental health improvements, social integration, and even physiological measures such as reduced blood pressure or lower cortisol levels.

Despite these challenges, opportunities exist when professionals and organizations adopt inclusive, person-centered approaches to ensure that everyone can engage meaningfully with art and culture. Best practices include offering accessible workshops, training facilitators to work with diverse populations, and collaborating with healthcare and community organizations to create spaces that promote inclusive participation. For example, The Art Room, a UK-based charity, uses creative activities to support young people facing mental health difficulties, providing them with a safe space to express themselves and develop coping skills. Similarly, initiatives like Art Beyond Sight focus on making art and culture more accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, helping them to engage with the arts in a way that aligns with their unique needs.

By integrating art as a shared language, we can bridge differences, promote empathy, and strengthen community well-being. Art offers a universal way of connecting people across cultural, linguistic, and social divides, allowing individuals to share experiences and perspectives that might otherwise remain hidden. In this way, cultural and artistic

engagement plays a crucial role in promoting not just individual well-being, but also collective resilience, empathy, and social cohesion.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: Mindfulness Photography: Cultivating Observation and Well-Being through Photography

Purpose: Participants will improve their self-observation, emotional expression, and connection with the present through simple photographic activities, which will then be applied to young people with disabilities. Upon completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Define key elements of mindfulness.
- Understand the relationship between photography and mindfulness.
- Try the method in practice and evaluate its benefits.
- Design their own activities for people with disabilities, using photography.
- Recognize how photography helps improve mental health, self-confidence, and emotional expression.

Method: This workshop aims to provide participants with an opportunity to experience and learn firsthand how photography can be used as a tool for mindfulness and mental empowerment.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Mobile/tablet camera; printed photos with examples (inspirational); screen for video projection; quiet outdoor or indoor space for photography; notebook and markers for reflection; worksheets.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Introduction (15 minutes):** Welcome everyone and give a brief presentation with examples and demonstration videos on what mindful photography is. It follows a 4-step mindful focus breath.

- *Pause*: ask the participants to sit comfortably, to relax their shoulders and let their hands rest naturally at their side.
- *Inhale*: ask the participants to breathe slowly through their nose, to notice the cool air as it enters their body.
- *Hold*: ask the participants to gently hold their breath- like holding a moment still in a photograph
- *Exhale*: ask the participants to release their breath through their mouth, allowing any tension to soften and release.

Repeat this cycle 2-3 times. When finished, invite everyone to open their eyes with clearer, steadier focus-ready to observe the world with renewed attention.

- **Step 2 Exploration and photography (20 minutes):** Activity: "One photo - One snapshot". The aim of this activity is to enable participants to connect with the "now" and the natural environment through their senses and to appreciate the naturalness of the moment with its imperfection (e.g., uneven light, a leaf that has torn, a shadow falling in unexpected way). Mindfulness photography focuses on noticing reality as it naturally appears, even if it is messy, simple, or not a perfect picture. Participants are encouraging to walk around (indoors or outdoors), to observe with all their senses and to accept the scene exactly as it is, without trying to make it look perfect. Specifically, ask the participants to take photos of:
    - Anything that naturally catches their attention (light, colors, shapes, textures)
    - Natural scenes (trees, sky, plants, stones)
    - Something that brings them a sense of peace or calm
    - Something that sparks their curiosity
    - Small details that they usually overlook

- Everyday objects seen with fresh eyes (a cup, a window, a chair, a path)

You can also suggest to participants to:

- Observe the environment without rushing, so they can notice more details and feel more present.
- Stand still for a few minutes before pressing the button, since it encourages a calm, intentional choice rather than a quick, automatic shot.
- Avoid zooming so they can see the subject from different angles.
- Work with natural light and real conditions rather than trying to perfect it.
- Avoid using filters and editing because the goal is to capture reality without altering it.
- Try not think about what is good or beautiful because mindfulness photography is about noticing, not judging.

- **Step 3 Discussion – Reflection (10 minutes):** Participants share in small groups or pairs and ask each other:
  - What did they notice?
  - What did they feel?
  - How does our relationship with space change when we are present?
- **Step 4 Closing – Feedback (15 minutes):** Finally, lead a group discussion reflecting on how this practice can be applied in participants' organisations and benefit the people they support in their daily work life.

Activity n.2: Storytelling Clay

Purpose: To experience the emotional and physical challenges that people with disabilities may face when participating in creative or learning activities, while fostering empathy and reflecting on how to make workshops more accessible and inclusive.

Method: Experiential learning through simulation, tactile creation, and collaborative storytelling. Approach: "Feel → Create → Reflect → Adapt."

- Maintain safety and comfort: Allow participants to remove simulation tools if distress occurs.
- Promote empathy, not mockery: Emphasize that this is about understanding experiences, not imitating disabilities.
- Encourage observation: Highlight nonverbal expressions, collaboration, and coping mechanisms.
- Facilitate reflection deeply: The power of this exercise lies in connecting feelings to professional action.
- Wrap up positively: End by reinforcing that inclusion starts from awareness, flexibility, and empathy.

Duration: 45 minutes.

Materials:

- Air-dry or modeling clay (various colors)
- Disposable gloves or socks (for simulating limited hand movement)
- Blindfolds or sleep masks
- Earplugs or headphones (to simulate hearing difficulties)
- Paper and markers (for reflection notes)
- Table or large surface for displaying creations
- Soft music (optional, for atmosphere)
- Flipchart or whiteboard

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Introduction (5 minutes):** Welcome the participants and introduce the workshop, explaining that the day will focus on how each person can engage in creative activities based on their own abilities. Then invite the group to make a small clay figurine. This exercise is designed to give them first-hand experience of some of the challenges they might encounter when creating art. Clarify that the aim of this exercise is to foster empathy, which is the ability to understand other people's points of view. This understanding can then be used to design more inclusive and welcoming environments that cater for everyone's needs.
- **Step 2 Assigning Scenarios (5 minutes):** Each participant (or pair) receives a scenario describing a person with a disability. Assign a corresponding "simulation" (e.g., blindfold, gloves, earplugs) of the impairment represented by the scenario. Example scenarios/themes could be:
  a) Maria – has limited movement in her right hand after a stroke.
  b) Alex – is blind and relies on touch to create.
  c) Eleni – is hard of hearing and often misses instructions.
  d) George – is autistic and struggles with unexpected changes or loud noises.
  e) Nina – has an intellectual disability and learns best through step-by-step guidance.
  f) Panos – uses a wheelchair and finds it hard to reach materials placed far away.
- **Step 3 Clay Creation (15 minutes):** Ask participants to create a clay figurine that symbolizes a personal story from the scenario's character — e.g., "Maria's first day at work" or "Alex discovers a new hobby." Encourage them to focus on the feeling and experience, not perfection.

- **Step 4 Group Storytelling (10 minutes):** All participants place their clay creations on a central table. As a group, they co-create a collective story linking all objects (e.g., "A Day in an inclusive art center"). You may facilitate the storytelling by asking the following questions: What connects these objects? How do these characters help each other? What barriers do they face together?
- **Step 5 Reflection and Debrief (10 minutes):** Guides to a final discussion on the obstacles encountered during the exercise, the emotions experienced, and the inclusive solutions proposed. Use guided reflection questions:
    - What emotions came up during the activity?
    - What barriers did you experience?
    - How did it feel to not have full access or clear communication?
    - What could have been done differently to make participation easier?
    - How can we adapt our real workshops to ensure inclusion?

Activity n.3: Coloring Soundscapes

Purpose: To explore how combining sound and color can support emotional expression, awareness, and regulation. To help participants experience a creative method they can later adapt for people with disabilities.

Method: Guided creative listening and painting activity, followed by group reflection and adaptation discussion.

- Emphasize emotional safety and non-judgmental sharing.
- Highlight the power of multi-sensory approaches in emotional literacy and therapy.
- Encourage participants to connect their reflections to the challenges and strengths of adults with intellectual disabilities.

- Use insights to discuss how creative sensory tools can support communication, focus, and wellbeing in daily practice.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: paper, watercolors, colored pencils, or markers, audio player or speaker, curated playlist with 3–4 contrasting soundscapes/music pieces (e.g., relaxing, joyful, melancholic, rhythmic).

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Introduction (5 min):** The trainer briefly explains how our senses — especially hearing and sight — influence our emotions. They describe how different sounds can make us feel calm, tense, happy, or reflective, and how colors can also express or amplify those emotions. The goal is to help participants understand that:
  - Sound can evoke emotional reactions (e.g., fast rhythms may energize, soft tones may soothe).
  - Colors can represent or express emotions (e.g., warm colors may show excitement, cool colors may show calm).
  - Combining both senses allows people to express feelings in a creative and non-verbal way.

  The trainer invites participants to notice their internal reactions — how the body feels, what emotions arise — and to use colors and shapes to express those reactions during the activity.
- **Step 2 Listening & Painting (25 min):** Participants listen to three short soundscapes (2–3 minutes each). After each, they spend 5 minutes painting how the sound makes them feel — using only colors and shapes (no words or symbols). Encourage free, intuitive expression rather than artistic "skill."
- **Step 3 Group Reflection (15 min):** In small groups or as a whole:
  - What emotions did each sound evoke?

- How were these emotions expressed through the colors and the movements of the brush / pencil?
- How could this experience be adapted for individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent?
- What kind of adjustments might be needed (e.g., simpler instructions, shorter duration, use of emotion icons, etc.)?

- **Step 4 Application Discussion (15 min):** In small groups, participants brainstorm adaptations of the activity for people with disabilities (e.g., shorter sessions, simpler instructions, use of emotion cards, guided color choices). Discuss practical use in group sessions for emotional recognition, sensory regulation, or relaxation.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Integrating art and culture into work with young artists with ID and/or those who are neurodivergent can significantly enhance their overall well-being. Participation in creative activities has been shown to support emotional expression, reduce stress, strengthen self-confidence, and promote a sense of identity and belonging. Engaging in shared cultural and artistic practices also encourages social connection, increases motivation, and contributes to cognitive and emotional development.

For these positive impacts to be realised, mental health (MH) professionals and cultural and creative sector (CCS) experts are encouraged to:

- **Create emotionally safe and welcoming environments.**
  A welcoming environment is one in which young artists feel accepted, respected, and free from judgement. This can be achieved by establishing predictable routines, using clear and accessible communication, offering choices, and ensuring that the physical space accommodates diverse sensory needs (e.g., quiet corners, soft lighting, accessible materials). Emotional safety also comes

from warm, consistent interactions, where facilitators actively listen, validate feelings, and model respect and patience.

- **Encourage social participation and mutual support among young artists.**
  This can be done by designing activities that require collaboration—such as group murals, ensemble music-making, or co-created performances. Facilitators can prompt turn-taking, shared decision-making, and peer feedback. Pair or group tasks, peer mentoring, and structured moments for artists to appreciate and discuss one another's work help build trust, empathy, and a sense of belonging within the group.
- **Recognise and value non-verbal communication as a key part of self-expression.**
  This includes acknowledging gestures, facial expressions, movement, rhythm, or sensory preferences as meaningful contributions. Facilitators can respond to these forms of expression with curiosity and affirmation, giving them equal weight to verbal communication.
- **Adapt sessions to different sensory and cognitive needs.**
  For example, using rhythm and repetition to support focus, providing visual schedules or cues to structure activities, offering tactile materials for sensory engagement, and breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps. Flexibility in pacing and communication style ensures that each participant can engage in a way that feels comfortable.
- **Reinforce a strengths-based perspective.**
  This involves highlighting each young artist's abilities, interests, and creative potential rather than focusing on perceived limitations. Celebrating small achievements, offering personalised

encouragement, and displaying completed artworks contribute to improved self-esteem and resilience.

By embedding these approaches—emotional safety, inclusive social structures, recognition of diverse communication styles, sensory/cognitive adaptations, and strengths-based facilitation—professionals contribute to the holistic development of young artists. These practices collectively foster well-being, resilience, joy, and a deep sense of belonging, ensuring that all participants can thrive within cultural and artistic settings.

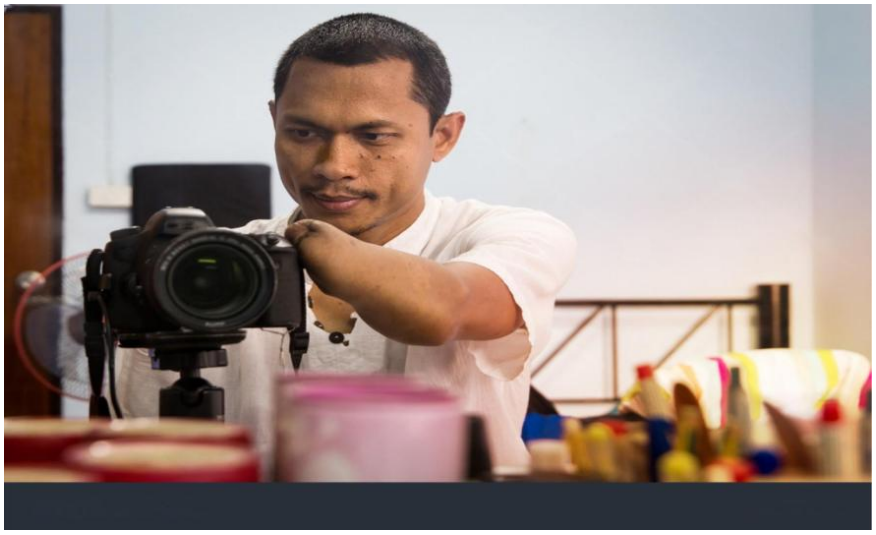


Figure 4 Man with a physical disability using a camera. Picture by Kawee from Stock Adobe

Additional resources

- "Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing" – UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2017): This document argues that engagement with the arts — including music, visual and performing arts, crafts, dance, and cultural activities — significantly improves health and wellbeing across life stages, helps prevent illness, supports recovery and long-term condition management, and can reduce costs to health and social-care systems.

- World Health Organization (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?*: A scoping review which argues that global evidence from over 3,000 studies shows that engaging with the arts significantly supports health promotion, prevents illness, and aids in the management and treatment of disease across people's lifespan.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Art-based interventions are only effective for people with strong creative skills.

   - TRUE
   - FALSE

2. Participation in art activities can support emotional regulation and resilience.

   - TRUE
   - FALSE

3. Which of the following best describes the outcome of engaging in cultural activities?

   - Increased anxiety
   - Reduced social connectedness
   - Improved sense of belonging

4. What is a common challenge in promoting well-being through art?

   - Limited access and inclusion
   - Overuse of materials
   - Excessive relaxation

5. Which element best supports inclusive well-being activities?

   - Standardised activities

- Person-centred approaches
- Strict performance evaluation

Artistic Minds

Module 04

Using digital technologies to improve art and culture

MODULE 04: USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE ART AND CULTURE

Learning objectives

This module explains a practical overview of how digital technologies can be used as accessible and creative tools within cultural and educational settings. It introduces key methods, good practices, and applied examples.

At the end of this module, you will:

- **Design** inclusive digital art activities using Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, or Artificial Intelligence, integrating at least two accessibility features.
- **Operate and produce** a short digital artifact and **document** it with basic credits and access notes.
- **Evaluate and improve** the accessibility of digital outputs by applying a structured checklist and **implementing** concrete adjustments.
- **Facilitate** a workshop-style session for young artists with disabilities, rotating roles (Creator/ Access Lead) and guiding structured peer feedback.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Digital technologies are transforming the landscape of art and culture, offering new ways to create, experience, and participate in cultural activities. From virtual reality museum tours to AI-generated artworks, these innovations hold immense potential to enrich the creative sector. They can make cultural content more immersive and engaging for general audiences while also improving accessibility for people with disabilities. In particular, the integration of **Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR),**

Artificial Intelligence (AI), and various assistive technologies is reshaping how art is produced and consumed. This training module explores how these technologies can be leveraged to improve art and culture, with a focus on inclusive practices that involve both creative professionals and artists with disabilities. The goal is to provide a clear, pedagogical understanding of using digital tech for more accessible and innovative cultural experiences.

Virtual Reality (VR) in the Cultural Sector

VR immerses users in fully computer-generated environments through headsets that deliver 360-degree visuals and sound. In the cultural sector, it has become a valuable tool for museums, galleries, and performing arts organizations, enabling experiences that transcend physical space. Through VR, visitors can explore reconstructed archaeological sites or historical events in digital form. A global survey of over 2,000 people showed that 79% were interested in using digital technology to access otherwise inaccessible museum collections, revealing strong public demand. VR also deepens engagement by fostering a closer, first-person connection with art and heritage (Isaacson, A., 2025).

A notable example is the Lord Kelvin VR Exhibition in Glasgow, which recreates a 19th-century laboratory and allows users to interact with virtual instruments, transforming the museum visit into an active historical experience. This approach can particularly attract younger audiences and shift perceptions of museums toward more dynamic spaces. Similarly, the Musée d'Orsay's Tonight with the Impressionists enables users to step into a virtual Parisian exhibition of 1874. In five months, it drew around 18,000 visitors, underscoring the appeal of immersive art history experiences (Isaacson, A., 2025). Together, these cases show how VR can bring history to life and expand audience reach.

VR also supports inclusion by **enabling remote access for people unable to visit cultural sites in person,** including those with mobility impairments or geographical constraints. Virtual environments can be tailored to support visitors with disabilities or neurodivergent profiles, such as allowing wheelchair users to access inaccessible buildings or helping autistic visitors reduce anxiety through prior familiarization. As noted by Murray Pittock and Fergus Bruce (2024), virtual access can overcome physical limitations, allowing broader access to collections often hidden from public view.

High-quality VR faces challenges such as high costs, technical complexity, usability issues, and accessibility gaps. Differences in digital literacy also require additional user support, making careful planning and inclusive design essential for successful adoption in the cultural sector.

Augmented Reality (AR) in the Cultural Sector

AR superimposes digital content onto the real world through smartphones or tablets, **enhancing physical spaces without replacing them**. Its accessibility and social nature make it especially suitable for museums, as it relies on devices most visitors already own and allows shared experiences. As Jim Richardson highlights, AR is more affordable than VR and better aligned with the social character of museum visits (Charr, M., 2025). Visitors can explore exhibits together, discuss what they see, and engage collectively, which makes AR a naturally inclusive tool for cultural learning.

Many museums use AR to **enrich storytelling and engagement**. Projects such as virtual try-ons of historical fashion or encounters with extinct animals demonstrate how AR can bring static displays to life and create strong emotional and educational impact (Charr, M., 2025). AR has also

been used to extend museums beyond their walls, turning cities into open-air galleries and transforming exhibitions into interactive, gamified experiences that are particularly attractive to families and school groups.

From an inclusion perspective, AR can integrate existing accessibility features of smartphones, such as audio narration, voice control, or adaptive content for different needs. AR applications can support deaf, blind, or cognitively diverse visitors through sign language avatars, simplified language, or customized interfaces. The EU-funded ARCHES project showed how co-designing AR solutions with disabled users leads to more accessible and meaningful museum experiences (Arches Project., 2019).

Despite its potential, AR presents challenges. Not all visitors own suitable devices, and poorly designed AR can distract from artworks rather than enhance them. Museums must therefore balance innovation with curatorial integrity and inclusive design. When thoughtfully implemented, AR can deepen engagement while respecting accessibility, authenticity, and diverse visitor needs.



Figure 5 Two women sitting at a bar look at the computer together. © Cliff Booth / Pexels

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Arts and Culture

Artificial intelligence is increasingly used in the cultural sector for content creation and data analysis. In museums, galleries, and archives, AI can generate artworks or narratives, such as algorithmic art or chatbots explaining collections, and analyze large datasets by identifying patterns or tagging artworks through computer vision. While these applications can enhance access and engagement, they also raise important questions about authorship, authenticity, and ethics.

AI is having a significant impact on accessibility, creativity, and operations in the cultural sector, while also **raising ethical and professional challenges.** One of its most powerful contributions is improving access for people with disabilities. Museums increasingly use AI to generate audio descriptions, translations, and personalized experiences. A prominent example is the Rijksmuseum, which used AI to produce rich audio descriptions of its digital collection for blind and low-vision users, a task

that would have been unfeasible to complete manually (Ma, V., 2024). This demonstrates AI's role as an effective assistive technology in cultural institutions.

AI also enhances multilingual access by enabling real-time translation of cultural content. Through tools such as AI-powered QR codes, AR kiosks, and advanced natural language processing, museums can offer information in many languages beyond those traditionally supported. While AI translation still requires human review to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity, it allows institutions to reach broader and more diverse audiences and lower language barriers.

On the creative side, AI is both an **opportunity and a source of debate.** Generative AI can act as a creative partner for artists, opening new possibilities and supporting artists with disabilities by enabling alternative modes of creation, such as voice-based or text-based image generation. At the same time, AI-generated art raises questions about authorship, intellectual property, consent, and the use of copyrighted material in training datasets. Cultural institutions are increasingly developing ethical guidelines to ensure transparency, accountability, and human oversight in AI use (United Kingdom Museums Association, 2024).

Bias is another major concern, as AI systems can reproduce existing cultural, gender, or geographic biases present in their training data. To address this, museums are adopting hybrid approaches where AI-generated outputs are reviewed and corrected by human experts, combining efficiency with cultural responsibility. Finally, AI's impact on employment cannot be ignored. While automation may threaten certain roles, best practices emphasize using AI to augment human work, supported by staff retraining and upskilling, rather than replacing cultural

workers. Overall, AI offers substantial benefits for accessibility and innovation in culture, but its adoption must be guided by ethical frameworks and a strong human-centered approach.

Assistive Technologies (AT) and Inclusive Design in the Creative Sector

Assistive technologies in art and culture are tools primarily designed to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in artistic creation and cultural experiences. For artists, these technologies **can unlock creative possibilities** that physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers would otherwise limit. For audiences, they can transform exclusion into meaningful inclusion, especially when inclusive design is embedded from the outset and informed by the perspectives of young artists with intellectual disabilities and or neurodivergent profiles.

Eye-tracking technology is a clear example of how assistive tools can enable artistic expression. Artists with severe physical disabilities can create detailed digital artworks using eye movements alone, as demonstrated by artist Felicia Bowers, who uses eye-tracking software to draw despite being unable to use her limbs (Blas, H., 2018). Her work shows that with appropriate tools, training, and adaptive design, artists with disabilities can achieve professional levels of creative output.

In music and performance, assistive technologies such as haptic wearables convert sound into tactile experiences for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. Vibrating vests used in live concerts allow users to experience music through patterns of vibration across the body, turning an otherwise inaccessible art form into a shared and inclusive experience (Hall, S. A., 2023). These technologies highlight how accessibility can expand, rather than diminish, artistic experiences.

Successful implementation of assistive technology depends not only on devices but also on supportive ecosystems. Training staff, engaging disabled communities, and treating disabled participants as co-creators are essential practices. Projects that involve users directly in design and refinement produce more meaningful and effective outcomes.

Initiatives such as the CripTech Metaverse Lab place disabled and neurodivergent artists at the center of emerging technology design, demonstrating **how accessibility can drive innovation**. By prioritizing marginalized perspectives, these projects create immersive cultural experiences that are more inclusive and creatively rich for everyone (Gray Area, 2023).

Opportunities, Barriers, and Strategies for Inclusion

The integration of digital technologies into art and culture offers major opportunities but also significant barriers. Technologies such as VR, AR, and AI can expand access to cultural heritage, enable multi-sensory experiences, and support new forms of artistic creation. They allow wider participation, from remote audiences engaging with virtual exhibitions to artists with disabilities using alternative creative methods such as voice, eye-tracking, or touch-based interfaces. Digital tools also support preservation, education, and experimentation, opening new creative pathways for cultural professionals.

However, these opportunities are unevenly distributed. A key barrier is **unequal access to technology, funding, and digital skills**, which can deepen divides between large and small institutions or between tech-savvy and excluded artists. Public funding, such as Creative Europe, and capacity-building through training are essential to address this gap (Creative Europe, 2024). Resistance to change also persists, driven by

concerns about authenticity, job security, and the risk of technology overshadowing cultural values. These concerns highlight the need for ethical frameworks, clear objectives, and inclusive planning processes that involve artists, staff, audiences, and disabled users.

From an accessibility perspective, digital tools can create new exclusions if they are not designed inclusively. Applying universal design principles and involving people with disabilities directly in design and testing is crucial. Research emphasizes that digital cultural projects must reflect the lived, intersectional experiences of disabled and aging people to be effective and meaningful (Jones et al., 2023).

Best practices for fostering inclusion include policy and funding incentives that prioritize accessibility, the development of clear standards for inclusive digital heritage, and the formal involvement of disabled creators in emerging technologies such as immersive and metaverse-based projects (Radanliev et al., 2024). Collaboration and knowledge sharing across institutions further support inclusive digital transformation by allowing best practices and tools to be adapted and reused. Overall, digital inclusion in culture is most successful when **accessibility is treated as a core requirement**, not an afterthought, and when marginalized voices actively shape technological innovation.

Conclusion

Digital technologies such as VR, AR, AI, and assistive tools are transforming the art and culture sector by expanding creative possibilities, enhancing audience engagement, and improving accessibility. When thoughtfully implemented, these technologies support the core cultural mission of connection, inspiration, and inclusion, enabling experiences such as

immersive heritage exploration, personalized museum visits, and new forms of artistic creation for artists with disabilities.

To fully realize this potential, **a balanced and critical approach is required**. This includes addressing the digital divide, ensuring ethical use of technology, supporting cultural professionals through training, and designing technologies that complement rather than replace the human dimension of art. Inclusion must be central to digital innovation, with the perspectives of young artists with intellectual disabilities and or neurodivergent users guiding design through co-creation and universal design principles. Research and European initiatives show that inclusive design benefits all users and leads to more effective and engaging cultural tools (Radanliev et al., 2024).

Ultimately, digital transformation in culture is most successful when technology is treated to amplify human creativity and equity rather than an end. Collaboration between artists, technologists, accessibility experts, and cultural managers is essential to ensure that the digital future of culture reflects shared values of diversity, access, and participation for all.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: Virtual Reality Creative Challenge

Purpose: To enable participants to explore cultural heritage sites digitally and reflect on how virtual environments can enhance accessibility, storytelling, and cultural participation.
Method: Individual or pair activity using smartphones or tablets with the Cultural Trails App. Participants navigate several virtual heritage locations and observe architectural, historical, and artistic elements. They then create a short reflection or sketch inspired by what they explored.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Smartphones/tablets with the Cultural Trails App installed, headphones (optional), paper or sketch material.

Instructions: Guide participants to open the app and select one or more cultural heritage sites. Ask them to explore the spaces, paying attention to details such as atmosphere, design, cultural symbols, or accessibility features. After the virtual visit, invite them to produce a short-written reflection, sketch, or conceptual note capturing what stood out to them. Conclude with a group discussion on how digital cultural environments can support learning, creativity, and access for diverse audiences.

Activity n.2: AI as a Creative Partner

Purpose: To experiment with AI for artistic creation and critically reflect on ethics and inclusion.

Method: Individual work using a generative AI tool (e.g., DALL·E, Runway ML). Each participant creates 2–3 images or short clips based on prompts linked to art or social issues. Group debrief on creativity, authorship, and potential biases.

Duration: 50 minutes.

Materials: Computers/tablets with AI platforms, internet access.

Instructions: Demonstrate how to use the AI tool. During debriefing, encourage participants to debate: *Who is the author – the AI, the artist, or both? How can AI empower disabled creators? What ethical risks must be addressed?*

Activity n.3: Designing Inclusive Futures (Speculative Workshop)

Purpose: To envision future uses of digital tech in inclusive art and culture.

Method: Group brainstorming (3–5 people). Participants design a concept

(poster, diagram, storyboard) of a future digital tool or platform that promotes accessibility in culture. They must integrate at least one technology: VR, AR, AI, or assistive devices.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Paper, markers, or digital whiteboard tools (Miro, Padlet, Jamboard).

Instructions: Encourage imaginative yet realistic proposals. Guide reflection with questions: *Who benefits from this technology? How do we ensure inclusivity from the start? What ethical safeguards are needed?* Groups present their concepts and receive peer feedback.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

In line with the ArtisticMinds training plan, where each module connects learning outcomes to a shared competency framework and emphasizes practical, evidence-based guidance, the impact areas below show what changes in practice you should expect and how to scaffold them.

1) Digital Creative Expression & Access

What changes: Young artists gain new channels to make and experience art (e.g., VR painting, AR storytelling, AI image/audio description).

Why it matters: Alternative modalities (voice, gaze, haptics) reduce motor, sensory, and cognitive barriers, shifting focus from limitation to authorship.

How to implement:

- Offer **parallel creation modes** (e.g., Tilt Brush/Quill in VR; Artivive for AR; voice-to-image with a generative model) so each artist can choose their accessible "route in."
- Pair each digital tool with **low-tech equivalents** (collage/stop-motion/storyboards) to reduce anxiety and allow transfer of skills.

- Build **pre-experience primers** (short screen recordings or slideshow "walk-throughs") so autistic or anxious participants preview environments before a session.

2) Inclusive Literacy in XR (VR/AR)

What changes: Artists learn to navigate immersive spaces safely and communicate ideas through spatial media.
Why it matters: Spatial thinking and multimodal communication expand narrative options and support confidence, collaboration, and presentation skills.
How to implement:

- Use **progressive exposure**: start with 2–3 minute VR visits (comfort mode, teleport locomotion, captions) before longer creation sessions.
- For AR, begin with **single-trigger overlays** (one image → one animation) before multi-step stories; add **captioning and audio description** as defaults.
- Establish **XR safety briefings**: session length limits, "sit-down" alternatives, sensory breaks, and a clear opt-out policy.

3) AI & Data Literacy for Creative Agency

What changes: Young artists move from being passive consumers of AI outputs to **directors** of AI-assisted processes (prompting, curation, iteration).
Why it matters: Understanding datasets, bias, and authorship helps them assert their voice, credit, and consent in digital production.
How to implement:

- Teach **"prompt → critique → iterate"** loops using small, values-led briefs (e.g., "represent my neighborhood without stereotypes").

- Discuss **authorship and consent** explicitly: what data trained the model? how is credit handled? where can they publish responsibly?
- Combine AI with **access tech** (e.g., text-to-image + screen reader; speech-to-text for artists with motor constraints).

4) Communication, Collaboration & Self-Advocacy

What changes: Artists practice roles—story lead, accessibility lead, tech operator—rotating responsibilities to build leadership.
Why it matters: Shared authorship and peer mentoring counter isolation, build social skills, and model workplace roles in the CCS.
How to implement:

- Use **paired roles** (e.g., "visual lead" + "accessibility checker") so access is embedded, not added at the end.
- Create **short critique rituals** (two strengths + one suggestion) to normalize feedback and self-advocacy around accommodations.
- Encourage **cross-modal teams** (sound, visual, movement) to value diverse contributions beyond a single skill.

5) Wellbeing & Confidence through Mastery

What changes: Regular, scaffolded wins (publishing an AR piece, completing a VR tour reflection, curating an AI mini gallery) increase self-efficacy.
Why it matters: Predictable structures and visible progress correlate with retention and reduced anxiety.
How to implement:

- Structure sessions with a **consistent arc**: orientation → micro-skill → make → share → reflect.
- Track **micro-credentials/badges** (e.g., "AR Trigger Designer," "VR Navigator," "AI Curator") that align with your validation model.

- Celebrate outcomes in **safe public showcases** (private YouTube link, school hall, youth center foyer) to build presentation confidence.

Additional resources

- Christine Sun Kim: "The Enchanting Music of Sign Language" (TED): Video & testimonies (artists with disabilities) Deaf sound artist reframes sound, silence, and ownership through ASL and performance.
- "Making Art Accessible using AI | Microsoft + Rijksmuseum" : Inclusive contexts (museum/projects). How large-scale audio descriptions/open access workflows can expand inclusion across massive collections.
- "Museum of the Future — Digital & Immersive Tech" (with Olaf Sperwer): Research / sector guidance NEMO Webinar. Practical implications of XR in museums, pitfalls, and strategic adoption.
- "Artivive Tutorial: Create Your First AR Artwork": Toolkits, platforms & apps (demo-friendly). Step-by-step creation, export, and viewing pipeline for adding AR layers to physical art.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. The integration of AI in cultural production challenges traditional notions of authorship and intellectual property.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Augmented Reality operates independently of physical contexts, unlike Virtual Reality which overlays data onto real environments.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. Which theoretical framework best explains how VR can reshape audience engagement in museums?

- McLuhan's 'Medium is the Message'
- Bourdieu's 'Cultural Capital'
- Habermas's 'Public Sphere'

4. In accessibility design for cultural platforms, what principle ensures usability for both disabled and non-disabled users?

- Universal Design
- Adaptive Personalization
- Minimal Viable Product

5. What is the primary ethical risk of deploying generative AI in cultural heritage projects?

- Increased creative collaboration
- Reinforcement of cultural stereotypes
- Reduction of project costs

Artistic Minds

Module 05

Valuing Diversity - challenges and opportunities

MODULE 05: VALUING DIVERSITY – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Learning objectives

This chapter introduces the core principles of valuing diversity within the cultural and creative sectors, with a specific focus on working alongside young artists with intellectual disabilities. It provides a comprehensive overview of how inclusion, accessibility, and intercultural awareness contribute to sustainable artistic and professional practices.

By attending the following module, participants will:

- **Analyse** how diversity in culture, language, gender, ability, age, and background contributes to creativity and innovation within the cultural and artistic sectors.
- **Evaluate** barriers and biases that limit participation in arts and culture and propose strategies to address them.
- **Demonstrate** effective communication and collaboration techniques that foster mutual respect and inclusion within diverse teams and communities.
- **Develop** an action plan for embedding diversity and inclusion principles into their own professional or organisational practice for long-term sustainability.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Valuing Diversity as a Core Principle in Arts and Culture

Diversity is a source of creativity in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS), arising naturally from the myriad ways in which human beings experience and express the world. In the context of working with young artists with

intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent, valuing diversity becomes both a moral responsibility and a key factor in innovation, sustainability, and artistic expression, breathing new life into creative processes (Creative Skills Pact, 2024).



Figure 6 Pictures of people's faces hanging on the wall. © Yunshuo Qu/ Unsplash

Art and culture thrive on the expression of multiple perspectives, sensory experiences, and emotional realities. Research in intercultural competence and inclusive practice highlights that when diversity is acknowledged and respected, artistic communities foster **empathy, learning, and collaborative creativity** (Deardorff, 2006; Gardner, 2011). Research shows this isn't just poetic—diverse teams in creative industries consistently produce more innovative solutions and higher audience engagement through their multifaceted approaches (McKinsey & Company, 2020) Yet when diversity is ignored or sidelined, these same spaces risk calcifying into echo chambers that reproduce exclusion, bias, and inequality, dimming the very spark they seek to ignite (European Commission, 2018, 2020).

For those of you working with artists with ID, understanding diversity involves embracing differences in ways of thinking, communication, and expression as valuable and creative. It also requires awareness of how

ability interacts with culture, gender, socio-economic background, and language in shaping artistic participation and recognition (Card, 2022).

This module supports you in adopting inclusive mindsets and practices that view difference as creative and social.

Diversity as a Creative Resource

Diversity within the arts generates novel ideas, fresh perspectives, and cultural exchange. Artistic expressions become richer when they reflect varied identities, languages, and worldviews. In inclusive creative spaces, multiple ways of perceiving and interpreting the world coexist — a condition essential for innovation (Gardner, 2011; UNESCO, 2022). This focus on diversity strengthens both social engagement and artistic analysis.

Opportunities:

- Diverse teams demonstrate higher problem-solving abilities and more experimental artistic approaches (Creative Skills Pact, 2024).
- Inclusion fosters creative resilience — the capacity to adapt, give new meaning to, and develop ideas across contexts (European Commission, 2020). Studies confirm that inclusive arts organisations see 20-30% higher innovation rates, proving diversity fuels artistic breakthroughs (Diversity Arts Australia, 2022).
- Cultural diversity naturally expands audiences and market reach, as authentic representation draws communities who finally see themselves reflected (UNESCO, 2022).

Challenges:

- Superficial inclusion may lead to misrepresentation or stereotyping (Arts Council England, 2023).
- Communication across different cultural or skill backgrounds may be made difficult by biases or inaccessible formats (Deardorff, 2006).

- Structural inequities (funding, representation, leadership) may restrict genuine participation (UNESCO, 2022). Data reveals artists with disabilities receive just 4% of arts grants despite comprising 20% of the population—a stark equity gap demanding urgent action (National Endowment for the Arts, 2023).

In this sense, the role of experts and professionals is to cultivate a culture of fairness, mutual respect, and collaboration, in which every voice contributes to shaping the creative direction.

Inclusion and Social Dynamics

Inclusion is a process that transforms social and organisational structures to ensure equitable participation. It involves building psychological safety, empathy, and respect for all forms of expression.



Figure 7 Graffiti with the words 'united in diversity' written in red. Claudio Schwarz on Unsplash

Inclusive social dynamics are fostered through intentional communication, accessible environments, and shared decision-making. For CCS experts and MH professionals, this requires shifting from a "support" model to a "collaboration" model, where artists with ID are recognised as co-creators and contributors to cultural dialogue.

Opportunities:

- Inclusive art spaces model equal participation and social belonging (UNESCO, 2022).
- Collaboration across differences develops empathy and intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006).
- Shared artistic creation enhances wellbeing, the ability to act, and confidence (Card, 2022).

Challenges:

- Hidden biases or assumptions about ability may shape expectations (European Commission, 2018).
- Discriminatory situations can be created by hierarchies within a group (Arts Council England, 2023).
- Limited training can restrict meaningful engagement (Creative Skills Pact, 2024).

Effective inclusion demands both emotional intelligence and structural adaptation. It requires awareness of language, tone, and representation in all artistic communication. Through this perspective, participants develop empathy and collaboration—core competences identified in the Social Area of the ArtisticMinds framework.

Structural and Accessibility Barriers

Structural barriers remain one of the most persistent challenges in achieving diversity in the arts. These barriers can be physical (inaccessible venues and equipment), social (stigma and prejudice), and systemic (policy and funding bias).

Accessibility must be understood holistically, aligning with the *bio-psycho-social-technical model.* Well-being and participation are produced by interaction between the individual, society, and environment — including digital technologies. This relates to the Professional Area of the project

competencies framework, in management, organisation, and rights—ensuring all artists can participate equally.

Key Barriers Identified:

- **Physical:** inaccessible architecture (e.g., lack of ramps, elevators, wide doors, etc.), inadequate signage, sensory overload
- **Technological:** lack of adaptive digital tools and supportive technologies in creative processes
- **Socio-economic:** Costs such as materials, transport, tuition, or event fees can stop young artists from joining creative activities. Limited access to transport and a lack of inclusive programmes in institutions also reduce their chances of participating.
- **Cultural:** limited recognition of artistic value in works by people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers:

- Applying *Universal Design* principles in all stages of artistic creation and exhibition.
- Incorporating accessibility in funding criteria and organisational strategies.
- Promoting cross-sector collaboration between CCS institutions, disability advocates, and educators.

Sustainable Inclusion Strategies

Sustainability in inclusion refers to incorporating diversity principles into cultural organisations, ensuring long-term transformation. Sustainability also implies maintaining motivation, resources, and shared accountability over time.

Effective Practices:

- Establish clear diversity and inclusion frameworks supported by leadership. This includes defining specific inclusion goals, outlining responsibilities, providing training, and ensuring that leaders allocate resources and model inclusive behaviour throughout the organisation.
- Include artists with ID in planning, evaluation, and management processes.
- Develop mentorship programmes linking young artists with professionals.
- Use collaborative evaluation tools to measure inclusion outcomes.

Inclusive practices empower young artists to define their creative goals, communicate their perspectives, and build confidence in their professional identities. This contributes to their long-term employability and personal growth.

Balancing Opportunities and Challenges

Valuing diversity means recognizing individual's needs, communication styles, and cultural aspects. The challenge is to transform these struggles into learning opportunities.

You are encouraged to view diversity as a dynamic balance between inclusion and individual expression. Valuing diversity requires negotiation, self-reflection, and adaptation. Success depends on cultivating humility, curiosity, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

The activities in this module are designed to help you practice empathy, collaboration, and cultural awareness, three competences central to the ArtisticMinds framework. Each reflective and group task encourages

personal and social growth and self-awareness supports artistic and professional development.

Activity n.1: Reflective Journaling

Purpose: To encourage participants to self-reflect on their own experiences with diversity, identify biases, and connect personal insights to professional practice.
Method: Individual activity (in person or online).
Duration: 20–30 minutes.
Materials: Journals or notebooks; optional digital platform (Google Docs, Padlet).
Instructions: Ask participants to reflect on their experiences with diversity in their professional or creative practice and to write them down. To encourage reflection, the following quick questions could be asked:

- Which aspects of diversity do I notice?
- How have my assumptions affected my work?
- What have I learned from interacting with people of different abilities, cultures, or backgrounds?

After writing, invite participants to share insights in pairs or small groups. Guide the discussion by highlighting patterns, encouraging empathy, and linking reflections to module content.

Activity n.2: Case Study Analysis

Purpose: To examine real-world scenarios involving diversity challenges and identify strategies for inclusive practice.
Method: Small group activity (online breakout rooms or in-person tables).
Duration: 45–60 minutes.
Materials: Prepared case study scenarios (1–2 pages each), discussion questions, flipcharts, or digital collaborative tools.

Instructions: Assign groups a case study where diversity challenges emerged in an artistic setting (e.g., team conflicts, accessibility barriers). To encourage the group discussions, the following quick questions could be asked:

- What were the barriers?
- What strategies could have improved inclusion?

Each group presents findings. Facilitates putting ideas together: highlight best practices, link to module content, and encourage application to participants' own work contexts.

Activity n.3: Co-Creation Task

Purpose: To apply principles of inclusive collaboration and diversity integration in a practical creative project.
Method: Group activity (3–5 participants per group, in-person or online).
Duration: 60 minutes.
Materials: Art supplies or digital tools for collaborative creation (drawing apps, Canva, Jamboard), worksheets for planning.
Instructions: Groups design a short artistic activity that integrates diverse abilities, cultural perspectives, and creative ideas. Each group presents a plan and shares rationale for inclusion decisions. To facilitate the discussion, the following questions could be asked:

- What worked well?
- How were diverse perspectives incorporated?
- How could the activity be adapted for real-world implementation?

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Activities designed under this module foster artistic creativity and build the personal and social competences necessary for inclusion and

empowerment. By nurturing competences such as empathy, flexibility, and creative skills, you create conditions for young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent to express themselves authentically and sustain artistic careers.

For young artists with ID, being in inclusive environments that promote confidence, autonomy and expression is essential for artistic skills development. By linking diversity awareness to self-regulation, empathy, and cultural awareness, this module reinforces the interconnected nature of the four competence areas described in the framework.

Personal Competences: By participating in activities guided by this module, the participants enhance self-awareness and emotional regulation. Recognising unique contributions of each individual foster resilience and a deeper understanding of own motivations and values.

Social Competences: The module emphasises collaboration, empathy, and mutual respect, through group activities, discussions, and co-creation exercises, participants develop communication skills, learn to negotiate differences, and experience the benefits of working in a socially supportive, inclusive environment. These experiences strengthen their ability to build positive relationships and participate fully in artistic communities.

Artistic Competences: Exposure to diverse perspectives, cultures, and abilities enriches creative thinking and expression. The participants learn to experiment with innovative ideas, techniques, and media, recognising that alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting the world can enhance their own work.

Professional Competences: The module fosters skills that are essential for future professional engagement in the arts and cultural sectors. The

participants gain experience in structured collaborative projects, adaptive planning, and inclusive participation,

By embedding diversity and inclusion into all aspects of the learning experience, young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent are empowered to develop sustainably, confidently, and creatively, building the foundation for long-term artistic, social, and professional success.

Additional resources

- Creative Europe. Diversity and inclusion toolkit: Provides practical guidelines, strategies, and tools to help cultural organisations embed inclusive policies and promote equitable participation across the CCS sectors.
- National Arts Centre. Arts & accessibility: Offers resources, best practices, and accessibility guidelines aimed at supporting arts institutions in creating welcoming and barrier-free environments.
- TEDx Talks on Inclusive Arts: Presents talks from practitioners and scholars exploring diversity, accessibility, and the power of inclusive creativity in contemporary arts.
- The Unlimited Festival. Celebrating disabled artists across disciplines: Celebrates and commissions work by disabled artists across disciplines, promoting innovation, visibility, and leadership within the arts sector.
- University of Brighton. Inclusive arts practice guide: Provides frameworks, methodologies, and case studies on collaborative arts practice with disabled and marginalised communities.
- VSA Arts. Promoting accessibility and inclusion in the arts. Delivers programmes, resources, and training to promote accessibility, inclusive arts education, and participation for artists of all abilities.

- European Disability Forum: Culture and accessibility resources. European Disability Forum.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Diversity in culture, language, and ability can enhance creativity.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Inclusive artistic activities should focus only on the majority group.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. Which skill is strengthened by valuing diverse perspectives?

- Speed
- Forgetfulness
- Empathy

4. What is a key barrier to inclusion in arts and culture?

- Structural and accessibility obstacles
- Unlimited funding
- Universal talent

5. Which is an example of embedding diversity in practice?

- Ignoring minority voices
- Designing activities that integrate different abilities

- Following the same routine for all

Artistic Minds

Module 06

Creative Mentorship – approaches and strategies

MODULE 06: CREATIVE MENTORSHIP – APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

Learning objectives

Creative mentorship is a powerful tool for fostering inclusive artistic development, especially when working with young people with ID and/or neurodivergent. This module equips the learners with the knowledge and strategies to guide young artists through meaningful creative processes, while supporting their emotional and psychological growth. Grounded in the principles of Positive Psychology, the module emphasizes strength-based approaches that promote resilience, self-expression, and personal empowerment. Whether you are a cultural arts expert or a mental health professional, the following learning objectives will help you build mentorship practices that are empathetic, effective, and transformative.

The learning objectives of the module are:

- **Design** mentorship strategies tailored to support artists with ID and/or neurodivergent using creative and psychological approaches.
- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of Positive Psychology principles in mentoring relationships within artistic contexts.
- **Explain** the role of creative mentorship in fostering autonomy, confidence, and artistic growth among young artists.

This training module is the preparatory phase for creative mentors who will support young artists as part of Work Package 4 (WP4) – the Cultural and Creative Model Programme. The knowledge and skills acquired through this module will be applied directly during mentoring activities and the implementation of the model programme in each living cultural hub.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Creative mentorship is a dynamic, multidimensional process integrating artistic guidance with emotional, psychological and developmental support. It involves more than just teaching artistic techniques; it encompasses nurturing the whole person, recognising their unique strengths, and fostering a safe and empowering environment in which creativity can flourish. When working with young artists, particularly those with an intellectual disability (ID) and/or a neurodivergent profile, creative mentorship is a vital means of promoting inclusion, self-expression and personal growth. Research on strengths-based youth mentoring indicates that mentoring relationships tend to have a measurable positive effect on young people's social, emotional, and developmental outcomes, especially when they are consistent, supportive, and growth-oriented (Raposa et al., 2019). In strengths-based creative mentoring contexts for young people with disabilities, relational factors such as positive connections and mentor flexibility are core elements that contribute to programme success and engagement. For instance, in a digital arts mentoring programme for autistic adolescents, mentors emphasised positive connections, their own knowledge and experience, and adaptive approaches as being essential for fostering meaningful outcomes (Lee E. A. L. & et. all., 2024).

This module introduces mentorship models grounded in **Positive Psychology**, a scientific field that studies what enables individuals and communities to thrive. Positive Psychology complements clinical perspectives by emphasizing strengths, meaning, engagement, relationships, and accomplishment. A widely used evidence-based framework is Seligman's **PERMA model** (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment), which offers mentors a practical

structure for designing experiences that support flourishing (Seligman, M. E. P.,2011). Recent empirical work applying PERMA-based frameworks in educational and development settings highlights how positive-emotion, engagement, and strength-focused practices can bolster creativity and well-being outcomes among participants (Wammerl M., 2025).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific tasks or situations. Research consistently links strong self-efficacy with greater persistence, willingness to try challenging tasks, and resilience after setbacks. For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergence, self-efficacy is especially important because creative work involves uncertainty and experimentation. Mentors strengthen self-efficacy by setting achievable micro-goals, giving specific process-focused feedback, modelling skills through safe demonstration and co-creation, and celebrating progress as evidence of growing capability (Bandura A., 1997). The emphasis on strengths and self-efficacy in creative mentoring aligns with strengths-based approaches that center inherent interests and abilities rather than remediation of deficits, shown to support confidence and engagement for autistic youth (Lee E. A. L. & et. all., 2024).

Flow

Flow is a state of deep absorption and enjoyment that occurs when challenge and skill are well matched, goals are clear, and feedback is immediate. Flow is strongly linked to intrinsic motivation and satisfaction in creative activity. Mentors can facilitate flow by calibrating tasks to be challenging but not overwhelming, clarifying what success looks like, offering real-time encouragement, and allowing flexible pacing or sensory-friendly options when needed (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. 2000).

Character strengths and strengths use

Character strengths are positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—such as creativity, perseverance, curiosity, and kindness. Strength's research suggests that identifying and practicing strengths supports well-being and identity development. In mentorship, this means helping mentees name strengths they show in their artistic process, connecting those strengths to real artistic decisions, and encouraging them to apply strengths in new contexts (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. 2000).

Complementary evidence-based lenses that enhance inclusive mentorship

Among the evidence-based perspectives that enrich this approach, the Broaden-and-Build Theory and Self-Determination Theory stand out, both of which are relevant for understanding how to effectively support development and well-being in mentorship programmes.

- **Broaden-and-Build theory of positive emotions:** Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory shows that positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, pride) widen attention and thinking, enabling creativity, and building durable psychological resources over time (Fredrickson B.L., 2001). In practice, mentors should intentionally cultivate moments of success, play, humor, and wonder, because these emotional states expand creative possibility and resilience.

- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** Self-Determination Theory finds that motivation and well-being strengthen when three basic needs are supported: **autonomy, competence, and relatedness** (Deci E. L. & Ryan R. M. 2000). An autonomy-supportive mentoring style—offering meaningful choice, acknowledging feelings, and avoiding

unnecessary control—has been shown to increase engagement and perceived competence. In mild intellectual disability contexts, autonomy support is also associated with stronger sense of autonomy and improved experience in learning/creative tasks (Emond Pelletier J. & Joussemet M., 2016). For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergence, SDT implies mentorship should:

- support autonomy (choice of materials/themes; respecting communication styles),
- build competence (scaffolding skills in clear steps), and
- prioritize relatedness (warm, predictable, trust-based relationships).

Inclusive application with young artists with ID/neurodivergence

Applying these principles requires sensitivity, flexibility, and a commitment to inclusive practice. Communication differences may arise from language processing, sensory experience, or emotional expression. Mentors can respond by adapting communication (visual prompts, embodied demonstration, multimodal feedback), setting realistic and flexible expectations, and co-creating structures that help mentees feel safe to explore (Emond Pelletier J. & Joussemet, M., 2016).

Despite challenges, creative mentorship offers profound opportunities. By building trust and nurturing inclusive spaces, mentors help mentees feel seen, heard, and valued. Through mentorship, young artists gain confidence to take ownership of their artistic journey, make meaningful choices, and develop agency in both creative and personal life.

Creative mentorship grounded in Positive Psychology is not just about teaching art-it is about cultivating human potential. It is a transformative relationship that supports mentees in discovering who they are, what they can do, and how they can express themselves in ways that are personally fulfilling and socially impactful (Fredrickson B. L., 2001).



Figure 8 Two women carefully shaping a clay sculpture together during a pottery lesson. © Cottonbro Studio, Pexels

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: Mentorship role map

Purpose: To identify and reflect on the roles and responsibilities of a creative mentor.

Method: Individual reflection followed by group discussion (in person or online).

Duration: 45 minutes.

Materials: Role map template (paper or digital), markers, or collaborative platforms.

Role Map Template (compressed)

Role	**My actions / behaviors (2–3)**	**Area(s)** *(P/S/A/Pr)*
Motivator	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Guide / Coach	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Listener / Safe Person	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Creative Spark	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Facilitator	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Advocate	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Boundary Setter *(opt.)*	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___
Connector *(opt.)*	1. ___ 2. ___ 3. ___	___

Legend: P = personal, S = social, A = artistic, Pr = professional

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Explain to the participants the distinct roles that can be played by a mentor, such as motivator, guide, or listener.
- **Step 2:** Next, each learner will create their own role map in digital or paper format, which should take 10–15 minutes.
- **Step 3:** Each participant will share their map with the rest of the group and explain their thinking behind it.
- **Step 4:** Guide a discussion about which roles are the most challenging and why. To help the group conversation, the following questions may be used:
  - Which roles do you feel most confident in?
  - Which roles are underdeveloped or unfamiliar?
  - How do these roles align with the needs of young artists with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent?
  - Encourage participants to identify one role they will strengthen and how it contributes to inclusive mentorship.

Activity n.2: Positive Psychology in Practice

Purpose: To apply Positive Psychology principles to real-life mentoring scenarios.

Method: Small group work (in person or online).

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Case studies, worksheets, access to VIA Character Strengths survey.

Instructions: In groups, analyze a case study of a young artist with intellectual disability. Identify character strengths and design a mentorship plan that leverages these strengths. Present your plan and receive feedback. In the end, guide participants to reflect on the mentorship plans presented. Ask:

- How did identifying strengths shift your approach to mentoring?
- What Positive Psychology principles were most useful?
- How can this approach be adapted to different mentee profiles?
- Encourage participants to commit to using one Positive Psychology tool in their next mentoring session.

Activity n.3: Empathy Walk

Purpose: To build empathy and perspective-taking in mentorship relationships.

Method: Paired activity followed by group reflection (in person).

Duration: 45 minutes.

Materials: Scenario cards describing challenges faced by young artists with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent. Here are some suggestions for free applications that can be used to prepare scenario cards.

- For printable physical cards: Canva or Adobe Express.

- For quick collaborative decks: Flippity + Google Sheets.
- For online interactive training: Genially.

Instructions: The facilitator divides the group into pairs. Each pair chooses a scenario card and acts out a conversation between mentor and mentee. Afterwards, the pairs reflect on their emotional reactions, communication strategies, and insights gained. To facilitate role-playing, an example scenario card is provided below:

> ***Title:*** *"My Idea Got Changed"*
>
> ***Role:*** *Mentee, neurodivergent artist with ID*
>
> ***Situation:*** *You are working on a piece you feel proud of. The mentor suggests changes to "make it better." You hear this as "my idea isn't good." You start to feel defensive or sad, but you do not have easy words for it.*
>
> ***What you experience:***
>
> - *You care a lot about your idea.*
> - *Feedback feels like rejection.*
> - *You are not sure how to explain why it matters to you.*
> - *You may go quiet, argue, or say "fine, do whatever."*
>
> ***Your goal:*** *Help the mentor understand you want your idea respected, and that you need feedback in a gentler, clearer way.*
>
> ***Starter line:*** *"Why do I have to change it? This is how I wanted it."*

Next, the facilitator will moderate a group discussion in which participants share what surprised them during the role-play. Questions to ask might include:

- What emotions did you experience in each role?
- How did your assumptions shift?
- What strategies helped you connect with your partner?

- Encourage participants to link their insights to real-life mentoring situations and identify one empathy-building practice they will apply.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Creative mentorship plays a transformative role in enhancing the competencies of young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent. It fosters **autonomy** — the ability to make independent choices and take initiative in creative expression. Through consistent and supportive guidance, mentees begin to trust their own decisions, explore innovative ideas, and develop a sense of ownership over their artistic process.

Another key area of impact is **emotional regulation**, which refers to the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in constructive ways. Many young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent may struggle with expressing or interpreting emotions, especially in social or performance contexts. By integrating Positive Psychology principles as CCS expert and MH professional you will help mentees build emotional resilience. This enables them to navigate challenges, cope with setbacks, and maintain motivation in their creative journey.

Creative mentorship also nurtures **artistic identity**, helping young artists recognize and embrace their unique voice. This is vital for self-esteem and long-term engagement in the arts. When mentees feel seen and valued for who they are—not just what they produce—they are more likely to take creative risks, collaborate with others, and contribute meaningfully to artistic communities.

These outcomes align directly with the **ArtisticMinds Competency Framework**, particularly in the following domains:

- **Personal area** – Strengthening self-awareness, emotional well-being, and confidence through creative exploration and supportive mentoring.
- **Social area** – Developing interpersonal communication, empathy, and a sense of belonging through shared artistic processes and mentor–mentee collaboration.
- **Artistic area** – Expanding creative skills, artistic identity, and freedom of expression by experimenting with techniques, materials, and personal themes.
- **Professional area** – Supporting self-determination in career-related contexts: setting goals, making choices, presenting work, and building pathways toward education, exhibitions, or employment.

Guidance and recommendations for mentors

Adopt a strength-based approach: Focus on what the mentee does well. Use tools like the VIA Character Strengths Survey to identify and reinforce positive traits.

- **Create psychologically safe spaces** - Ensure that your mentorship environment is free from judgment, comparison, and pressure. Celebrate effort and experimentation.
- **Use clear and consistent communication** - Adapt your language and feedback style to match the cognitive and emotional needs of each mentee. Visual aids, metaphors, and storytelling can be powerful tools.
- **Encourage reflection and self-awareness** - Use journals, feedback sessions, and creative prompts to help mentees articulate their thoughts and feelings.

- **Model emotional openness and resilience** - Share your own creative challenges and how you overcame them. This builds trust and normalizes vulnerability.
- **Be flexible and responsive** - Recognize that each mentee's journey is unique. Adjust your mentoring strategies based on their evolving needs, interests, and emotional states.
- **Collaborate with other professionals** - When needed, work alongside mental health practitioners, educators, or caregivers to provide holistic support.

By embracing these practices, you contribute not only to the artistic development of young people with ID and/or neurodivergent but also to their overall well-being, confidence, and sense of belonging in the creative world.

Additional resources

- VIA Institute on Character: Offers tools and research on character strengths, including the free VIA Survey.
- "The Power of Mattering and Meaningful Leadership": TEDx Talk by Angela Maiers: A compelling talk on how mentorship and meaningful connection empower individuals.
- "Extraordinary People – The Musical Genius" (YouTube Documentary): Follows Derek Paravicini, a blind autistic musical savant, showcasing the power of mentorship and artistic talent.
- Perspectives on Mentorship – Reinventing Mentoring in Arts and Creative Industries (REMAM Erasmus+ Project): A comprehensive publication exploring inclusive mentorship models in the arts and cultural sectors.
- Positive Psychology Tools – Therapist Aid: Offers a wide range of free worksheets, exercises, and guides based on Positive Psychology

principles. These include tools for exploring strengths, gratitude, self-esteem, and self-care—ideal for mentors working with young artists and individuals with intellectual disabilities.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Flow is a state of boredom during creative activities.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

2. Positive Psychology focuses on strengths and well-being.
   - TRUE
   - FALSE

3. What does self-efficacy help mentees develop?
   - Confidence in their abilities
   - Dependence on mentors
   - Fear of failure

4. Which is the key benefit of strength-based mentorship?
   - It highlights weaknesses
   - It promotes resilience

- It avoids emotional topics

5. What is a mentor's role in inclusive creative spaces?
   - Enforce strict rules
   - Encourage artistic ownership
   - Limit experimentation

Artistic Minds

Module 07

Supporting artists with intellectual disability and/or neurodivergent

MODULE 07: SUPPORTING ARTISTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND/OR NEURODIVERGENT

Learning Objectives

This module provides useful knowledge to CCS experts and MH professionals to understand the differences between the specific needs of young neurodivergent artists (e.g., with autism, learning disorders such as dyslexia) and/or with intellectual disability (e.g., due to congenital syndromes such as Down syndrome). It builds on rights-based and neurodiversity-affirming approaches and aims to translate them into concrete facilitation choices.

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- **Adapt facilitation approaches** with greater self-awareness and flexibility so that activities can match diverse artistic, cognitive, and sensory needs.
- **Strengthen collaboration, empathy and cultural awareness** when working in inclusive artistic environments, especially in mixed-ability groups.
- **Enhance creative, technical, and communicative abilities** for supporting self-expression and co-creation in groups that include young artists with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent.
- **Apply professional ethics, lifelong learning, and well-being principles** in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and relevant EU instruments (e.g., the EU Accessibility Act, the Union of Equality: Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030).

Co-funded by the European Union

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges

Understanding Neurodiversity

Coined in 1998 by Australian sociologist Judy Singer, neurodiversity refers to the **natural variety of human neurological functioning**, emphasizing cognitive differences as different ways of being rather than pathological deficits to be corrected (Bellini, 2023). According to this perspective, conditions such as autism, ADHD, learning disorders such as dyslexia, intellectual disability and other profiles fall within a spectrum of neurological variations that reflect the natural diversity of human brains. Talking about **neurodiversity** means recognising that differences in cognition, perception, attention, communication, and sensory processing are part of normal human variation, and that these differences can enrich the ways in which people imagine, create, and collaborate artistically (EBSCO, 2023).

Within the ArtisticMinds training programmed, it is fundamental to list and explain the main profiles of neurodiversity, both to achieve terminological clarity and to promote understanding, respect, and effective inclusion about the young artists we aim to support, while recognizing the uniqueness of everyone. Before discussing specific conditions, it is helpful to note that 'neurodiversity' is an umbrella term encompassing learning differences, neurobehavioral differences, and genetic conditions that can affect how people learn and communicate. The infographic shows a representation of the umbrella concept of neurodiversity.

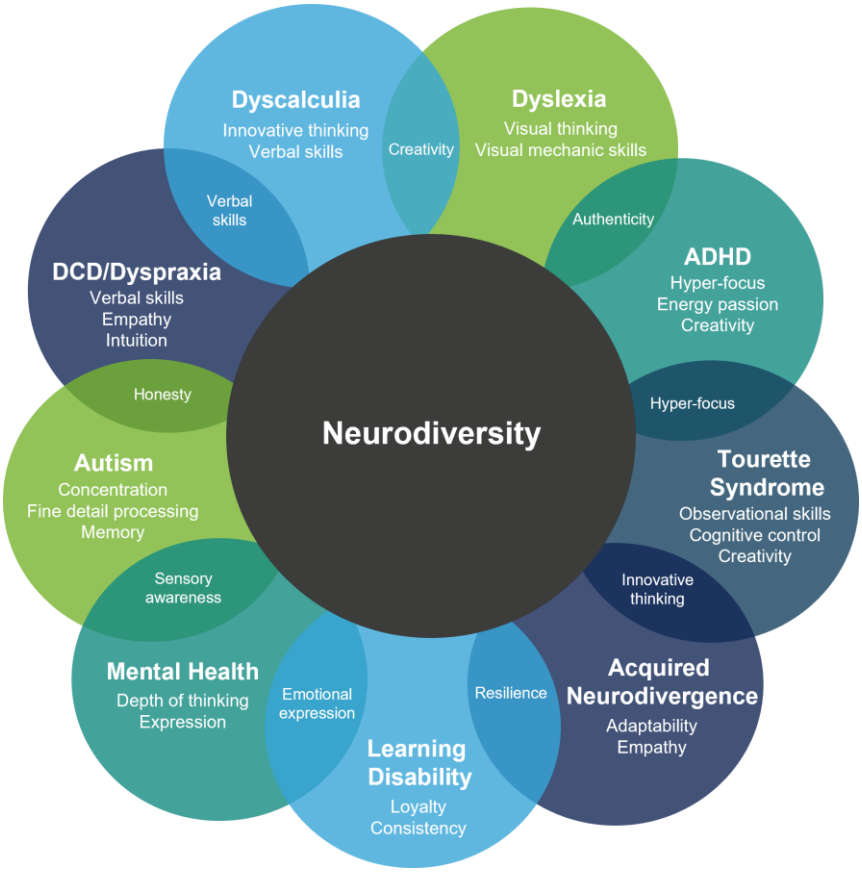


Figure 9 A visual diagram of neurodiversity - Butler University

A neurodiversity-affirming approach asks: **What can this cognitive style contribute?** rather than how do we make this young person behave like everyone else? The aim is to support access, participation, and artistic growth while respecting identity, choice, and rights.

The main profiles of Neurodiversity

The most widely discussed form of neurodiversity is **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**. ASD involves different ways of processing social and sensory information. Those on the spectrum may prefer routines, communicate directly, and react intensely to environmental sensory stimuli. However, epistemological studies emphasize that these characteristics reflect coherent and functional cognitive modes rather than defects that need correcting (Boilson M. & et. all, 2022). In a creative

context, these modes can manifest as attention to detail, a systemic rigour, an original perception of artistic experience and a deep approach to interests and materials (EBSCO, 2023).

Another common neurocognitive condition is **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).** This disorder is characterised by difficulties with sustained attention, organising activities and controlling impulsivity. Literature on the subject notes that these differences affect the way attention is maintained and tasks are planned, but they do not reduce intelligence and are often associated with divergent thinking and creativity (EBSCO, 2023). For instance, some qualitative studies suggest that individuals with ADHD may encounter organisational difficulties yet demonstrate an exceptional capacity for addressing complex problems with innovative solutions, particularly in non-routine tasks (Liebel et al., 2023).

The term **intellectual disability (ID)** refers to differences in the development of cognitive and adaptive skills that can affect complex learning. However, research on neurodiversity emphasises that cognitive experiences are not monolithic; many individuals with intellectual disability have unique profiles of strengths, particularly in visual comprehension, non-verbal communication, and practical skills (Boilson et al., 2022).

Intellectual disability is often present in people with **Down's syndrome**, a genetic condition involving changes in neurological development that impacts on working memory, language, and processing speed. Nevertheless, many individuals with Down's syndrome demonstrate strong social motivation, resilience, and collaborative skills, all of which are highly valued in artistic environments. Contemporary scientific documentation on neurodiversity encourages us to listen to people with Down's syndrome, to

avoid deficit-centred narratives and to recognise the creative value of active participation (Van Elswijk et al., 2025).

Finally, one of the most common forms of neurodiversity is **learning differences**, which are defined as alternative approaches to processing, organising and utilising information. These differences are described in the literature as neurological variations that affect specific cognitive processes without compromising general intelligence (EBSCO, 2023).

Dyslexia is a paradigmatic example of a learning difference that affects reading and decoding written language. Those with dyslexia may struggle with reading accuracy and fluency, but often demonstrate strong visual thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills due to alternative cognitive processes. Other examples include **dysgraphia** (difficulty with writing) and **dyscalculia** (difficulty with numbers). There is also executive attention differences related to ADHD which can affect task management and cognitive structure in specific, non-pathological ways (EBSCO, 2023).

Understanding these learning differences enables us to create educational, training or artistic environments that utilise visual aids, text modulation, flexible rhythms and instructions to maximise the strengths of all participants.

Barriers to inclusion

Young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent individuals often face barriers arising from environments, attitudes, and systems that lack inclusivity. Research shows that these obstacles result from inappropriate **communication and organisational practices** (Kerschbaum et al., 2017).

Such barriers can arise when instructions are presented in complex, abstract language, only at the beginning of a workshop and without visual

aids or repetition; when written language, such as forms, timetables and information documents, uses complex vocabulary or small print; or when no time is allocated for alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This marginalises learning methods expressed through images, gestures, or multimedia tools rather than verbal texts alone.

Social barriers manifest as reductive or stereotypical expectations, such as believing that young people with disabilities cannot engage in authentic artistic practices or interpreting their participation as merely therapeutic or a way to occupy their time. Paternalistic attitudes, in which adults make decisions on behalf of the artists, limit self-determination and fuel persistent stigma.

Similarly, **cultural institutions and programmes** often lack inclusive policies, accessible information, and funding for specialist support, such as assistants, interpreters, and adaptations, as well as staff training in inclusive communication and disability rights. This prevents full participation (Seale, 2013).

Physical spaces can also be exclusionary, with elements such as bright or unstable lighting, noise, strong smells, unpredictable transitions, a lack of quiet areas and the assumption that there is only one 'correct' way of working all having the potential to overwhelm those with sensory or attention differences (Grandin & Panek, 2013).

Opportunities and practical solutions

A truly inclusive practice does not eliminate artistic quality but rather reorients the design. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL),** for example, proposes activities that allow everyone to participate through multiple modalities — visual, auditory, motor, and technological — and to express

results in different forms, thereby valuing cognitive diversity (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Approaches such as co-creation and co-authorship, in which young artists contribute alongside mentors or co-facilitators with disabilities to define themes, materials, and decisions, support autonomy and creative dignity. Accessible communication, such as the use of simple language, images, demonstrations, and clear routines, does not reduce artistic quality, but rather broadens access to it (CAST, 2018). Finally, environments that focus on strengths — structure, sufficient time, sensory regulation, and collaborative feedback — promote individual expression more effectively than any attempt at 'normalisation'.

A useful way to operationalise inclusion is to review four areas regularly:

- **Information and communication**: Provide plain-language summaries and visual versions of key information. Use step-by-step instructions, modelling, and repetition without patronising tone. Offer alternative formats (audio, visuals, easy-read, large print). Allow processing time and AAC/support where needed.
- **Environment and sensory accessibility:** Reduce avoidable noise; provide quiet corners and predictable transitions. Use visual schedules, clear work zones, and consistent routines. Offer sensory-friendly options (headphones, lighting choices, breaks).
- **Relationships and power:** Practise “supported autonomy”: offer help as an option, not as control. Invite consent at key points (touch, photos, public sharing, performance). Challenge paternalism: ask the artist what they want; do not assume.
- **Organisational readiness:** Make inclusion part of strategic plans and budgets (not an add-on). Build staff training and reflective supervision into routine practice. Partner with disability organisations

and families where appropriate, while keeping the artist's voice central.

Illustrative European examples embedded in practice

These examples show how **inclusive artistic practices** actively integrate people with disabilities into creative processes, both as performers and co-creators.

- European project "Inclusive Theatre(s) (Spain): The Inclusive Theatre(s) project, funded by the European Commission's Creative Europe programme, involves Spanish cultural partners in developing good practices for accessibility and inclusion in theatre, including productions and services aimed at audiences with sensory and cognitive disabilities. A theatre collective integrates actors with disabilities through structured rehearsals, embodied text work, and shared decision-making processes, treating disabled participants as colleagues rather than "special guests."
- Terapia Artis – Visual art platform (Finland): a free visual platform that offers space and support for artists who share experiences related to mental health, without any educational or diagnostic requirements, allowing them to exhibit individual or collective works, digital or manual, thus promoting creative participation and accessibility without structural barriers.
- ArtDiCo – Digital storytelling for inclusion (Erasmus+) (Italy): Media designers and art therapists support young artists in scriptwriting, voice recording and basic editing with accessible tools and appropriate support, strengthening digital literacy and self-advocacy.

Outsider Art (Art Brut): Guiding without Deciding

The concept of **Outsider Art (Art Brut)**, introduced by Jean Dubuffet, celebrates creative work produced outside traditional art institutions – often by people in psychiatric hospitals, long-stay institutions, or marginalised social positions. Many of these creators today would be described as neurodivergent or as having ID.

Art Brut challenges the idea that only formally trained artists produce "real" art. It values spontaneity, personal symbolism, and resistance to conventional aesthetic norms. For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, this tradition is important because it recognises that their work can stand on its own terms, not merely as a "therapy outcome" (Dubuffet, 1945; Cardinal, 1972).

For facilitators, the key lesson is to **guide without** deciding (Maclagan, 2011):

- Offer open-ended prompts ("something that makes you feel strong," "a place you dream about") rather than narrow themes.
- Encourage experimentation with materials without rushing to correct form or technique.
- Respect the young artist's own interpretation of their work; avoid imposing symbolic meanings with which they have not agreed.
- In exhibitions, ensure that young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent engage in decisions about titles, texts, pricing, and the use of their image.

Ethical facilitation means holding a delicate balance: supporting exploration, providing enough structure for safety and clarity, but not taking over authorship.



Figure 10 A man and a woman work together on the lithograph. Inclusive creative activity with young artistic - VTC Margarita (Athens, 2025)

Suggested activities for individual or group work.

Activity n.1: Reflective case workshop

Purpose: Connect inclusive principles to real situations and identify workable facilitation choices.

Method: Small groups (3–5 people).

Duration: 25 minutes.

Materials: Flipchart/markers or shared digital board; the embedded Europe examples above and/or a real local example.

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Each group select one example (Spain/Finland/Italy) present in the previous section or a similar real case from participants context.
- **Steps 2:** Each group summarise the following information about the selected case: who is involved, what is the setting, what barriers appeared (communication, sensory, social, institutional).

- **Steps 3:** Each group identify strategies used in the selected case (e.g., visual scripts, flexible schedules, sensory adjustments, co-creation).
- **Step 4:** Note outcomes for young artists (participation, confidence, artistic development) and for staff/audience.
- **Step 5:** Finally, each group produces a one-page "What we can borrow" poster with three actions you could implement in your setting. Follow this with a brief plenary sharing session to help cross-pollinate ideas.

Activity n.2: Inclusive space redesign

Purpose: Practise accessibility analysis and realistic improvement planning.
Method: Small groups.
Duration: 20 minutes.
Materials: Paper/pen or digital whiteboard; example of a cultural venue or your own setting (room, studio, rehearsal space).
Instructions: Each group now turns to an actual cultural venue or artistic programme they know well (a theatre, studio, gallery, community centre). They quickly sketch how the space and process currently work and then ask:

- What might be difficult here for a young artist with ID and/or neurodivergent?
- What could we realistically change in the next 6–12 months to improve physical, cognitive, and sensory access?
- Which policies, routines or attitudes would also need to shift?

Groups outline a **"**before and after": a brief description or rough floor plan of the current situation, and a revised version showing adjustments (quiet

corner, visual schedule, simplified forms, clearer welcome process, etc.). They note who would need to be involved in making the change (management, technicians, families, local disability organisations).

Activity n.3: Guiding without deciding

Purpose: Practise supported autonomy and ethical facilitation.

Method: Pairs.

Duration: 15 minutes.

Materials: Optional prompt cards.

Instructions: In pairs, participants engage in a short role-play. One plays a young artist with intellectual disabilities (ID) and/or neurodivergent working on a piece that looks very different from what the facilitator expected; the other plays the facilitator trying to support without taking over. The "artist" can decide whether they want help, reassurance, new materials or simply space. The "facilitator" practises:

- asking open questions;
- offering choices instead of instructions;
- acknowledging the artist's intentions;
- resisting the urge to "fix" the work.

After a few minutes, roles switch. A brief group reflection follows:

- What felt supportive?
- When did guidance start sliding into control?
- How might this show up in real workshops?

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Implementing the approaches described in this module affects activities at several levels. When inclusive practices are embedded thoughtfully,

they have a positive impact on young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent:

- They are more likely to feel **safe, respected, and welcome**, which supports sustained participation.
- They gain opportunities to **exercise choice, take creative risks, and assume leadership roles** in ways that are proportionate and meaningful to them.
- Their artistic identities are strengthened: instead of being seen only as service users or patients, they are recognised as artists, colleagues, and co-authors.
- They develop competencies in all four areas of the ArtisticMinds Framework:
    - *Personal* (self-awareness, confidence, emotional regulation);
    - *Social* (communication, collaboration, conflict navigation);
    - *Artistic* (skills, experimentation, personal style);
    - *Professional* (reliability, understanding of roles, basic project literacy).

Inclusive approaches also transform group dynamics:

- Mixed-ability groups often become spaces of **mutual learning**, where assumptions about "ability" are questioned and everyone's creativity is stretched.
- Non-disabled peers learn to adapt communication, share roles, and appreciate different forms of contribution.
- Conflicts based on misunderstanding or sensory overload tend to decrease when the environment is adapted and communication is clearer.

At the organisational level, embedding inclusive practices results in systemic benefits:

- Programmes evolve from ad hoc inclusion to a **strategic, rights-based approach** embedded in plans, budgets, and policies.
- Staff feel more confident and less anxious about "making mistakes," because there are clear guidelines and shared language.
- Partnerships with disability organisations, families and mental health services become more balanced and mutually beneficial.

In short, when organisations apply this module, inclusion ceases to be a peripheral initiative and becomes a core aspect of artistic excellence. To summarise this impact on the format used across the training:

Dimension	**Expected outcome**
Personal	Greater empathy, self-regulation and adaptability among professionals and young artists.
Social	Stronger collaboration, peer support, and community connection.
Artistic	More innovative, authentic, and autonomous creative practices.
Professional	Improved ethics, reflective skills, and inclusive methodology in everyday work.

Together, these outcomes confirm the central message of Module 7: that artistic environments designed with young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent profiles in mind not only enhance artistic quality but also expand opportunities for personal, social, and professional growth, fostering inclusion as an integral part of creative practice.

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Additional Resources

- European Commission (2021). Union of Equality: Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030: EU strategy emphasising accessibility, participation, and rights, including in culture and the arts.
- Inclusive Education and Culture Guidelines (Autism Europe, 2020): Recommendations for inclusive learning and cultural environments for autistic people.
- Inclusive Practice in the Arts (Arts Council England, 2021): Case studies, checklists and reflections on inclusive programming, commissioning, and audience development.
- World Report on Disability (World Health Organization, 2022): Overview of disability prevalence, barriers, and good practices, with sections on community participation and culture.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Inclusive artistic environments view neurodiversity as a natural variation, not a deficit.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. The facilitator's main goal is to correct artistic output to ensure it matches conventional standards.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. Which of the following best defines Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?

- Teaching through one fixed method.
- Designing flexible, multi-sensory learning approaches.
- Reducing the pace of activities for everyone.

4. What is a key element of ethical facilitation in inclusive art settings?

- Guiding without deciding, respecting the artist's autonomy.
- Avoiding communication to preserve "independence."
- Enforcing identical outcomes for all artists.

5. Which environmental adjustment best supports artists with sensory sensitivities?

- Bright lighting, strong outdoors setting, and loud music.
- Unpredictable transitions between tasks.
- Quiet areas, soft lighting, and clear visual structure.

Artistic Minds

Module 08

Supporting artists with mental health challenges

MODULE 08: SUPPORTING ARTISTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Learning objectives

This module explores how mental health challenges intersect with artistic practice and what this means for young artists with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent**.** It offers CCS experts and MH professionals practical guidance on recognising common mental health difficulties, reducing stigma, and creating supportive, trauma-informed creative environments where artistic potential and emotional well-being can flourish side by side.

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- **Recognise** common mental health conditions and their impact on artistic participation and collaboration.
- **Identify** barriers and apply trauma-informed, supportive practices within creative environments.
- **Implement** strategies to create safe, stigma-free, and empowering spaces for artistic engagement.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Historical overview: art, creativity, and mental health

Across history, societies have often imagined a special link between artistic creativity and mental disturbance. Ancient Greek writers conceptualised *mania* and *inspiration* as intertwined traits of poets and seers, positing that creative insight could emerge from altered states of mind. In Western

cultural history, Romantic narratives further idealised the *tormented genius*—figures such as Vincent van Gogh or Lord Byron became emblematic of suffering tied to artistic achievement. This cultural motif has even found reflection in psychological research: early reviews of creativity and psychopathology identified some associations between creative individuals and mental disorders, although methodological limitations and inconsistent definitions have made these links difficult to interpret reliably (Richards, 2001; Kaufman, 2001).

At the same time, many artistic traditions—religious iconography, folk arts, and community rituals—have used creative practices explicitly to heal, mourn, celebrate, and maintain social bonds. These practices often involve symbolic expression and collective engagement, which can play a role in meaning-making and emotional processing beyond individual cognitive states (Sawyer & Henriksen, 2023).

Contemporary research helps to rebalance this picture. First, mental health challenges are **common across the entire population** and not confined to artists or specific occupational groups; estimates suggest high lifetime prevalence for mood and anxiety disorders in general community samples, underscoring that mental health conditions are widespread rather than profession specific. Creativity itself is better understood as a **dimension of human cognition and behaviour** that varies in form and expression across individuals and contexts. Modern psychological models emphasise that creativity and mental health are distinct constructs that *interact* in nuanced ways rather than implying deterministic relationships of genius with illness.

Empirical work on arts engagement and wellbeing suggests that **creative activity can contribute positively to mental health**. Meta-analytic evidence shows modest positive associations between creativity and

aspects of well-being when creativity is measured as engagement in creative activities or behaviours across large, diverse samples. These effects are consistent with findings that creative expression correlate with greater subjective well-being, positive mood, and life satisfaction, even after controlling stress and other covariates (Selcuk et al., 2020).

Furthermore, intervention research indicates that structured participation in creative arts, whether through therapeutic programmes, performing arts, or multidisciplinary arts initiatives — can **enhance mental health outcomes**, reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improve quality of life. For example, arts-based interventions in youth and adult populations have demonstrated reduced psychological distress and increased well-being following sustained creative engagement. Qualitative studies also link creative workshops with processes of empowerment, self-expression, and social connection, highlighting creative activity's role in recovery frameworks that prioritise holistic well-being and meaning making rather than pathology alone (Tanigughi et al., 2025).

In summary, creativity and mental health are best understood as **interacting but independent dimensions** of human life. Artistic practice can support well-being, resilience, and social cohesion for many people, while some individuals, including artists, may also live with mental health conditions that deserve understanding and rights-based support. Contemporary research underscores a *pluralistic* view: creativity neither guarantees mental illness nor is mental illness a prerequisite for creativity, but creative engagement—both formal and informal—can be a valuable part of human flourishing and psychosocial health.

Understanding Mental Health in the Arts

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state in which individuals realise their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. Within this definition, mental health is not simply the absence of disorder, but a **dynamic balance** of emotional, psychological, and social resources. In arts contexts, this balance can be influenced by specific pressures and opportunities: irregular income, public exposure, precarious employment, but also meaningful self-expression, recognition and belonging.

Common mental health conditions that may affect people in the arts include **depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar spectrum conditions, and psychosis**. These diagnoses may or may not be formally present; some individuals will instead describe "burnout," "overwhelm" or "feeling stuck." For **young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent**, experiences such as exclusion, bullying, lack of accessible opportunities or sensory overload can further impact emotional well-being.

For CCS experts and MH professionals, the key message is that **creative potential and mental vulnerability can coexist**. Artistic practice is not a cause of mental illness, but the arts can become a powerful context where distress is either **amplified by unsafe conditions** or **held and transformed** by supportive ones. Clift and Camic (2016) and Fancourt and Finn (2019) summarise extensive evidence that arts participation can support prevention, recovery, and social inclusion when environments are intentionally designed.

Barriers to Inclusion

Even though the arts can be a powerful resource for well-being, many people who work or wish to work in the cultural and creative sector face

significant barriers that can affect their mental health and their ability to participate on equal terms. These barriers do not only concern “vulnerable” individuals; they are often built into how the sector is organised and how success is defined.

- **Performance stress and creative pressure**
  Artistic work is often exposed to public evaluation: auditions, premieres, exhibitions, funding panels, social media. This can generate strong performance anxiety and self-criticism (“I am never good enough”). For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, this pressure may be intensified by internalised stigma or previous experiences of failure at school or in services. If feedback is harsh, unclear, or humiliating, artistic spaces can easily become unsafe rather than supportive.
- **Freelance work and economic insecurity**
  Much cultural work is freelance, project-based or “gig” work. Income is irregular; contracts are short; social protection is limited. For anyone, this economic insecurity can increase stress and worry about the future. For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, navigating complex contracts, invoicing, benefits rules, or sudden gaps between projects can be particularly challenging without support. Fear of losing disability benefits or essential services may discourage people from taking opportunities, even when they are talented and motivated.
- **Isolation and fragmentation**
  Artists often work alone or in small, temporary teams. Rehearsal periods may be intense but short, followed by stretches with little contact. This rhythm can lead to isolation, especially for those who already experience social anxiety, communication difficulties, or

exclusion in other areas of life. Young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent may depend on family, carers or services for transport and organisation; if these supports are not aligned with artistic timetables, participation can quickly break down.

- **Anxiety, burnout, and emotional fatigue**
  The combination of creative pressure, economic insecurity and isolation can contribute to high levels of anxiety, burnout, and emotional fatigue. Artists may feel that they must always be available, say yes to every opportunity, and constantly reinvent themselves to stay visible. In inclusive settings, CCS experts and MH professionals may also experience emotional fatigue if they carry responsibility for many people's well-being without adequate supervision or organisational backing. Without clear boundaries, shared protocols, and time for reflection, both participants and staff are at risk.
- **Stigma and lack of understanding**
  On top of these structural factors, stigma about mental health remains a major barrier. Some fear that disclosing a diagnosis or asking for support will lead to being seen as "complicated," "unreliable" or "not professional enough." Others internalise stereotypes and feel shame about struggling. For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, there can be a double stigma: disability and mental health. If organisations do not openly address mental health, people may hide difficulties until they reach crisis point, or they may withdraw from opportunities altogether.

Taken together, these barriers show why mental health in the arts cannot be treated as an individual issue only. Inclusive, rights-based practice requires cultural organisations to recognise these structural pressures, talk

about them openly, and design working conditions, supports and expectations that protect rather than undermine the mental health of all artists, including young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent.



Figure 11 A woman mentors her student in an art classroom, pointing at a worksheet on the table. A lesson is being held beside a chalkboard in a creative workspace. © Antoni Shkraba Studio, Pexels

Opportunities for Inclusion

Art offers a transformative framework for both mental health recovery and professional growth. Evidence from European community and cultural initiatives shows that regular participation in the arts enhances well-being, social connectedness, and resilience (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

Art offers a powerful **path to recovery**: through creative expression, individuals can reframe their experiences, explore new perspectives, and rediscover personal meaning. Collaborative projects further reinforce this process, as peer support fosters empathy, reduces isolation, and nurtures a sense of belonging. Beyond personal growth, art also functions as a tool for advocacy: exhibitions and performances challenge stigma by giving everyone the opportunity to express their voice. In addition to its therapeutic and social roles, art represents a professional opportunity.

Supporting inclusion in the arts requires affirming the right of all individuals to pursue sustainable artistic careers. This includes equal access to commissions, residencies, funding, and professional representation. Cultural organizations can play a key role by implementing inclusive recruitment, mentoring, and support structures.

Finally, cross-sector partnerships between cultural institutions and mental health services demonstrate how art can serve both recovery and vocation. By linking wellbeing to professional inclusion, these collaborations show that artistic practice can be a meaningful, empowering, and sustainable pathway for both individuals and communities.

Safe and Trauma-Informed Creative Spaces

Safety is the foundation of inclusion. A trauma-informed approach recognises that safety is the foundation of inclusion. A trauma-informed approach starts from the understanding that many people—artists, staff, and audiences—may have lived through difficult or overwhelming experiences (trauma), even if they never talk about them. Instead of trying to identify "who is traumatised", a trauma-informed approach focuses on shaping the whole environment so that it is as safe, predictable and empowering as possible, and so that the risk of re-traumatisation is reduced (SAMHSA, 2014; Sweeney et al., 2018).

Trauma-informed practice is often summarised as the "four R's":

- Realise the widespread impact of trauma and the potential paths for recovery.
- Recognise the signs of trauma in participants, staff, and systems.
- Respond by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and everyday interactions.

- Resist re-traumatisation by avoiding practices that replicate powerlessness, humiliation, or sudden loss of control.

In creative settings, this translates into several practical principles:

- **Choice and consent** – Participants are informed, in accessible language, about what an activity involves (content, level of exposure, use of images). They can opt in or out of specific exercises, choose their level of visibility (e.g. on stage, backstage, anonymous contribution) and change their mind without punishment. Consent is revisited at key points (e.g. before sharing work online or with the media).
- **Predictability and transparency** – Sessions have a clear structure and time frame. Facilitators explain what will happen next, how long things will last and what kinds of feedback or discussion will follow. Surprises are used carefully, and any potentially intense material (e.g. work touching on violence, death, discrimination) is signposted in advance.
- **Emotional regulation and grounding** – Activities include simple strategies that help participants notice and manage their arousal level, such as short breathing exercises, stretches, sensory breaks, or a brief grounding art task at the start and end of sessions. A quiet corner or "time-out" space is available and using it is normalised rather than stigmatised.
- **Peer connection and respect** – Group agreements are co-created (e.g. "listen without interrupting," "no pressure to share personal stories," "no mocking or gossip"). Facilitators model respectful responses and actively intervene if shaming or discriminatory comments arise.

Research in arts and mental health suggests that when these trauma-informed principles are applied, creative spaces are more likely to promote psychological safety, engagement and recovery, especially for people who have experienced adversity or live with ongoing mental health challenges (Hopper et al., 2010; Sweeney et al., 2018; Fancourt & Finn, 2019). For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, trauma-informed arts practice can make the difference between a setting that feels overwhelming and unpredictable, and one that supports trust, exploration, and long-term participation. Participants may carry invisible experiences of distress and ensures that artistic spaces avoid re-traumatisation.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

The following activities are designed to deepen participants' understanding of mental health inclusion within the arts while fostering self-reflection, empathy, and practical skill-building.

Activity n.1: Creative Safety Charter

Purpose: To build shared values of emotional safety and inclusion within creative or training environments.
Method: Group activity (in person or online). Participants co-create a "safety charter" that defines the emotional and practical conditions necessary for everyone in a group to feel secure and valued.
Duration: 45–60 minutes.
Materials: Flipchart paper or digital whiteboard (e.g. Miro, Jamboard, Padlet); markers or digital pens; post-it.
Instructions:

- **Step 1:** In small groups, discuss what makes individuals feel *safe* or *unsafe* in creative spaces.

- **Step 2:** Each group lists 5–6 key principles (e.g. confidentiality, choice, empathy, respect).
- **Step 3:** Groups share and merge ideas into one collective "Creative Safety Charter."
- **Step 4:** The facilitator highlights how this charter can guide inclusive artistic environments for young artists with disabilities. This exercise can be followed by a brief reflection on how "security" encourages creativity and risk-taking.

Activity n.2: The Artist's Journey Map

Purpose: To explore how mental health challenges and recovery can shape an artist's creative journey and professional opportunities.
Method: Small group work, reflective and visual mapping exercise.
Duration: 60 minutes.
Materials: Large paper sheets or digital canvas; coloured pens; optional collage materials or digital imagery.
Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Each group creates a visual "journey map" of an artist (real or fictional) who faces mental health challenges, identifying the following key elements: challenge, support, turning point, empowerment, opportunity.
- **Step 2:** In plenary, discuss what helped or hindered the artist's growth.
- **Step 3:** Analyse common patterns of support and barriers emphasizing the role of empathy, networks, and inclusive practices.

Activity n.3: Grounding Through Art (Self-Reflection Practice)

Purpose: To help participants personally experience grounding and self-regulation through creative expression, and to reflect on how such techniques can support artists experiencing emotional distress.

Method: Individual self-directed activity, followed by optional journaling or brief reflection sharing.

Duration: 25–35 minutes.

Materials: Basic art materials (e.g. paper, pencils, pastels, or watercolours); quiet space; optional soft music; notebook or digital journal.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Prepare your space:** Find a quiet area where you can work undisturbed for about half an hour. Place your materials within reach.
- **Step 2 Begin with grounding:** Take three slow breaths. Gently notice your body — e.g. your feet on the ground, your hands resting, your breath moving.
- **Step 3 Creative process:** Using your chosen materials, create an abstract image or shape that represents *stability*, *safety*, or *balance* for you. There is no right or wrong way — focus on colour, rhythm, and movement rather than artistic outcome.
- **Step 4 Reflection:** When finished, look at your work and write a few lines responding to these prompts:
    - What sensations or emotions did I notice while creating?
    - What elements in the artwork make me feel grounded or calm?
    - How could a similar activity help artists in moments of anxiety or overwhelm?
- **Step 5 Closing:** Take one more deep breath, stretch, and acknowledge the sense of calm or focus that may have emerged.

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Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

By raising awareness of the challenges that people with mental health issues may face in the arts and culture sector, CCS experts and MH professionals can better support the skills development of young artists with disabilities, helping to prevent emotional distress and fatigue. Emotional intelligence, communication, adaptability, and collaboration are thus key tools for promoting their psycho-emotional well-being and enhancing their creative journey.

When CCS experts and MH professionals apply the principles from this module, they promote environments where young artists can safely explore identity, creativity, and resilience. Recognising that emotional vulnerability does not limit artistic potential, facilitators learn to transform perceived limitations into opportunities for growth. This shift supports the development of autonomy, confidence, and artistic agency among young artists.

Trauma-informed and recovery-oriented approaches introduced in the module help learned design psychologically safe creative spaces — e.g. studios, rehearsal rooms, or educative workshops — where emotional regulation, consent, and choice are embedded in daily practice. As young artists experience trust and validation, their ability to take creative risks, collaborate, and express themselves authentically expands.

Interdisciplinary cooperation between CCS experts and MH professionals further ensures continuity of care and inclusion, bridging artistic education with wellbeing. Joint planning, peer support, and reflective supervision can reduce dropout rates and foster sustainable participation in artistic programmes.

Ultimately, this module contributes to building a more inclusive, empathetic, and resilient creative ecosystem, where young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent are not passive recipients of support but active contributors to cultural life—valued for both their artistic and human capacities.

Additional resources

- WHO — What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? (Scoping review, 2019): Extensive synthesis of >3,000 studies showing how arts participation supports prevention, promotion, and treatment of mental health — authoritative evidence bases to justify arts-informed practice.
- CARE — Culture for Mental Health (EU project / practice examples): Pan-European project examples that integrate culture and community responses to mental health; good source of case studies and models for regional festivals, youth work, and outreach.
- Creative Health & Wellbeing: Case studies (Arts Council England): Rich bank of UK case studies where arts activity is embedded in health/wellbeing projects (social prescribing, NHS partnerships). Practical examples for translation into local contexts.
- Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance — Toolkits, guidance, and factsheets: Practical guidance on co-producing projects, evaluation, thriving practice frameworks and social prescribing resources — good for developing sustainable programmes and partnerships.
- Stephen Fry: The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive (BBC documentary): high-profile, compassionate account linking creative life and bipolar/cyclothymic conditions; useful to open discussion about stigma and disclosure.

- Yayoi Kusama – press profiles/interviews (Guardian, Tate, and profile pieces): widely cited example of an artist whose creative practice and lived experience of psychiatric care are inseparable; useful to discuss agency, artistic identity, and institutional support.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. In trauma-informed creative environments, facilitators should focus on identifying who has experienced trauma to tailor activities appropriately.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Stigma around mental health can discourage artists (including young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent) from asking for support, which may increase withdrawal or crisis risk.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. Which statement best reflects the understanding of mental health in the arts?

- Mental health challenges limit an individual's ability to create art effectively.
- Artistic expression and mental health are unrelated areas of experience.
- Creative potential can coexist with mental vulnerability when environments are supportive.

4. What is one of the most significant barriers to inclusion for artists with mental health challenges?

- Flexible participation and open dialogue.
- Stigma and misunderstanding within artistic communities.
- Access to diverse forms of expression.

5. Which of the following illustrates an *opportunity* for inclusion through art?

- Using exhibitions and performances to raise awareness and challenge stigma.
- Limiting public exposure for artists experiencing distress.
- Replacing professional art practice with therapeutic sessions only.

Artistic Minds

Module 09

Area of application of the learned – Art Therapy

Module 09: Area of application of the learned – Art Therapy

Learning Objectives

This module introduces the foundations, practices, and applications of Art Therapy, with a particular focus on its relevance for people with intellectual disability and neurodivergent profiles. It provides an initial overview that helps the reader understand how theory, methodology, and practical tools are interconnected throughout the chapter.

Upon completion of this module, you will:

- **Explain** the theoretical and historical foundations of art therapy and its relevance for emotional and relational well-being.
- **Identify** and evaluate how artistic practices (visual, tactile, digital) can be used as therapeutic tools for people with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergent.
- **Being aware** of how art-based interventions are designed to promote expression, self-awareness, autonomy, and social connection.
- **Learn** the principles for monitoring and evaluating outcomes using mixed-methods (qualitative/quantitative) indicators and reflect on practice for continuous improvement.

Content Description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Introduction to Art Therapy

Art therapy is a psychotherapeutic discipline that uses artistic creation as a primary mode of expression, communication, and emotional processing. It integrates principles from psychology, the visual arts, neuroscience, and

human development to support wellbeing, identity formation, and interpersonal connection. Although art has served as a symbolic and healing practice across cultures for centuries, art therapy emerged as a formal profession in the mid-20th century, shaped by psychoanalytic, humanistic, and creative arts traditions (Malchiodi, 2012).

A central premise of art therapy is that **the creative process itself is therapeutic**, independently of artistic skill or aesthetic outcome. Edith Kramer (1958) described this as the *healing potential of the art process*, emphasising that manipulating materials, making choices, and externalising internal experiences contribute to emotional organisation and ego integration. Similarly, Margaret Naumburg (1978) framed spontaneous art-making as a form of "symbolic speech" capable of expressing thoughts and feelings that may not yet be accessible through verbal language. This is especially relevant for individuals with communication differences, trauma histories, or cognitive limitations.

Art therapy is grounded in the belief that images can hold personal, relational, and emotional meaning. Through drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, digital media, and mixed techniques, participants can externalise internal experiences in a tangible, safe, and modifiable form. This externalisation creates psychological distance that supports reflection, insight, and regulation. Waller (1991) highlights the therapeutic importance of the *triangular relationship* between client, artwork, and therapist, noting that the artwork becomes a mediating object through which emotions can be explored without overwhelming the participant.

Contemporary research further supports the efficacy of art therapy across diverse populations. Studies have shown that creative expression activates brain networks associated with emotional regulation, sensory integration, and stress reduction (Hass-Cohen & Carr, 2008). This neuroscientific

grounding aligns with longstanding clinical observations that tactile and visual engagement can help modulate arousal levels, especially for individuals with heightened sensory sensitivity or difficulties in verbal communication.

For people with ID or neurodivergent profiles, art therapy provides an accessible, flexible, and affirming therapeutic pathway. Schweizer, Knorth and Spreen (2020) found that art therapy enhances emotional expression, participation, and self-concept in individuals with ID by offering non-verbal and sensory-based modes of communication. Similarly, Coholic and Eys (2016) report that creative, multisensory interventions help young people with developmental differences understand and express emotions, improve self-awareness, and build relational trust.

Art therapy also supports **agency, autonomy, and identity formation**. The open-ended nature of materials allows participants to make choices, experiment, and assert their preferences, reinforcing personal authorship and self-efficacy. This is particularly important in neurodiversity-affirming practice, which recognises individual sensory, communicative, and cognitive styles as valid ways of interacting with the world (Malchiodi, 2020). Through creative exploration, participants can construct visual narratives, develop a stronger sense of self, and build confidence in their ability to influence their environment.

In addition to individual benefits, art therapy fosters **relational connection**. The shared creative space provides opportunities for co-regulation, social engagement, and collaboration. The therapist's attuned presence, empathy, and sensitivity to non-verbal cues play a central role in facilitating trust and emotional safety (McNiff, 2004). Moreover, artworks can serve as bridges for communication between participants, caregivers, and professionals, promoting social understanding and inclusion.

Overall, art therapy is a dynamic and evidence-informed discipline that uses creativity as a medium for emotional, cognitive, social, and sensory development. Its adaptability and multimodal nature make it particularly effective for individuals whose experiences and communication styles are not fully supported by verbal therapies. The introduction of art-based approaches into inclusive, educational, community, and healthcare settings contributes not only to individual wellbeing but also to cultural and social participation.

Historical Background and Theoretical Perspectives

The historical development of art therapy reflects the convergence of psychology, education, the arts, and community-based practices. Although its formalisation occurred during the 20th century, the use of visual expression for emotional and symbolic purposes has long been present in cultural rituals and healing traditions. Modern art therapy builds upon this universal human capacity for visual meaning-making.

The discipline became established in the mid-1900s through two major theoretical traditions. The first was the **psychodynamic tradition**, led by early pioneers such as Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer. Naumburg (1978) conceptualised spontaneous artistic expression as a form of symbolic communication capable of accessing unconscious material when verbal expression is limited. Kramer (1958) expanded this view by emphasising "the healing potential of the art process," arguing that artistic creation itself promotes emotional organisation, ego strength, and mastery. Her influential concept of the *third hand* describes the subtle guidance provided by therapists to support expression without imposing interpretation.

Parallel to this, the **art-as-therapy movement** emerged, highlighting the intrinsic therapeutic qualities of creative activity. This perspective helped expand the field beyond clinical settings, reinforcing the idea that art-making supports wellbeing, autonomy, and emotional literacy across a range of populations (Waller, 1991).

In the United Kingdom, the field continued to evolve with models focused on relational processes and group-based practice. The **triangular relationship** between client, artwork, and therapist, described extensively by Waller (1991), became a central theoretical framework that remains highly influential today. This model recognises the artwork as an active element in the therapeutic process that mediates emotional expression and reflection.

From the 1980s onward, art therapy expanded through **humanistic**, **cognitive-behavioural**, **systemic**, and **community-based** approaches. These integrative models acknowledged the diversity of human needs and understood creativity as a pathway for empowerment and self-determination (Domínguez Toscano, 2005). Contemporary art therapy therefore situates itself within an interdisciplinary field where psychological theory, education, disability studies, and social practice meet.

Recent research has increasingly incorporated insights from **neuroscience and sensory processing theory**, showing that tactile and visual engagement can support emotional regulation, executive functioning, and stress reduction—especially for people who experience communication or cognitive barriers (Schweizer, Knorth, & Spreen, 2020). Such findings provide empirical grounding for well-established clinical observations that art therapy offers accessible pathways for expression beyond verbal language.

In parallel, **neurodiversity-affirming perspectives** have reshaped the field, framing cognitive and communicative differences as natural forms of human variation. In this context, art therapy is understood as a flexible medium that accommodates sensory profiles, supports alternative communication styles, and strengthens agency and identity for individuals with intellectual disabilities or neurodivergent characteristics (Coholic & Eys, 2016).

Overall, the theoretical evolution of art therapy reveals a shift from a primarily psychoanalytic discipline toward a **pluralistic, interdisciplinary practice** that integrates creativity, relational processes, cultural contexts, and contemporary scientific knowledge. This expanded framework provides the foundation for inclusive, accessible, and person-centred interventions across diverse settings.

Person-Centred, Neurodiversity-Affirming Practice

This section explains that art therapy is particularly well suited for individuals with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles because it relies on non-verbal, sensory, and creative forms of expression that respect diverse communication styles. From a person-centred perspective, the therapist co-creates a predictable, supportive environment where participants can explore materials, make choices and express themselves at their own pace. A neurodiversity-affirming approach views cognitive and neurological differences as natural variations and adapts communication strategies, pacing and materials to each person's sensory and processing needs. Art therapy also supports co-regulation and sensory integration through tactile and movement-based activities, which can help modulate arousal and organise emotional experience. The therapist avoids interpreting artwork without consent,

prioritising the participant's own meaning-making. Overall, this approach fosters wellbeing, autonomy, identity formation, and emotional expression.

Benefits and Mechanisms of Change

Evidence highlights several mechanisms: emotional expression and regulation; narrative reconstruction; corrective relational experiences; sensory integration through tactile/kinesthetic engagement; attentional anchoring; and social cohesion in groups. Outcomes include improved self-esteem, adaptive behaviour, reduced anxiety, increased participation, and enhanced communication. Mechanisms are mediated by safety, predictability, attuned facilitation, and access to appropriate materials.

Opportunities in Inclusive Cultural Contexts

Art therapy can transform cultural spaces—schools, museums, community centres—into inclusive environments. Opportunities include visibility of artists with ID, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community exhibitions that challenge stigma and promote belonging. Digital tools (tablets, accessible apps) broaden access and support alternative forms of authorship and curation.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Key challenges include: ensuring professional training and supervision; providing accessible spaces and materials; addressing communication barriers via AAC and Easy-to-Read formats; safeguarding confidentiality and informed consent; avoiding over-interpretation of images; and developing proportionate evaluation strategies. Ethical practice requires clear boundaries, safeguarding protocols, cultural humility, and shared decision-making.

The Role of the Art Therapist

The role of the art therapist is central to creating a safe, responsive, and meaningful environment in which participants can engage in expressive processes with autonomy and emotional support. Art therapists facilitate a relational space in which artistic creation becomes a vehicle for communication, emotional regulation, self-discovery, and social connection. This role is grounded in theoretical, ethical, and practical competencies developed within the field over several decades.

A foundational element of the art therapist's role is the capacity to attune to both verbal and non-verbal communication. Because many individuals, particularly those with intellectual disabilities or neurodivergent profiles, communicate more effectively through sensory and symbolic means, the therapist must be skilled in interpreting gestures, rhythms, material choices, and creative sequences as meaningful expressions (Kramer, 1958). This attunement reflects the core psychoanalytic perspective that imagery operates as a form of symbolic speech and that therapeutic insight emerges through the creative process (Naumburg, 1978).

The art therapist also acts as a facilitator of the creative process, supporting participants in exploring materials, experimenting with new forms of expression, and discovering their own artistic voice. Kramer's (1958) influential concept of the *third hand* underscores this responsibility: the therapist offers guidance through subtle interventions—adjusting materials, providing stabilisation, or modelling techniques—while refraining from imposing interpretations or controlling the outcome. This balance preserves autonomy and strengthens the participant's sense of mastery and agency.

From a relational perspective, the therapist holds the triangular therapeutic relationship involving client, artwork, and therapist, as described by Waller (1991). This triadic model positions the artwork as an active mediator that facilitates reflection and dialogue. The therapist must navigate these relational dynamics with sensitivity, recognising that the artwork can simultaneously contain emotion, reveal internal states, and serve as a symbolic relational bridge. This framework is especially relevant when verbal communication is limited, as the artwork provides a shared focus for connection.

In contemporary practice, the art therapist adopts a person-centred and neurodiversity-affirming stance, valuing the participant's lived experience and reinforcing their role as the primary meaning-maker of their artwork. This aligns with humanistic foundations in art therapy, which emphasise empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, as applied in the field by McNiff, 2004). Such an approach requires the therapist to adapt sessions to sensory needs, communication preferences, and individual goals, ensuring accessibility without compromising creative depth (Coholic & Eys, 2016).



Figure 12 A woman with disability poses for a photo, holding a paintbrush. In the background is an art easel with a blank canvas. nina-sonriente-con-sindrome-de-down-posando-con-cepillo, Freepick

A core responsibility of the art therapist is to create a safe and predictable environment. Safety is understood not only in physical terms but also emotionally and psychologically. Trauma-informed art therapy highlights the importance of sensory grounding, pacing, and co-regulation to help participants navigate arousal and maintain engagement (Malchiodi, 2020). The therapist uses materials intentionally—choosing textures, levels of resistance, or forms of mark-making—to support regulation, expression, or containment, depending on the participant's needs.

Another essential dimension of the art therapist's role is reflective practice and ethical awareness. Ethical guidelines emphasise confidentiality, informed consent, cultural humility, and respect for participants' interpretive authority (American Psychological Association, 2020). Art therapists must avoid projecting meanings onto artworks or making diagnostic assumptions from imagery alone—an error repeatedly addressed in professional literature (Naumburg, 1978; Waller, 1991). Instead,

the therapist engages in collaborative inquiry, inviting participants to share their own associations and meanings, thus reinforcing authorship and agency.

Collaboration is also central to the art therapist's professional role. Effective practice involves interdisciplinary coordination with educators, psychologists, social workers, and caregivers to ensure coherence between therapeutic goals and the broader support network (Domínguez Toscano, 2005). The therapist may contribute to accessibility planning, behavioural strategies, or sensory support frameworks, always maintaining an integrative, person-centred orientation.

Finally, art therapists engage in continuous evaluation and documentation. This includes observing creative processes, recording verbal or non-verbal expressions, photographing artworks (with consent), and identifying patterns that inform future sessions. Such documentation not only supports therapeutic continuity but also strengthens evidence-based practice and contributes to professional accountability (Schweizer, Knorth, & Spreen, 2020).

The art therapist's role is multi-layered, integrating creative facilitation, relational attunement, ethical responsibility, sensory awareness, and reflective practice. Grounded in theoretical traditions from Naumburg to contemporary trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming approaches, the art therapist creates a space in which expression, empowerment, and connection become possible through the transformative language of art.

Implementation Framework

The Implementation Framework provides a structured guide for translating the principles of art therapy into consistent, accessible, and person-

centred practice across different contexts. Its purpose is to ensure that therapeutic interventions are planned, delivered, and evaluated in a way that aligns with the needs, strengths, and sensory profiles of participants—particularly individuals with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent characteristics. By outlining key steps such as referral procedures, accessibility planning, session structure, interdisciplinary collaboration, and documentation, this framework supports practitioners in creating safe, coherent, and ethically grounded environments where creative expression can foster emotional, relational, and cognitive development. It also promotes continuity of care and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of art-based interventions.

- Referral and Intake: clarify goals, strengths, sensory needs, communication supports, risks, and safeguarding requirements.
- Accessibility Plan: physical access, material adaptations, AAC tools, Easy-to-Read session outlines, predictable routines.
- Session Structure: welcome and orientation; creative exploration; reflective dialogue (verbal/visual); closure and preview.
- Materials and Environment: calming colours, low-odour paints, varied textures; organise materials to support choice and independence.
- Collaboration: coordinate with educators, caregivers, speech therapists, and social workers; align goals and share observations.
- Documentation: brief session notes, photos of work (with consent), participant quotes, and next-step plans.

Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work

These three activities are intentionally designed to function as a **single, coherent therapeutic process**, moving from grounding, emotional

expression and cognitive–symbolic integration. This progression mirrors the arc of an art therapy session described in the literature, beginning with sensory regulation (Hass-Cohen & Carr, 2008), transitioning into expressive exploration (Malchiodi, 2012), and culminating in narrative or reflective meaning-making (Naumburg, 1978).

Activity n.1: The Safe Place Collage

Purpose: To support grounding, emotional safety, and self-regulation at the beginning of the session. This introductory activity facilitates predictability, sensory regulation, and autonomous choice-making, which are key conditions for therapeutic engagement with neurodivergent participants and individuals with ID.

Method: Structured sensory-based exploration combining visual, tactile, and symbolic elements. The exercise prioritises non-verbal communication, supported choice and gentle verbal or AAC prompts. It draws on principles of sensory grounding, emotional containment, and participant-led meaning-making.

Duration: 20 minutes.

Materials: Paper or card; a curated selection of images (nature, calm spaces, softness, familiar environments); tactile materials (soft fabrics, textured paper, ribbons, foam, felt, etc; glue or tape; optional AAC supports (sentence starters, symbols, visual prompts).

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Begin with a brief sensory attunement (approximately 2 minutes), inviting participants to engage in grounding actions such as touching soft objects, taking slow deep breaths, or identifying favourite colours.
- **Step 2:** Present a limited and carefully selected range of images and textures associated with comfort, safety, calm or softness.

- **Step 3:** Invite participants to choose 2–3 elements that feel “safe,” “quiet” or “calm” to them, emphasising that there are no right or wrong choices.
- **Step 4:** Support participants in arranging the selected elements on paper, encouraging layering, overlapping, or grouping according to personal preference.
- **Step 5:** Offer optional sentence starters or AAC prompts to support expression, such as:
    - “This place feels safe because…”
    - “This reminds me of…”
    - “I chose this colour because…”
- **Step 6:** Invite participants to complete the activity by choosing a title, word or symbol that represents their safe place.

Activity n.2: Emotion Through Colour and Movement

Purpose: To facilitate embodied emotional expression through large-scale movement and colour. This activity supports the externalisation of emotional states in a regulated, playful, and non-verbal manner, recognising the body as a primary site for emotional experience and expression.

Method: Expressive movement-based art activity integrating full-body gestures with visual mark-making. Participants select emotions through supported communication (gesture, AAC, colour or pointing) and translate emotional qualities into movement and paint. The method emphasises sensory integration, emotional regulation, and shared group experience.

Duration: 15 minutes.

Materials: Large sheets of paper or cardboard (floor or wall-mounted); large brushes, rollers or sponges; washable paint in a limited, clearly

presented colour palette; emotion cards or symbols (e.g., happy, sad, angry, calm, excited); protective coverings (aprons, floor mats).

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Present 4–5 emotion cards or symbols and invite participants to choose one emotion using their preferred communication method (pointing, gesture, AAC, colour selection).
- **Step 2:** Introduce the painting materials, encouraging the use of large brushes, rollers, or sponges to support expansive, whole-body movement.
- **Step 3:** Invite participants to explore how their chosen emotion moves through the body, translating movement qualities into paint strokes (e.g., fast, slow, strong, light).
- **Step 4:** Offer optional prompts to support embodied exploration, such as:
    - "Show me how this feeling moves."
    - "If this emotion were a wave, how would it flow?"
- **Step 5:** Encourage a moment of reflection by inviting participants to point to, touch or gesture toward the part of the painting they feel most connected to.
- **Step 6:** Conclude the activity with approximately one minute of slow, rhythmic painting or movement to support a return to a more regulated emotional state.

Activity n.3: Story Through Symbols

Purpose: To integrate the emotional and sensory experiences of the session through symbol-based narrative construction. This activity supports cognitive organisation, sequencing, identity expression, and

emotional understanding, contributing to reflective closure at the end of the session.

Method: Structured visual storytelling using symbols, sequencing, and personalisation. Participants select and organise symbolic elements to build a simple narrative, supported by verbal, gestural or AAC-based facilitation. The method emphasises meaning-making, self-expression, and integration of inner experience into communicable form.

Duration: 20 minutes.

Materials: Symbol cards representing characters, emotions, places, actions and objects; paper or boards for arranging symbols; art materials for personalisation (markers, textures, coloured paper, glue, stickers, etc.); optional AAC supports and visual prompts; camera or device for documentation (with consent).

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Present a selection of symbol cards and briefly explain that participants will create a simple story using images and symbols.
- **Step 2:** Invite participants to choose three symbols that represent a moment, feeling or idea from the session.
- **Step 3:** Support participants in arranging the symbols in a clear sequence: beginning → middle → end.
- **Step 4:** Encourage personalisation of the story using textures, lines, colours, or additional symbols, according to individual preference.
- **Step 5:** Offer reflective prompts to support meaning-making, such as:
    - "Who is this?"
    - "What happened first?"
    - "What feeling goes here?"

- **Step 6:** Co-create a simple title, word or caption that represents the story.
- **Step 7:** Document the completed story through photography or note-taking, ensuring informed consent.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

A growing body of reviews and meta-analyses indicates that art therapy can have positive effects on emotional regulation, self-concept, social participation, and behavioural functioning among people with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent profiles. These findings point to the value of creative, embodied and symbol-based processes as accessible pathways for expression, connection, and self-understanding, particularly for individuals whose experiences may not be easily articulated through verbal or cognitively mediated forms. At the same time, research consistently reports considerable variability in outcomes, reflecting differences in developmental profiles, sensory and emotional needs, facilitation approaches, and contextual conditions. This variability underscores the importance of contextualised, flexible, and ethically grounded practice, as well as the need for robust yet sensitive evaluation designs that can account for complexity rather than impose standardised notions of success. In this context, mixed-methods approaches—such as goal attainment scaling, session rating scales, and thematic analysis of visual, verbal or embodied narratives—are especially well suited to art therapy with young artists, as they capture subtle, process-oriented and participant-defined forms of change that extend beyond symptom reduction and foreground lived experience.

Emotional Development

Art therapy supports emotional development by transforming felt, often pre-verbal experiences into symbols, images and embodied forms that can be explored and shared. Through predictable routines, sensory breaks and co-regulation strategies, participants are supported to recognise, name, modulate and tolerate emotional states over time. This gradual scaffolding of emotional literacy is particularly relevant for individuals who experience difficulties with emotional awareness or regulation. Emphasis on process-focused feedback—highlighting effort, exploration, and adaptive strategies rather than outcomes—helps protect self-esteem, reduces performance anxiety and counters tendencies toward perfectionism.

Social and Relational Skills

Within a group context, collaborative art-making creates low-pressure opportunities to practise turn-taking, listening, and perspective-taking in ways that feel purposeful and engaging rather than instructional. Shared creative tasks foster relational attunement and mutual awareness, allowing social interaction to emerge organically through doing. Rotating roles, such as materials lead, timekeeper or photographer, support agency, responsibility, and role flexibility, while group agreements and visually supported rules provide a clear relational framework that anchors safety, predictability, and mutual respect.

Identity, Agency, and Visibility

Art-making affirms authorship, voice, and personal narrative, particularly for young artists whose perspectives are frequently marginalised or mediated by others. The opportunity to make choices, leave visible traces and develop a personal visual language contributes to a strengthened

sense of identity and agency. When appropriate, exhibitions or sharing moments—co-curated with participants—can promote social inclusion and challenge dominant narratives that frame disability primarily in terms of deficits. Ethical practice requires that participants retain meaningful control over how their work is displayed, described, and shared, with explicit consent processes governing images, captions, and public presentation.

Cognitive and Creative Growth

Art therapy activities that intentionally alternate between structure and freedom support the development of attention, planning, sequencing, and flexible thinking. Clear frameworks provide containment and predictability, while open-ended exploration invites creativity and problem-solving. Multisensory materials—such as varied textures, temperatures, resistances—enhance sensory integration and enrich memory encoding and recall. Practices such as visual journaling or portfolio-building further consolidate learning over time, offering participants a tangible record of exploration, continuity, and change.

Long-Term Benefits

With consistent and supported participation, young artists frequently report increased resilience, greater social participation, enhanced autonomy in choice-making and a stronger sense of creative identity. Families and educators often observe the generalisation of these capacities into everyday contexts, including improvements in communication, self-care, and cooperative behaviours. These longer-term outcomes highlight the role of art therapy not only as a space for expression, but as a sustained developmental, relational, and inclusive practice with relevance beyond the therapeutic setting.

Additional Resources

- Art therapy documentary (YouTube video): A short documentary showing real art therapy sessions and professionals explaining how creative processes support emotional wellbeing.
- A young artist with Down syndrome (YouTube video): A brief portrait of a young artist with Down syndrome, highlighting how art fosters identity, autonomy, and self-expression.
- Art Therapy – FRIEASEL Easel for people living with Disability (YouTube video): A demonstration of an adaptive painting easel designed to support people with physical or motor disabilities in artmaking.
- LHC Better Living: Autism and Art Therapy (YouTube video): A short segment illustrating how art therapy helps autistic individuals regulate emotions and engage through sensory-based activities.
- Art Therapy – Real Look Autism (YouTube video): A look inside art therapy sessions with autistic children, showing how creative expression facilitates communication and reduces anxiety.
- "Yes you can" – Art Centered Therapy for People with Disabilities (YouTube video): A motivational video presenting inclusive art programs that empower people with disabilities through collaborative creation.
- The Power of Arts Therapy (YouTube video): A short piece highlighting the therapeutic impact of art-making, with examples of how creative processes promote emotional healing.
- What is Art Therapy? (YouTube video): A clear introduction to the principles and benefits of art therapy, featuring examples from different contexts and populations.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

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1. Art therapy focuses on the aesthetic value of artworks rather than the personal creative process.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. People with intellectual disabilities can use art therapy to express emotions that are difficult to verbalise.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. What is the main goal of art therapy?

- Teach artistic skills
- Promote emotional and relational well-being
- Produce art for sale

4. Which material is especially suitable for sensory integration?

- Clay
- Pencil
- Computer graphics

5. What is a key ethical principle?

- Competition
- Confidentiality and respect
- Interpretation without consent

Artistic Minds

Module 10

Area of application of the learned – Music Therapy

Module 10: Area of application of the learned – Music Therapy

Learning objectives

This module introduces music therapy as an inclusive and relational approach that uses musical experience to support communication, emotional expression, and shared participation. It provides an overview of key concepts, methods and rhythm-based strategies that can be adapted for work with young artists with intellectual disabilities or who are neurodivergent. The chapter also offers practical examples and activities that facilitators can apply in group or individual settings to enhance engagement, co-creation, and wellbeing.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- **Describe** music therapy as a reflexive process grounded in musical experience and therapeutic relationship.
- **Explain** how rhythm, improvisation and shared music-making support communication, emotional regulation, and social connectedness.
- **Apply** selected principles from Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) to support attention, coordination, and sensory organization.
- **Identify** opportunities and considerations when implementing music-based activities in inclusive settings.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Music therapy uses musical experience - such as rhythm, improvisation, and shared music-making - to support communication, emotional expression, and social participation. It emphasizes the process of musical

interaction, where meaning and connection emerge between therapist and participant (Bruscia, 2014; Nordoff & Robbins, 2007).

This module adopts principles from **Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT)** to illustrate how structured rhythmic patterns can support cognitive timing, emotional regulation, and coordinated movement (Thaut & Hoemberg, 2014). While originally developed in neurorehabilitation, selected NMT strategies are increasingly applied to young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent as rhythmic structure can enhance attention, sensory regulation, and co-regulated engagement (Thaut & Hoemberg, 2014; Wan et al., 2010; LaGasse, 2024; Bharathi et al., 2019). In this module, rhythmic and attention-supporting strategies from NMT are used in an adapted, non-clinical form. Rather than applying full therapeutic protocols, these elements are incorporated to support engagement, co-regulation, and shared participation in inclusive artistic environments.

For young artists with disabilities, music therapy provides a non-verbal channel of expression, where gestures, sounds, and timing function as meaningful forms of communication (Wigram, Pedersen, & Bonde, 2002; Bunt & Stige, 2014,). It enables individuals to express experiences or feelings that may be challenging to articulate verbally (Bruscia, 2014; Wigram, 2004) while fostering self-awareness and empathy within the group (Brown & Pavlicevic, 1996; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009).

Bruscia (2014) describes music therapy as a reflexive process wherein the therapist supports the participant's health using musical experience and the relationship formed through it. The Nordoff-Robbins approach assumes every individual possesses inherent musical capacity that can be activated through shared improvisation. Neurologic Music Therapy (Thaut & Hoemberg, 2014) demonstrates that rhythm can organize attention and movement by supporting neural timing and coordination.

While Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) was originally developed and applied in neurorehabilitation settings - such as stroke, traumatic brain injury -selected rhythmic and attention-regulation strategies from NMT can be effectively adapted in work with young artists with ID and to support sensory organisation, engagement and emotional grounding. In such contexts, NMT serves as a source of structured rhythmic support, while the relational and creative process remains central to the musical interaction.

While **MACT (Musical Attention Control Training)** originates as a structured clinical technique within NMT, in art and culture contexts it could be used as a simplified and playful rhythmic framework to support attention, turn-taking and sensory organization. This adaptation maintains the principle of rhythmic co-regulation without implying clinical treatment.

In conclusion, music therapy offers significant benefits to those who participate in its activities:

- Communication through non-verbal sound and gesture.
- Emotional expression and reduction of negative symptoms.
- Group belonging and co-creation.
- Creative agency and self-expression.

- Accessibility through simple instruments, voice, and body movement.



Figure 13 Three men sitting downplaying an instrument. Photo by RDNE Stock project / Pexels

Suggested activities for individual or group work

The following activities can be used individually or in groups. They are designed to support emotional regulation, communication, and creative participation in accessible ways.

Activity n.1: Pulse together

Purpose: Promote emotional regulation, grounding, and group synchrony through a steady, shared rhythm. Group drumming is often used in therapy to enhance feelings of togetherness and co-regulation. A steady pulse can help calm the nervous system and create a sense of predictability.

Duration: 10-15 minutes.

Materials: Small drums or shakers for each participant. If instruments are

not available, body percussion (e.g. clapping, tapping, stomping) can be used.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Circle setup:** Invite participants to sit together in a circle.
- **Step 2 Leader's steady pulse:** Begin by playing a slow, steady beat - for example, gentle clapping or a soft drum beat at an even tempo. This rhythmic cue serves as an anchor for the group.
- **Step 3 Join in gradually:** Encourage each participant to join the pulse in whatever way they feel comfortable to them. This could be clapping hands, tapping feet, playing their drum or shaker, or even just breathing in time with the beat. Emphasize that there is no wrong way to join - the goal is simply to align with the group's rhythm. If someone cannot use an instrument or move limbs, encourage them to imagine tapping or to nod their head, etc. The goal is inclusion in the shared rhythm at whatever level is possible.
- **Step 4 Maintain the groove**: Continue the group pulse for several minutes. Keep the tempo predictable and steady, adjusting only if the whole group naturally shifts into a new, comfortable tempo. You should monitor the group's energy and make minor tempo adjustments if needed (e.g., slowing down if people seem overstimulated, or gently speeding up if energy is very low).
- **Step 5 Closure:** Gradually bring the drumming to a soft stop or slow fade-out after 10-15 minutes. You might count down the last few beats or give a simple signal (like raising a hand) so everyone can end together.

Activity n.2: Rhythm & Move (NMT - MACT Inspired)

Purpose: Practice attention skills, turn-taking, sequencing, and motor planning through interactive rhythm games. This activity is inspired by Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) techniques, specifically Musical Attention Control Training (MACT), which uses structured musical cues to practice sustained and shifting attention.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Hand drums or wooden rhythm sticks for each person. Clapping or patting thighs can work if no instruments are available.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Call-and-response pattern:** Establish a simple rhythmic pattern for the group to echo. For example, start with a four-beat pattern like “ta - ta - ti - ta” (where “ti” indicates two quicker beats in the space of one). Play this pattern on a drum or clap it out, and have the group listen. Then cue everyone to echo the pattern back in unison.
- **Step 2 Repeat & embed the rhythm:** Do the call-and-response a few times with the same pattern so participants get comfortable with it. This engages focused attention and listening skills.
- **Step 3 Introduce variations:** Gradually introduce small changes to the pattern to practice shifted attention and sequencing flexibility. For example, you might insert a pause (rest) in the pattern, add an accented (louder) beat, or change the speed (slightly faster or slower). Each time, the group listens and then echoes. Laugh off any “mistakes” and encourage trying again - the goal is to keep everyone mentally engaged and having fun with the changes.
- **Step 4 Rotate the leader role:** Once the group understands the game, invite participants to take turns being the leader who creates

a new rhythm for everyone else to copy. This can be as simple as a two- or four-beat pattern of their choosing. Support those who might be shy or unsure - even a single clap or a simple beat is perfect. Celebrate creativity: if someone does something unexpected or irregular, treat it as a playful variation for the group to echo.

- **Step 5 Movement Integration (optional):** To involve motor planning, you can incorporate movement with the rhythm. For example, assign a simple motion (like a step, a clap, or a wiggle) to certain beats. Or try an activity like “stop and go”: when the leader plays, everyone marches in place to the beat; when the leader stops playing, everyone freezes. This is directly drawn from MACT techniques, where musical cues signal when to start/stop actions, training participants’ impulse control in a motivating way (Thaut & Gardiner, 2014).

Activity n.3: Sound identity check-in

Purpose: Provide a non-verbal outlet for each participant to express their current emotional state and feel heard by the group. This activity offers a way to “say” how you feel using sound instead of words, which can reduce the pressure of verbal explanation.

Duration: 8-12 minutes (depending on group size).

Materials: Just the voice or one simple instrument per person (e.g. a chime, hand drum, kalimba, or any sound-making object). If instruments are available, distribute them so each person has one; if not, the voice alone is fine.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Introduction:** Explain to the group that instead of using words to describe how we feel, we will each make a single sound to show

how we are doing right now. Emphasize that any sound is okay - it could be long or short, loud, or quiet, musical, or just a noise. There is no “wrong” sound when it represents how you feel.

- **Step 2 Individual sound sharing**: One at a time, each participant makes their chosen “feelings sound.” For example, someone might take a deep breath and hum softly if they feel calm, or they might stomp or play a quick loud note if they feel angry or excited. It can be abstract - even just a volume, pitch, or rhythm that resonates with them in the moment.
- **Step 3 Group echo:** After a person makes their sound, the rest of the group is invited to gently echo or mirror that sound back. If it was a vocal sound, others try to imitate that vocalization briefly. If it was made on an instrument, others can reply using their own instruments in a similar way (or voice, if they do not have the same instrument). The idea is that everyone reflects what they heard, acknowledging the person’s expression. This should be done respectfully - matching the tone/volume (if someone did a soft sound, everyone echoes softly).
- **Step 4 Turn-taking:** Go around so that each group member has a turn to make a sound and hear it echoed by the group. There should be no interrupting; each person’s sound is unique and important. Encourage participants to really listen to each other.
- **Step 5 Closure:** After everyone has had a turn, end the activity with a moment of silence or perhaps one gentle collective sound (like a unified hum or a chord on instruments) to bring the group back together. For instance, the facilitator can cue everyone to take one deep breath together and let out a soft hum in unison, then fade out to silence.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Music-based activities can meaningfully support the personal, social, and artistic development of young artists with ID or who are neurodivergent. What matters most in practice is not the musical outcome, but the environment of shared presence, flexibility, and relational engagement. The facilitator's approach strongly shapes how accessible and empowering the activity becomes.

Below are some guidelines to follow when working with young artists.

- **Model calm, steady, and non-judgmental participation:** A grounded posture, relaxed breathing and steady movements help establish a predictable atmosphere that supports co-regulation. Variations in rhythm or timing from participants should be welcomed rather than corrected; all contributions are meaningful. Allow synchrony to emerge naturally—shared rhythm often develops spontaneously and strengthens group cohesion.
- **Use clear, simple rhythmic cues and encourage turn-taking without pressure:** Demonstrate active listening by echoing participants' patterns accurately and acknowledging their ideas. If someone struggles, gently simplify or support them without drawing negative attention. Follow the group's flow: if a rhythm changes or becomes irregular, adapt with it. Use positive, specific feedback to reinforce engagement ("Great stop together!," "Nice fast pattern you created!").
- **Validate expressive sounds and gestures without interpreting them:** Echo each sound sincerely to show it has been heard—whether soft, playful, or intense—while avoiding labelling ("angry," "sad") or analysing meaning. If someone is hesitant, offer to create a

sound together or allow them to pass. Pairing, mirroring, and gentle encouragement help maintain an atmosphere of acceptance and shared presence.

This approach supports the development of many skills in young artists participating in music-making activities, in particular:

- **Personal competence:** emotional awareness, confidence, self-agency, and comfort in creative expression.
- **Social competence**: turn-taking, listening, group belonging and rhythmic co-regulation.
- **Artistic competence**: exploration of musical identity, sound choices, and improvisation.
- **Emerging professional competence**: responsibility, preparation, collaboration, and respectful shared practice.

Through these guidelines, music-making becomes a flexible, inclusive process where young artists can participate at their own pace, communicate in ways that feel natural to them, and be recognised as valued contributors in the group.

Additional resources

The following resources can support the participant in exploring music-based activities and further learning.

- Nordoff-Robbins (Creative Music Therapy): Explores relational and improvisational approaches, focusing on shared musical interaction and creative agency.
- Neurologic Music Therapy - Demonstrations (adaptable elements): Short practice videos showing how rhythmic structure can support attention, movement, and engagement in simple, accessible ways.

- Chrome Music Lab (Free Interactive Music Tools): Accessible digital tools for exploring rhythm, melody, loops, and sound texture. Useful for inclusive and low-barrier group play.
- Deep Listening / Sonic Awareness (Pauline Oliveros Foundation): Simple guided sound awareness practices that encourage sensory grounding and co-presence.
- Free Drum Loop Library: Useful for establishing steady rhythmic structure in activities when instruments are limited. No login required.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Music therapy emphasizes shared musical interaction rather than achieving musical performance outcomes.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) uses rhythm to support attention, coordination and regulation, not only emotional expression.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. The Nordoff-Robbins approach is based on the idea that:

- Music must be taught before it can be used
- Every person has an innate musical potential that can be engaged through improvisation
- Music therapy focuses primarily on performance skills

4. The primary goal of group rhythm activities in this module is to:

- Produce synchronised musical outcomes
- Support shared attention, co-regulation and connection
- Train technical rhythmic accuracy

5. Which activity provides a non-verbal way to express emotional state within the group?

- Sound identity check-in
- Lyric analysis discussion
- Scale practice exercise

Artistic Minds

Module 11

Area of application of the learned – Drama Therapy

Module 11: Area of application of the learned – Drama Therapy

Learning objectives

This module introduces the theoretical foundations and practical applications of Drama Therapy in educational, social, and therapeutic contexts. Participants will explore how drama-based methods support emotional expression, inclusion, and personal development, with particular attention to work with young artists with intellectual disability (ID) and/or neurodivergence. At the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- **Understand** the theoretical and practical foundations of drama therapy and its potential to complement other psychological and educational support methodologies (e.g., dance therapy).
- **Analyze** the opportunities and challenges of its application in different educational, therapeutic, and social contexts.
- **Learn** about the impact of drama therapy on the skills of young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

During the 20th century, the boundary between art and therapy gradually blurred. Music, dance, theater, and photography demonstrated a transformative potential capable of influencing self-perception and quality of life (Chasen, 2011; Slade, 2008). Within this context, drama therapy emerged, based on the idea that people can get to know themselves and transform themselves through performance. Founded on action and movement, drama therapy recognizes the role of the body as a bridge between the internal and external dimensions. Through it, the invisible can

take shape, becoming a shareable and recognizable experience. Movement, rhythm, mimicry, and play become tools for expressing what words cannot communicate. In drama therapy, this sensitivity translates into the use of the body as a privileged channel of expression and relationship, capable of making the invisible visible.

Theoretical foundations

Drama therapy stems from the convergence of different traditions and schools of thought which, during the 20th century, transformed theater from a simple performing art into a tool for healing and personal growth. In 1953 Jacob Levi Moreno paved the way with psychodrama, arguing that action precedes thought: through gesture and movement, the body becomes the primary vehicle for knowledge and transformation (Moreno, 1953). It is not about acting for an audience, but about staging fragments of one's own life in a protected context, to explore emotions and relationships in a direct and liberating way (Holmes & Karp, 1991).

This insight is intertwined with the work of Augusto Boal, who, with his Theater of the Oppressed (1974), took theater off the traditional stage and put it at the service of the community. Boal argued that every human being is both an actor and a spectator in their own life: theater thus becomes a space for critical awareness, where people can reflect on power dynamics and propose alternatives. In the therapeutic field, this perspective shows how the stage can be a means of liberation and collective transformation, not just individual (Boal, 2000). Alongside these visions, Jacques Lecoq in 1997 developed a pedagogy centered on the poetic body (Lecoq, 1997). For him, theater should not only train professional actors, but also human beings capable of listening to the world with their whole body.

In Italy, Gaetano Oliva helped systematize drama therapy in educational and therapeutic contexts, describing it as “education in presence.” For Oliva, the body is a place where fears, conflicts, and resources manifest themselves, and the stage becomes a symbolic space for mediation: a protected environment where emotions and experiences can be represented without being overwhelmed. Symbolic play, in this perspective, is fundamental because it allows deep emotions to be expressed in a protected and shareable way (Oliva, 2005).

Finally, in 2014 Michael Karp and Maria Farrall updated Moren's method, describing contemporary psychodrama as a three-stage process: warm-up, dramatic action, and sharing. Their focus on creative spontaneity, considered the purest form of mental health, reinforces the idea that the stage is a laboratory of reality, a place where new ways of being and relating can be experienced (Karp & Farrall, 2014). Oliva and Karp & Farrall share a focus on the body, relationships, the use of symbols and play, and the role of the facilitator.

Drama therapy is a practice of emotional citizenship, bridging art and psychology, the individual and the community (Brook, 1968). Drama therapy, therefore, is based on a web of ideas that, despite coming from different contexts, converge on certain common principles: the centrality of the body as an instrument of knowledge, the value of play and spontaneity, the relational and community dimension, and the stage as a symbolic space for transformation.

Drama therapy is a discipline that can be applied and proposed in various areas:

- **School and education:** promotes emotional education and integration, combats bullying and inequality, and values diversity as a resource (Chasen, 2011).
- **Disability:** values expressive abilities even in the presence of communication limitations; the stage becomes a space for inclusion.
- **Mental health**: when drama therapy is used in therapeutic centers and communities, it promotes the reconstruction of identity and self-narrative (Slade, 2008).
- **Vulnerable groups:** deconstructs roles and stereotypes, restoring voice and dignity to minorities and discriminated people.
- **Group dimension**: the group is a mirror and support, a therapeutic micro-society based on listening and empathy.

Role of the facilitator and safe setting

In Drama Therapy, the facilitators act as a "process companion," ensuring a clear and reliable setting (Karp & Farrall, 2014). They define time frames, rules of mutual care, and physical boundaries. They provide gradual warm-ups to the participants, offer non-prescriptive images and stimuli, slow down when emotional intensity increases, and use final sharing to translate the experience into meaning. In the helping relationship, the facilitator monitors the quality of symbolic play (the ability to "pretend" while remaining safe), encourages awareness of breathing and posture, and cultivates a non-judgmental climate that allows for trial and error without consequences. When working with young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent individuals, they take care of sensory adaptations (lights, sounds, tactile materials), the predictability of sequences, and the use of clear signals to facilitate transitions and breaks.

Drama therapy, phototherapy, and other art therapies

Phototherapy can complement drama therapy, creating a virtuous circle between image and action: photographs (personal, archival, symbolic) serve as narrative triggers and allow body work to be extended to the visual dimension, promoting recognition and re-elaboration. Similarly, dance-movement therapy supports kinesthetic awareness, and music facilitates co-regulation and group cohesion. Integration does not confuse languages: each practice presides over a register (body, voice, image, rhythm) and converges on the same goal of awareness, expression, and relationship. In courses with young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, this integration allows for fine customization: some respond better to rhythm, some to visualization, some to voice, and the plurality of channels increases accessibility and inclusion (Chasen, 2011).

Process and outcome assessment

Evaluation is an integral part of drama therapy activities as it highlights the individual and collective processes of change experienced by workshop participants. The evaluation system is designed to accompany the experience throughout, capturing emotional, relational, physical, and expressive aspects. Monitoring can be divided into three key stages:

- **Entry:** In this phase, participants' expectations, initial needs, and level of physical and relational comfort can be identified.
- **During:** during the activities, the drama therapist can observe spontaneity, perception of safety, ability to engage, and respect for the proposed times.
- **Closure:** finally, self-perception, expressed abilities and integration into the group can be assessed.

Various tools can be used to collect this information, including short Likert scales on safety and spontaneity, questionnaires on skills such as non-verbal communication, listening and cooperation, body diaries consisting of words and images, and narrative micro-interviews. The goal is to highlight the impact of the activity on the participant and make the change visible. For instance, Drama Therapy courses can enable a person with disabilities to move more easily, use their voice more effectively, and develop a stronger sense of belonging to the group. This approach restores dignity and centrality to the processes, highlighting the transformative potential of artistic experiences (Oliva, 2005; Slade, 2008).

In conclusion, drama therapy is a valuable addition to clinical, therapeutic, and educational practices, enriching and supporting them. It promotes safe and respectful emotional exploration, as well as individual well-being and the regulation of emotions. Drama therapy activities welcome different personal rhythms, allowing freedom to move in and out of roles and recognising the value of silence as a legitimate form of participation. Taking part in activities is always voluntary, and the atmosphere is one of listening and mutual respect.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: Building the Safe Dramatic Space

Purpose: To develop awareness of how to create a safe, structured, and inclusive setting for Drama Therapy with educational or cultural groups.
Method: Groupe experiential exercise followed by guided reflection (in person or online).
Duration: 60 minutes.
Materials: Flipchart or digital board; markers; printed checklist (or shared document).

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Warm up:** The trainer leads a short, simulated drama therapy session, emphasising predictability and safety. Participants stand in a circle while the trainer leads them through breathing exercises involving slow movements such as placing their hands on their heart and doing gentle stretches. Use visual and verbal cues (e.g. 'Ready? Yes/No').
- **Step 2 Short symbolic exercise:** 'My safe tree' – participants use their bodies or objects to create a tree that represents strength (first individually, then in pairs).
- **Step 3 Small group analysis:** The group is divided into smaller groups. Each group draws or chooses images in response to the question 'What creates safety?' (Example categories: Physical space, voice/tones, body/movements, rhythm/timing, rules/sharing and transitions/signals. Then, each group votes for the top three elements using stickers or marks.
- **Step 4 Plenary Discussion:** Groups share results. Trainer introduces a checklist of good practices (rituals, rules, transitions, sensory awareness).



Figure 14 Above, the title 'Building the safe dramatic space'. Below, on the left, one woman and two men with their eyes closed and barefoot are doing a theatre exercise. On the right, a teacher explains the exercise to them. Midjourney v6, 2025

Activity n.2: Embodiment and Symbolic Language in Education

Purpose: To explore how bodily action and symbolic play support emotional learning and communication in educational and cultural contexts.

Method: Practical laboratory with reflection.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Open space; scarves or neutral objects; paper and pens.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Body Activation (15 min):** Simple movement and mirroring exercises to increase body awareness.
- **Step 2 Symbolic Improvisation (25 min):** Participants create short scenes using objects as symbols of emotions or experiences.

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- **Step 3 Reflection (20 min):** Discussion on transferability to educational and cultural work (group regulation, engagement, expression).



Figure 15 Above, the title 'Symbolic improvisation'. Below, two women and two men prepare a theatre scene. AI generated photo - Midjourney v6, 2025

Activity n.3: Adapting Drama Therapy for Neurodiversity and Disability

Purpose: To develop practical strategies for adapting Drama Therapy to inclusive settings.

Method: Case-study discussion and collaborative design.

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Case sheets; adaptation checklist; digital or paper templates.

Instructions for Participants:

- **Step 1 Case Analysis (20 min):** Groups receive a scenario involving participants with different needs.

- **Step 2 Design Phase (25 min):** Groups propose adaptations (sensory inputs, pacing, visual aids).
- **Step 3 Sharing and Feedback (15 min):** Groups present shortened plans and receive peer feedback.



Figure 16 Above, the title 'Adapting drama therapy for neurodiversity and disability'. Below, three women and one man seated around a table. One woman shows a sheet of paper with the image of a person in a wheelchair. AI generated photo - Midjourney v6, 2025

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

The impact of the module on young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent can be mapped onto areas of cross-cutting competence:

- **Self-awareness and self-regulation:** recognizing physical states, naming emotions, modulating intensity.
- **Expressive communication**: using voice, gesture, rhythm, and image to convey meaning; listening and mirroring.

- **Collaboration and citizenship**: caring for the group, respecting boundaries, participating in shared creation.
- **Creativity and problem solving**: transforming materials and assignments into symbolic scenarios, generating new responses.
- **Resilience and well-being**: navigating difficult emotions in a protected play environment, returning to the here and now with more resources. For young artists with ID and/or neurodivergence, the mapping highlights observable progress that can be shared with families, teams, and schools, supporting educational and therapeutic decisions.

Practical guidelines for the setting

The following guidelines offer practical advice on creating a safe, inclusive, and functional environment for drama therapy activities. They are designed to facilitate organization, support participation, and ensure a positive experience for young artists with disabilities.

- **Space:** ensure that the environment is clean, flexible, and free of obstacles, organized with areas dedicated to both dynamic activities (action) and quieter moments (sharing).
- **Time:** recommended activity duration is 60–90 minutes, divided into warm-up, core experiential phase, closing, and reflection.
- **Materials:** it is preferable to use easily movable chairs, large sheets of paper, towels, and neutral objects such as soft balls, ropes, or colored paper.
- **Audio and lighting:** we recommend moderate levels, with the possibility of reducing stimuli to accommodate any sensory sensitivities.

- **Safety:** at the beginning of the activities, define clear rules for safety and the success of the activity together with the group (e.g., no non-consensual contact, immediate interruption at a verbal signal).
- **Accessibility:** it is advisable to use multimodal communication (verbal, visual, demonstrative), with predictable times and entry and exit rituals to facilitate orientation and participation.

Additional resources

- British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth): Official website of the British Association of Dramatherapists.
- European Federation of Dramatherapy (EFD): European network for drama therapy: projects, conferences, and professional resources.
- German Society for Drama Therapy (DGfT – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Theatertherapie): German institute that has been offering advanced and continuing education in drama therapy for many years.
- Creative Drama in Support Therapies for Children with Learning Disorders (Zafeiriadou N., 2015): The document presents the results of the project entitled "Supportive therapies for children with learning disabilities," in which elements of creative theater and drama therapy were used with students in grades five through nine.
- Drama Therapy (Orioli W. 2021): The book is eminently practical in nature: a concise theoretical section serves as a conceptual framework for the two subsequent sections, which present exercises and experiences in the form of work reports by experts in the field and theater therapy scholars.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Is artistic performance the goal of drama therapy?

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Is the group a mirror and support device on stage?

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. According to Moreno, which comes first?

- Words
- Action
- Thoughts

4. Essential dimension of drama therapy:

- Competition between participants
- Rigid direction by the facilitator
- Play and a safe environment

5. The key objective of drama therapy is:

- Technical training
- Exploration of the self through body and voice
- The artist's economic success

Artistic Minds

Module 12

Area of application of the learned – Digital Art and Smart Culture

Module 12: Area of application of the learned – Digital Art and Smart Culture

Learning Objectives

This module offers an overview of how digital art and smart culture intersect with inclusive creative practices. It introduces the key concepts, opportunities, and challenges that shape the use of emerging technologies in artistic work with young artists with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles.

By attending the following module, participants will:

- **Design inclusive digital art experiences** that integrate smart technologies (e.g. interactive media) to engage young artists with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent in creative expression.
- **Implement strategies and best practices** for using digital art tools in your work with artists with intellectual disability, ensuring these technologies are applied in an accessible, empowering, and ethical manner.

Content Description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Digital technology has become an integral part of today's cultural landscape, giving rise to digital art as a medium and fostering what many call a "smart culture." In simple terms, **digital art** refers to creative works produced or enhanced using digital tools – from illustrations drawn on a tablet, to generative AI artworks, to interactive installations. **Smart culture** refers to the integration of advanced technologies (such as AI, virtual/augmented reality, and mobile apps) into cultural spaces and practices, with the goal of enhancing access, participation, and

personalization (SmartCulture, 2015). In an artistic or cultural environment, designed and integrated with smart culture, technology is leveraged to transform how people engage with art: audiences become co-creators, learners, or players rather than passive viewers. For example, a city might use a network of interactive public art pieces that respond to visitors' movements, or a museum might offer a smartphone app that delivers personalized audio description and sign language overlays for exhibits. These developments promise new creative experiences for the public and significant opportunities for inclusion –including young artists ID and/or neurodivergent (SmartCulture, 2015).



Figure 17 A man sitting in a wheelchair takes a photo with his mobile phone of a painting depicting a woman in the countryside, wearing a dress and carrying a white umbrella. AI-generated image – ChatGPT v5.1, OpenAI, 2025

In practice, digital art and smart culture initiatives are already demonstrating these inclusive opportunities. Cultural institutions have begun to adopt technology to become more accessible: museums, for

example, are using interactive and AI-driven tools to accommodate visitors with disabilities. One recent study designed a “smart museum” system featuring tactile exhibits, AI-based narration, and chatbots, which led to a 52% increase in content comprehension and high satisfaction among visually impaired visitors (Elsayed et al., 2025). On a broader scale, cultural policymakers also recognize the value of digital inclusion. The European Commission’s Creative Europe program has made digital transition and resilience a priority for 2025 (Creative Europe, 2024). Efforts, like the EU-funded Smart Culture project, have likewise aimed to leverage digital technologies for “sustainable access to cultural heritage”, underlining that tech can help break down long-standing barriers to participation.

Equally important, artists with disabilities themselves are driving digital innovation in the arts. As arts producer Jo Verrent (2019) observes, such creators have *“always stretched boundaries, challenged stereotypes and created change”* and must be at the forefront of cultural tech innovation rather than just recipients of accessibility fixes. The ethos of “nothing about us without us” is leading to collaborative initiatives: for instance, the 2023 **CripTech Metaverse Lab** brought together artists with disabilities to prototype new immersive art experiences (Gray Area & Leonardo/ISAST, 2023), demonstrating how co-design with people who have disabilities can yield innovative creative outcomes. Individual artists are also using digital media to express perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked. A notable example is Sue Austin’s *Underwater Wheelchair* project – an underwater performance by a wheelchair user that was captured in 360° video and virtual reality formats, allowing global audiences to share in its sense of freedom while challenging their perceptions of disability (Verrent, 2019). Such cases illustrate how digital art can have an impact both on the

creative abilities of artists with disabilities and on the public's ability to engage with and learn from their art.

Digital Art as an Inclusive Creative Practice

Digital art offers a versatile toolkit for creative expression that can be especially empowering for artists with disabilities. Unlike traditional art forms that might require fine motor skills, physical mobility, or expensive materials, many digital art tools are highly adaptable to different needs. For instance, an artist with limited hand mobility can paint using a tablet and a stylus or even eye-tracking software instead of a brush. In fact, affordable sensor technologies (like eye trackers, motion sensors, or VR controllers) have opened new ways for people with physical or developmental disabilities to create art by leveraging their existing abilities in alternate ways. Research initiatives have found that devices such as Microsoft Kinect, Leap Motion, or Tobii EyeX (eye-gaze trackers) can enable creative interaction through gestures, head movement, or gaze, allowing artists to engage in art forms previously out of reach.

Digital tools enable the introduction of art forms considered "hybrid" (like digital sculptures that can be 3D-printed), which enrich the art world with new perspectives born from disability experiences. For example, one artist with spinal muscular atrophy reported that using 3D modeling software was a "huge revelation" that enabled him to design the large-scale artworks he imagined, despite severe mobility limitations (Al-Rashed, 2024). By shifting creative tasks into the digital realm, he found the freedom to produce intricate looping sculptures on-screen that would have been impossible to construct by hand – underscoring how technology can help artists transcend physical barriers.

Importantly, digital platforms also help remove traditional barriers of **space and access** in the art world. Online galleries, social media, and NFT marketplaces allow artists to display and sell their work globally without needing to travel or navigate physical gallery spaces that might be inaccessible. By creating and selling art as digital files or NFTs (non-fungible tokens), artists with disabilities can bypass the gatekeepers of the traditional art market and maintain more control over their work and income. They no longer must incur the costs and physical demands of shipping artworks or attending openings in person – an online art sale is as legitimate as one in a bricks-and-mortar gallery. This democratization of distribution promotes inclusivity and can even provide economic empowerment: artists with disabilities are finding new revenue streams and gaining recognition through digital art (Getty, 2025).

Digital art can also be tailored to individual needs, which is crucial for artists with ID and/or neurodivergent. For example, simple creative apps with touch-friendly interfaces, symbols, or voice output can enable artists to create complex works in an accessible and easy way. Interactive art software often includes features like undo/redo, templates, or adaptive prompts that reduce the fear of mistakes and encourage experimentation – fostering a sense of mastery and confidence. Moreover, research shows that engaging in interactive digital art activities has therapeutic and developmental benefits for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Albrecht et al. (2021) found that activities like digital painting, virtual sand art, and art-based video games led to improved cognitive functioning and social interaction in participants with intellectual disabilities. The process of creating art in a digital environment can stimulate focus, provide sensory feedback (through visuals, sounds, or gentle vibrations), and invite social collaboration – for instance, two artists

might draw together on a shared tablet or take turns adding to a digital canvas. Such activities support communication and teamwork skills in a fun, accessible way.



Figure 18 A person sitting at a desk drawing on a tablet whilewith right hand while scrolling images for inspiration on a laptop. ©Antoni Shkraba Studio, Pexels

In short, digital art is an expansive new realm where artists can thrive on their own terms, experiment with cutting-edge techniques, and share their visions in formats the world is increasingly eager to embrace.

Despite these opportunities, there are challenges to acknowledge. **Digital divide** issues mean not everyone has equal access to the necessary technology or reliable internet connectivity. Digital Divide is a problem that can disproportionately affect people with disabilities who may also face economic disadvantages. For instance, a recent European survey found that 87% of people with a disability had used the internet in the past year, compared to 95% of those without a disability (Eurostat, 2024). Additionally, some digital art tools have a learning curve or may not initially be designed with cognitive accessibility in mind. For example, a complex 3D modeling program might be overwhelming for some users with ID due to

complicated menus and interfaces. It is crucial for trainers and facilitators to select user-friendly tools, provide clear tutorials (ideally with visual examples or step-by-step guidance), and be ready to offer one-on-one support or adaptations. Another challenge is ensuring that the art created is **accessible to audiences** with disabilities. An interactive digital artwork might be stunning visually, but if it is exhibited without captions, audio description, or alternative formats, people with hearing or visual impairments (some of whom could be artists with IDs themselves) might not fully experience it. Thus, practicing "accessible artistry" – thinking about alt text for images, easy-read descriptions for complex pieces, and multisensory elements – becomes part of the digital artist's skill set in an inclusive arts environment.

Smart and Inclusive Culture

Smart culture represents a transformative approach to integrating digital technologies within cultural ecosystems, aiming to foster innovation, broaden accessibility, and deepen public engagement. This concept is closely tied to the broader vision of smart cities, where culture is not merely decorative but a strategic driver of social cohesion, urban identity, and inclusive development.

At the heart of smart culture lie several foundational theories. *Creative Placemaking* emphasizes the role of arts and culture in shaping both the physical and social character of communities, turning public spaces into vibrant cultural hubs. *Digital Inclusion Theory* advocates for equitable access to digital cultural resources, ensuring that technological advancements do not widen existing gaps but instead serve as bridges across them. Meanwhile, *Participatory Culture*, as articulated by Henry Jenkins (2006), encourages active involvement from individuals in the

creation and dissemination of cultural content, shifting audiences from passive consumers to empowered co-creators.

The opportunities presented by smart culture are vast. Technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), mobile applications, and digital archives significantly enhance access to cultural content, making it more immersive and widely available. These tools also enable data-driven decision-making in cultural policy and urban planning, allowing for more responsive and inclusive strategies. Furthermore, smart culture opens new avenues for audience engagement, fostering co-creation and interactive experiences that redefine traditional cultural participation.

However, these advancements are not without challenges. The digital divide remains a pressing concern, as marginalized groups may lack the infrastructure or skills to fully participate in smart cultural initiatives. Ethical issues also arise, particularly around surveillance and data privacy, as cultural spaces become increasingly digitized. Additionally, there is a risk that algorithmic systems may homogenize cultural expression, privilege mainstream narratives while sidelining diverse or unconventional voices. Examples used in this module include digital tools developed within WP3, such as the Cultural Trails App, the 3D Comic Creator Tool, and the Collection of Digital Art Tools to enhance inclusion and creative participation.

Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work

Activity n.1: Digital Art Jam Session

Purpose: To explore accessible digital art-making tools and encourage creative expression for all participants, regardless of ability.
Method: Individual activity (with option to share afterwards). Each participant creates a simple artwork using a digital app or tool (e.g. a

drawing tablet, a touchscreen painting app, or an online collage maker).
Duration: 45 minutes (30 min creating art, 15 min optional show-and-tell).
Materials: Tablets or computers with a user-friendly art app (such as Tux Paint, Procreate, Kleki, or Microsoft Paint 3D). If available, adaptive devices like touch pens, head pointers, or eye-tracking setups should be provided for those who need them.
Instructions:

- **Step 1**: Before starting, introduce the tool with a quick demo – show how to select colors, use undo, add images, etc. Emphasize that there is no "right or wrong" way to make art. Encourage participants to experiment with features (for example, using stamps, changing brush sizes, or adding text/audio). If a participant is hesitant or has difficulty, pair them with a peer or support staff to collaborate.
- **Step 2:** Ask to each participant to create a simple artwork. During creation, circulate to assist and praise efforts.
- **Step 3**: Afterwards, have an informal sharing session: participants can hold up their device or share their screen to show their artwork and say a few words about it (with support if needed). As the trainer, model positive feedback and invite the group to applaud each creation. This activity not only builds digital skills but also helps participants gain confidence in expressing themselves through technology.

Activity n.2: Smart Culture Experience Map

Purpose: To explore how smart technologies influence cultural experiences in participants' local environments and to reflect on inclusivity, innovation, and accessibility.
Method: Individual reflection followed by collaborative mapping and group discussion (in person or online).

Duration: 45–60 minutes.

Materials: Concept mapping tools (paper, markers, or digital platforms like Miro, Padlet,..); access to local cultural data (optional: websites of museums, cultural centers, smart city dashboards); worksheets with guiding questions (e.g., "Where do you encounter smart culture?", "Who benefits?", "What barriers exist?").

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Individual Mapping** (20 min): Invite each participant to create a visual map of smart cultural experiences in their city or region. This can include AR/VR installations in museums; interactive public art; mobile apps for cultural events; smart signage or multilingual guides and data-driven cultural planning tools.
- **Step 2 – Group Sharing** (20 min): In small groups, participants present their maps and discuss:
  - Which technologies are most prevalent?
  - Who is included or excluded from these experiences?
  - What opportunities for innovation or improvement exist?
- **Step 3 – Debrief & Reflection** (15–20 min): Facilitate a plenary discussion, encouraging participants to reflect on:
  - How smart culture can be made more inclusive.
  - What ethical considerations should guide its development.
  - How young or marginalized artists can engage with smart cultural tools.

Activity n.3: Ethical Dilemma Roleplay – Smart Culture in Public Spaces

Purpose: To critically examine the ethical implications of smart technologies used in cultural settings, such as surveillance, data collection, and algorithmic curation.

Method: Small group roleplay followed by a guided plenary discussion (in person or online).

Duration: 60 minutes.

Materials: Scenario cards (printed or digital); role sheets (e.g., artist, city planner, activist, tech developer); digital collaboration tools (Zoom breakout rooms, Miro, Google Docs).

Instructions:

- **Step 1 – Scenario Assignment** (10 min): Each group receives a scenario involving a smart cultural initiative (e.g., facial recognition at a museum, AI-curated public art, data-driven cultural funding).
- **Step 2 – Roleplay** (30 min) Participants assume roles and debate the scenario from their assigned perspectives. They must consider ethical, social, and cultural impacts.
- **Step 3 – Debrief** (20 min): Each groups present their conclusions in a plenary discussion. Trainer facilitates a discussion on:
  - Whose voices are prioritized or silenced?
  - What safeguards are needed?
  - How can smart culture be both innovative and ethical?

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Applying the content of this module in your practice will directly support the growth of **competences** in young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent. In alignment with the ArtisticMinds competency framework, which connects each module's learning outcomes to tangible skills and behaviors, here are several key impact areas to focus on. These illustrate what changes you can expect in your artists and how you can facilitate those positive changes:

1. Digital Creative Expression & Communication

- **What changes**: Artists discover new ways to express themselves using digital tools (e.g., drawing, music, avatars), especially helpful for those with limited verbal or written communication.
- **Why it matters**: Validates their identity as artists, builds confidence, and bridges communication gaps with peers and audiences.
- **How to implement**: Offer varied digital tools, encourage "show and tell," and support communication with visuals, symbols, or audio where needed.

2. Technological Fluency & Accessibility Awareness

- **What changes**: Artists gain confidence using technology and notice what makes digital tools accessible or not.
- **Why it matters**: Builds digital literacy for daily life, enhances independence, and promotes self-advocacy.
- **How to implement**: Start with simple tasks, use routines, and engage learners in adjusting or evaluating accessibility features together.

3. Social Inclusion, Collaboration & Cultural Participation

- **What changes**: Through group projects, artists develop teamwork skills and take active roles in cultural spaces.
- **Why it matters**: Reduces isolation, fosters belonging, and promotes equal participation in community and digital art events.
- **How to implement**: Plan regular group activities, assign rotating roles, support peer teaching, and publicly share their collaborative work.

4. Confidence, Autonomy & Lifelong Learning

- **What changes**: Artists become more self-directed, resilient, and curious about exploring creative tools.
- **Why it matters**: Encourages personal growth, decision-making, and transfer of confidence to other areas of life.

- **How to implement**: Scaffold tasks, allow safe failure, praise effort and creativity, and involve artists in mentoring others when ready.

Additional Resources

- Becky Tyler: "This Is What I See" (BBC Stories) — Eye-gaze digital artist with quadriplegic cerebral palsy shows how she creates paintings using only her eyes. The video explores her creative process, tech tools, and how digital art empowers her expression.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Digital art platforms can help remove physical barriers for disabled artists, allowing them to reach a wider audience.

- True
- False

2. Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Artificial Intelligence can help make art and culture more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.

- True
- False

3. New sensor technologies (like eye-trackers or motion sensors) can enable:

- Artists with limited mobility to engage in creative activities like drawing or sculpting digitally
- Only virtual reality gaming and not art-making
- A completely automatic art creation without any input from the artist

4. What is a key principle of digital inclusion in smart culture?

- Providing exclusive access to tech-savvy users
- Ensuring equitable access to digital cultural tools
- Limiting content to mainstream audiences

5. Which concept encourages users to actively contribute to cultural production?

- Passive consumption
- Participatory culture
- Cultural elitism

Artistic Minds

Module 13

Area of application of the learned – Photo Therapy

MODULE 13: AREA OF APPLICATION OF THE LEARNED – PHOTO THERAPY

Learning Objectives

This module explores phototherapy as a distinct creative healing practice that uses photography, reflection, and contemplation to support personal growth and emotional well-being. Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- **Differentiate** between phototherapy and other creative therapies, identifying the distinct role of reflection, still images, and contemplation in personal healing.
- **Facilitate** photo-dialogue activities that support identity development, emotional regulation, and self-expression in young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent.
- **Design** inclusive phototherapy sessions that emphasize accessibility, concrete communication, and participant authorship while encouraging autonomy and artistic agency.
- **Explain** the theoretical foundations of phototherapy as a method that uses photography to explore memory, identity, and emotional experience, referencing Judy Weiser's and Jo Spence's contributions.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Phototherapy: the image as a mirror of the soul

According to Judy Weiser (1999), a pioneer of this approach, photographs are "emotional maps of our inner world". They allow people to access memories, relationships, and unconscious aspects of our identity, offering an external yet intimate view (Weiser, 2004). Looking at a photograph

means confronting time, loss, and change. In therapy, images help individuals deal with grief, transitions, and moments of crisis through a non-verbal but deeply emotional language (McDougall, 2019).

Self-Portrait as an Act of Presence

Conscious self-portraiture is one of the central practices of phototherapy. It is not a narcissistic gesture, but an act of truth (Ziller, 1990). In front of the camera, the person exposes themselves, chooses and recognises themselves. An example of this practice is provided by Jo Spence, in her Putting Myself in the Picture (1986), who documented her own illness, transforming vulnerability into power. Through self-portraiture, the person reconstructs their image and reappropriates their body.

During phototherapy workshops, participants bring personal, family, or childhood photos, or images of meaningful places, and share their stories. Each photo becomes a symbolic object and acts as a bridge between the past and the present. Re-narrating one's story through images allows it to give new meaning and the reformulation of one's identity (Weiser, 1999).

Although it works with still images, phototherapy is profoundly physical. Every pose, gaze, or gesture captured by a photograph is a physical and identity-defining act. Phototherapy can be seen as a kind of silent drama therapy, where light replaces the stage and the lens becomes the gaze of the other (Heenan, 2006). Looking at one's own photograph activates a process like performance: one sees oneself, recognises oneself and forgives oneself. While drama therapy works with moving images, phototherapy focuses on still images: one represents while the other preserves, offering a complete path of self-knowledge and transformation. While theatre heals through action, photography heals through contemplation.

Drama therapy and phototherapy though using different tools, share the same root: art as healing and as self-knowledge, both of oneself and of others (Entin & Weiser, 2001). Through body and image, human beings find new languages to express their lived experience. The body that tells and the image that reflects are two dimensions of a single journey toward awareness. In an increasingly digital and fragmented society, these practices restore depth and presence, offering spaces of shared humanity and listening capable of healing, educating, and transforming.

Practical applications of phototherapy

According to Judy Weiser (1999), phototherapy is a tool for establishing a deep connection between memory and the present perception of the self. The therapeutic value of photography lies not only in the image itself, but in the dialogue, it activates between the observer and the observed, between the subject and their representation, between the past and the present. The image becomes a “living trace” that preserves emotions and narratives and can be used to reinterpret one's life experience. One of the most widespread applications is that of photo-dialogue, in which the professional invites the person to select some personal photographs and talk about what they evoke. The resulting story is not a simple chronological memory, but a true narrative reworking. Through words and images, the subject recomposes fragments of identity that emotional memory had scattered.

In the educational and relational sphere, this methodology has proven particularly effective with adolescents and young adults, age groups in which the construction of self-image is a fragile and constantly changing process (Wilson, 2012). Looking at photographs of oneself taken at different times in life helps to recognise the continuity and evolution of one's identity. In a workshop conducted at a youth centre in Vancouver (Weiser, 1999),

participants explored their adolescent self-portraits, comparing them with recent images. The comparison stimulated reflections on personal growth, body perception, and relationships with others, demonstrating how images can act as a transformative mirror.

In the clinical setting, phototherapy is used in contexts of trauma processing, grief, and body image disorders. For people who have experienced trauma, observing and reinterpreting a meaningful photograph can become a way of recontextualising pain within a broader narrative framework. Weiser describes, for example, the case of a patient who brought a photograph from her childhood to therapy: only after several sessions, she was able to notice the details of the scene – her father's distant gaze, the stiffness of her own body – as signs of repressed family pain. Working on the image allowed her to express repressed emotions and begin a process of integration.

The therapeutic use of photographs was also taken up by Jo Spence, who considered the camera a "political and psychological ally" (Spence, 1986). Through staging and visual reworking of the self, the individual not only reworks their own history but also actively reconstructs their personal power.

This view, shared by Weiser, emphasises that photography is not neutral: every image is an act of choice and position in relation to the world.

Phototherapy and contemporary social contexts

In recent years, phototherapy has also found application in social and community contexts. Participatory photography projects, such as the ones based on PhotoVoice methodology (1994) or the Inside Out Project (2011), have shown that photography can become a tool for inclusion and collective empowerment (Hall, 2017). Weiser's approach has inspired

psychological support programmes for refugees, victims of gender-based violence and homeless people, in which photography is used to rebuild a sense of identity and belonging. In one such project, conducted in Toronto in 2015, participants (women who had experienced domestic violence) created autobiographical photo series. Through sharing and discussing the images, a space for mutual recognition was created: the photographs were not only testimonies of pain but acts of resistance and rebirth.

The effectiveness of phototherapy in such contexts is based on the possibility of making visible what is silenced, giving voice and dignity back to those who, in their own experience, have felt invisible. Photography allows us to objectify our experiences, to look at them from a distance and, therefore, to transform them. As Weiser (1999) writes, "images are our oldest words": they precede language and speak a universal code, capable of uniting people beyond cultural or linguistic barriers. For this reason, phototherapy today represents not only a therapeutic technique, but also a bridge between psychology, art, and social activism (Nota et al., 2007).

In the dialogue between vision and narration, photography continues to remind us that every image is a story waiting to be told.

Challenges

Phototherapy's power also brings several important challenges that practitioners must navigate with care. Personal photographs can evoke strong emotions and sometimes reawaken past trauma, especially when they depict vulnerable periods, complex family relationships, or unresolved experiences. This makes it essential to create safe, well-paced environments where emotional reactions can be contained and explored without overwhelming the participant (Weiser, 1999). Ethical considerations

are just as central: photographs involve real people, real contexts, and intimate dynamics, meaning that issues of consent, privacy, authorship, and image circulation require clear agreements and responsible management (Entin & Weiser, 2001).

Another challenge concerns interpretation. Some participants—particularly individuals with intellectual disabilities or neurodivergence—may find it difficult to engage with the symbolic or metaphorical dimensions of images, which can limit deeper narrative exploration. For this reason, facilitators must keep reflections concrete, structured, and accessible, supporting participants in building meaning without imposing abstract layers they may not relate to (Wehmeyer, 2013). Similarly, self-portraiture can be a double-edged sword: while it can foster empowerment and self-recognition, it may also provoke discomfort, shame, or negative body perceptions, especially among adolescents and young adults (Wilson, 2012).

Cultural factors also shape how images are created, interpreted, and shared. In some communities, photography is experienced as a liberating tool for visibility and expression, while in others it may feel intrusive, exposing, or socially risky (Parr, 2006). Being sensitive to these cultural dynamics is crucial to avoid reinforcing power imbalances or unintentionally placing participants in uncomfortable positions. Finally, Phototherapy requires a blend of artistic, relational, and therapeutic skills: guiding a photographic process while maintaining emotional safety demands both technical awareness and psychological insight. A further risk lies in over-interpreting images—assigning meanings that reflect the facilitator's assumptions rather than the participant's lived experience. The core aim of Phototherapy is to help individuals uncover their own meanings, not to impose a predetermined narrative.

Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work

The following activities have been specifically designed for CCS experts and MH professionals, emphasizing accessibility, multisensory engagement, and concrete experiences.

Activity n.1: Photo-Based Emotional Mapping

Purpose: To introduce participants to phototherapy as a tool for identifying emotions, building empathy, and initiating reflective conversations. Based on phototherapy theory, the activity emphasizes projective techniques, where photos are used to express internal states symbolically.

Method: Individual activity, followed by optional small group sharing (in person).

Duration: 45–60 minutes.

Materials: Printed or digital set of diverse non-triggering images (nature, objects, everyday scenes).

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Warm-up (5 min):** Participants briefly discuss how images can influence mood or memory.
- **Step 2 Image Selection (5 min):** Provide 20–30 photos and ask each participant to select two images:
    - One that represents how they feel today.
    - One that represents how they want to feel.
- **Step 3 Paired Discussion (15 min):** In pairs, participants share why they chose their images, reflecting on emotions, associations, and symbolism.
- **Step 4 Group Reflection (15–20 min):** Discuss:
    - How could this activity support emotional expression and self-reflection?

    - What ethical considerations arise when using personal emotions in photos?
- **Step 5 Debrief (5 min):** Highlight how emotional projection onto images facilitates safer self-disclosure.

Activity n. 2: Photo Narrative Sequencing for Creative & Cultural Storytelling

Purpose: To help CCS and MH professionals practice using image sequences to explore personal, cultural, and creative narratives, supporting both emotional expression and cultural identity reflection.

Method: Individual and group activity.

Duration: 45-60 minutes.

Materials: A diverse set of photos, including cultural symbols, arts, craftsmanship, rituals, creative scenes, daily life, and abstract concepts.

Instructions:

- **Step 1 Intro (5 min):** Explain how photo sequences can help us articulate stories of cultural identity, creative belonging, challenges, and transformations.
- **Step 2 Image Sequencing Task (10 min)**: Participants select three photos to create:
    - A cultural/creative challenge story (an obstacle in identity, expression, or social environment)
    - A creative healing story (transformation through art, culture, or community)
- **Step 3 Small Group Sharing (15 min):** In small groups, participants share their stories focusing on:
    - Cultural symbolism within the images
    - Creative meanings (artistic metaphors, aesthetic choices)
    - Emotional layers

- Possible MH insights (coping, identity, resilience)

- **Step 4 Skill-Building Discussion (10–15 min):** Discuss questions such as:
  - How can this activity strengthen cultural pride and creative agency?
  - How does using cultural imagery help externalize trauma safely?
  - What adaptations could support young artists with IDs and/or neurodivergent?
  - How could CCS workers use this method to stimulate cultural storytelling in communities?
- **Step 5 Wrap-up (5 min):** Emphasize how phototherapy supports creative identity, cultural grounding, and emotional wellbeing.



Figure 19 A group of people participating in the phototherapy activity No1, holding photos of natural landscapes and flowers. AI generated image - Midjourney v5, 2025

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Phototherapy offers uniquely valuable applications for young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent, addressing both therapeutic needs and artistic development through an accessible, concrete, and engaging medium. Understanding these impacts on young artists creative practice means

recognising of how photography can serve as both therapeutic tool and a genuine artistic practice.

Accessibility and Concrete Communication

Research consistently demonstrates that individuals with intellectual disabilities benefit from concrete, visual learning approaches that minimize reliance on abstract verbal processing (Wehmeyer, 2013). Photography provides precisely this kind of concrete medium, creating tangible visual representations of experiences, relationships, emotions, and identity that can be viewed, handled, revisited, and shared.

Identity Development and Self-Concept

Young people with intellectual disabilities and/or neurodivergent often face significant challenges in identity development, as societal responses to disability can interfere with the normal process of forming an autonomous, positive self-concept (Nota et al., 2007). PhotoTherapy directly addresses these challenges by positioning young artists as authors and subjects of their own visual narratives.

Emotional Expression and Regulation

Emotional literacy and regulation are areas of significant challenge for many young people with ID and/or neurodivergent. The research by Heenan (2006) specifically examined the use of photography for emotional expression in adults with intellectual disabilities, finding that participants successfully used photography to communicate feelings and experiences that they struggled to express verbally.

Social Connection and Communication

Social relationships are essential for well-being across the lifespan, yet young people with intellectual disabilities often experience social isolation,

limited friendship networks, and reduced opportunities for meaningful social connection (Hall, 2017). PhotoTherapy can support social connection in multiple ways, both through the relationships developed in therapeutic contexts and through photography's capacity to facilitate communication and shared experience.

Competency Development Within an Artistic Framework

A distinctive benefit of PhotoTherapy for young artists with intellectual disabilities is its dual identity as both therapeutic intervention and genuine artistic practice. This positioning allows young artists with intellectual disabilities to develop identity as artists and creative practitioners, not merely as individuals receiving therapy or services.

Additional resources

- "Photography as a Wellness Tool for Counselors-in-Training" (Research Paper): This paper examines how photography-based methods support expression, identity formation, and well-being in educational/training settings.
- Phototherapy and Therapeutic Photography in a Digital Age (Book): This book provides a comprehensive overview of theories and techniques of phototherapy and therapeutic photography, including self-portraiture and reflective image work.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Phototherapy uses photography to explore emotions, memories, and identity.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. In phototherapy, photography heals mainly through action rather than reflection.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. What is the main purpose of self-portraiture in phototherapy?

- To promote vanity
- To learn photography techniques
- To reconstruct self-image and identity

4. Which of these sentences best describes a “photo-dialogue” session?

- A debate about famous photos
- Talking about personal photos to evoke memories
- Editing digital images creatively

5. What distinguishes phototherapy from drama therapy?

- It uses still images for reflection
- It focuses on performance
- It excludes emotional content

Artistic Minds

Module 14

Area of application of the learned – Dance Therapy

MODULE 14: AREA OF APPLICATION OF THE LEARNED – DANCE THERAPY

Learning Objectives

Dance therapy integrates movement, emotion, and creative expression as essential tools for promoting wellbeing, communication, and inclusion. This module introduces the fundamental principles of dance/movement therapy (DMT) and explains how embodied practices can support young artists with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles. It provides a theoretical and practical foundation for professionals who wish to incorporate meaningful, accessible, and inclusive movement-based strategies into their work.

Upon completion of this module, you will:

- **Recognize** dance and movement as vital tools to promote communication, self-expression, emotional balance, and inclusion among young artists with intellectual disability.
- **Understand** the theoretical and practical foundations of dance therapy as an embodied approach that integrates physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
- **Learn** how to apply movement-based strategies to facilitate creative participation, empathy, and well-being in individual and group contexts.
- **Being** aware of how to design and adapt inclusive dance-based sessions suitable for diverse participants, emphasizing safety, trust, and emotional connection.
- **Reflect** critically on how dance therapy principles can enhance your professional practice and contribute to inclusive cultural and educational environments.

Content Description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Dance Therapy, or Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT), is a psychotherapeutic modality that employs movement as a tool for emotional expression, embodied awareness, cognitive development, and social connection. It is grounded in the idea that body and mind are inseparable and that movement patterns reflect, sustain and transform psychological states. This foundational principle, widely recognised in the DMT literature, asserts that every movement conveys aspects of identity, emotion, and relational history (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). Rather than treating the body as separate from psychological experience, DMT understands movement as both an expressive language and a therapeutic pathway through which participants can access deeper layers of emotional material.

Historically, the emergence of DMT was deeply influenced by pioneers such as Marian Chace in the United States, María Fux in Argentina and Trudi Schoop in Germany and Switzerland. Each brought a unique vision to the field: Chace emphasised group cohesion and rhythmic synchrony as therapeutic mechanisms; Schoop foregrounded humour, play, and character exploration; and Fux (1998) championed the expressive authenticity of all bodies, regardless of disability or physical limitation. Fux's work remains a cornerstone of inclusive dance therapy, underscoring that creativity is not a technique but a human right, accessible through genuine engagement with one's own movement vocabulary.

Contemporary DMT builds on these foundations while integrating findings from neuroscience, somatic psychology, disability studies, and trauma-informed practice. Research demonstrates that movement activates neural networks associated with emotional regulation, empathy, sensory

integration, and memory consolidation (Koch & Fischman, 2023). DMT promotes self-determination and quality of life by leveraging movement to build social abilities and autonomy (Nota et al., 2007). For individuals with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles, who may rely more heavily on sensory or non-verbal communication, DMT offers a uniquely accessible modality that honours their embodied ways of experiencing and interacting with the world (Papadopoulos & Smith, 2024).

Movement as a Channel for Emotional Expression and Regulation

Dance therapy views movement as a primary channel for emotional expression. Because emotions are rooted in physiological and kinaesthetic patterns, expressive movement offers a direct route to explore and reorganise emotional states. Movement qualities such as flow, tension, breath, rhythm, shape, direction, and speed can mirror internal affective processes. Fischman (2005) highlights that when people move, they externalise aspects of their internal world, creating opportunities for symbolic transformation, emotional release, and narrative integration.

Embodied awareness — learning to sense and identify what is happening in one's own body — is central to developing emotional intelligence. Through movement exploration, participants learn to recognise tightening, numbness, heaviness, trembling, lightness, or expansion as indicators of emotional activation. These embodied cues often precede verbal awareness, making them particularly valuable for individuals who struggle with verbal labelling of emotions. By linking bodily sensations with cognitive understanding, DMT enhances emotional regulation and resilience.

For individuals with ID and/or neurodivergent, DMT's strength lies in its accessibility: it does not depend on verbal fluency, abstract thinking, or

linguistic processing. Instead, it relies on kinaesthetic intuition and sensory-based engagement. As Papadopoulos & Smith (2024) note, dance-based methods support cognitive and emotional processing through multimodal pathways, enabling participants to discover alternative forms of expression that reflect their strengths and preferences.

The Social and Relational Dimensions of Dance Therapy

DMT is inherently relational. Interpersonal movement processes —such as mirroring, synchrony, echoing, shared rhythms, and group formations — create opportunities for connection beyond words. These practices cultivate empathy, attunement, and mutual awareness. Wengrower (2008) argues that dance therapy engages individuals in a reciprocal, body-based dialogue that transcends cognitive or language barriers. This relational synchrony is especially powerful for community inclusion among young adults with ID, fostering belonging through shared embodied experiences (Hall, 2017).

From a neuroscientific perspective, movement is social behaviour. Mirror neuron research shows that observing another person's moves activates one's own motor and emotional circuits, fostering understanding and relational bonding (Koch & Fischman, 2023). This embodied resonance is particularly important for individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, or communication challenges, who may not rely primarily on verbal channels to relate to others. Shared movement experiences can help reduce isolation, increase comfort in social interaction, and strengthen group cohesion.

Group DMT sessions provide structured yet flexible opportunities for participants to negotiate space, develop cooperation and practice relational roles such as leading, following, joining, or withdrawing. These

embodied experiences support social-emotional learning, teamwork and community building within artistic and educational contexts.

Cultural, Artistic and Inclusive Dimensions

In cultural institutions, dance therapy reshapes the understanding of dance by shifting the emphasis away from technical skill or performance perfection toward authenticity, presence, and embodied creativity. Fux (1998) famously stated that “every body can dance,” a philosophy that challenges ableist norms and promotes inclusive artistic participation. DMT positions movement as a universal language, opening artistic spaces to individuals whose bodies, sensory profiles or cognitive styles may not fit traditional dance frameworks.

DMT can be integrated into interdisciplinary artistic practices, connecting movement with visual arts, sound, storytelling, film, or digital media. This multimodal approach resonates strongly with neurodivergent artists, who often benefit from working across sensory channels. By incorporating movement as both stimulus and response, facilitators can design sessions that engage different learning styles, from kinaesthetic to visual to auditory.

Moreover, DMT encourages ethical and aesthetic values rooted in relationality, dignity, presence, and creative agency. Instead of prioritising spectatorship, it values participation and co-creation. This aligns closely with contemporary trends in disability arts, where audiences are invited to witness diverse movement vocabularies and where creative ownership is shared between facilitators and participants.

Scientific Foundations: Embodiment, Neurobiology and Sensory Integration

Evidence from neuroscience and embodied cognition confirms that movement influences psychological and physiological states. Koch & Fischman (2023) highlight that DMT activates areas of the brain associated with:

- emotion regulation
- sensory integration
- spatial reasoning
- empathy
- proprioception
- memory processing
- reward and motivation

Rhythmic movement strengthens neural coherence, stimulates endorphin release, and enhances feelings of wellbeing and connection. Studies demonstrate that synchronised movement increases oxytocin levels, supporting bonding and trust—critical components of therapeutic and educational relationships (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).

DMT also contributes to sensory integration, an essential aspect of functioning for many neurodivergent individuals. Movement activities that vary rhythm, pressure, weight, speed, or spatial patterns help reorganise sensory input and reduce states of overstimulation or hypo-responsiveness (Papadopoulos & Smith, 2024). These effects support attention, executive function, body awareness, and motor coordination, contributing both to artistic development and daily functioning.

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Figure 20 A woman standing with a prosthetic leg posing for a yoga exercise. Pexels

Opportunities for Inclusive and Therapeutic Practice

Dance therapy offers numerous opportunities for individuals with ID and neurodivergent profiles:

- It is inherently accessible, relying on non-verbal communication and kinaesthetic expression.
- It fosters emotional literacy through embodiment rather than linguistic abstraction.
- It supports interpersonal connection through synchrony, mirroring, and cooperative movement.
- It affirms bodily diversity and rejects normative standards of ability, beauty, or “appropriate” movement.
- It strengthens autonomy, creative agency, and personal identity.
- It can be adapted to mobility needs, sensory preferences, physical capacities, and communication styles.

- It enriches artistic and educational settings by providing alternative pathways to participation.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Dance therapy also presents complex challenges that require skilled facilitation:

- Emotional material emerging from movement may require grounding, regulation, and trauma-informed pacing (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).
- Facilitators must prioritise consent, bodily boundaries, and safety, especially when working with young or vulnerable participants. Art-based therapies like DMT must balance therapeutic benefits with mental health promotion, ensuring ethical containment of emotional processes (Heenan, 2006).
- Space, pacing, and sensory input must be carefully managed to prevent fatigue, overstimulation, or dissociation.
- Movement interpretations must be collaborative, avoiding assumptions or pathologising readings.
- Facilitators need strong observational skills to identify signs of distress, discomfort, or dysregulation.
- Ethical practice involves transparency, cultural humility, inclusive communication, and attunement to power dynamics in group settings.

In summary, dance therapy is a multidimensional discipline that integrates physical movement, emotional awareness, relational engagement, and creative expression. Grounded in both classical theory (Fux, 1998; Fischman, 2005) and contemporary research (Koch & Fischman, 2023; Papadopoulos & Smith, 2024), DMT supports individuals at emotional,

sensory, social, and cognitive levels simultaneously. Its embodied, inclusive, and artistic nature makes it uniquely suited for work with young people with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles. By transforming movement into a language of connection, agency and belonging, dance therapy enriches cultural ecosystems and expands the possibilities for expressive participation within inclusive arts practices.

Suggested Activities for Individual or Group Work

Dance therapy practices work best when they are immersive, experiential, and guided with sensitivity. To maintain consistency with the rest of the modules, the following **three activities** are designed to be conducted **within a single one-hour session**. Together, they create a coherent therapeutic arc that guides participants from grounding and body awareness, through expressive movement exploration, and towards final integration and reflection. Each activity builds on the previous one, allowing professionals to facilitate a complete dance therapy experience within a limited period.

Activity n.1: Awakening the Body: Grounding and Sensory Connection

Purpose: To help participants connect with their bodies, regulate sensory input, and prepare emotionally and physically for movement-based work. Grounding practices support autonomic regulation and enhance readiness for expressive tasks (Koch & Fischman, 2023).
Duration: 15 minutes.
Materials: Open space, calm instrumental music, optional scarves, or soft fabrics.
Instructions: Begin with a guided breathing sequence and gentle warm-up focusing on shoulders, spine, and breath. Invite participants to notice

bodily sensations and gradually explore simple movements such as swaying, rocking or shifting weight. Provide sensory prompts using soft fabrics or slow gestures in the air. Encourage participants to identify movements that feel safe or comfortable. Conclude with a short centering gesture such as placing hands on the chest or extending arms softly outward.

Activity n.2: Emotion in Motion: Expressive Movement Exploration

Purpose: To explore how emotions manifest through rhythm, flow, speed, and gesture. Expressive movement enables participants to identify and externalize emotional states through embodied action (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).
Duration: 20 minutes.
Materials: Playlist with contrasting emotional tones (joyful, calm, energetic, reflective), open space, optional emotion cards.
Instructions: Introduce 3–4 basic emotions visually. Invite participants to choose an emotion and respond to a corresponding music track through movement—using large or small gestures, flowing or sharp qualities, or moving from different body parts. Encourage exploration of contrasting emotional states. Integrate brief relational prompts such as observing another's movement or gently echoing a gesture. Offer short reflective cues ("What changed in your body?") before transitioning to the next emotion.

Activity n.3: The Body Story: Creating a Collective Movement Narrative

Purpose: To integrate the sensory and emotional material of the session into a short, shared movement narrative. Symbolic sequencing

encourages cognitive organization and strengthens group cohesion (Fischman, 2005).

Duration: 25 minutes.

Materials: Open space, scarves, or ribbons, calm, or thematic music.

Instructions: Invite the group to select a simple theme (e.g., connection, courage, change). Each participant creates one symbolic gesture inspired by the theme. Combine these gestures into a collective sequence and rehearse them slowly as a group. Encourage variations in tempo, space, and movement level. Facilitate a brief sharing round in which participants express—verbally, gesturally or via AAC—what their gesture represents. Close the session with a unifying movement or group breath to anchor the experience.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

Dance therapy has profound and multi-layered effects on the creative, emotional, and relational development of young artists with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent profiles. As an embodied modality, it nurtures capacities that transcend verbal communication and provide alternative pathways for learning, expression, and social connection.

Emotional Development and Regulation

Through movement, young participants learn to identify internal states not by naming them but by *feeling* them. Rhythmic repetition and kinaesthetic exploration help regulate the autonomic nervous system, supporting transitions from agitation to calm, or from withdrawal to engagement. Movement qualities such as rising, sinking, spiralling or sustained flow offer embodied metaphors that help participants symbolise their emotional experiences. Over time, young artists develop a repertoire of self-regulatory strategies—rocking gently, stretching, grounding—that they can apply beyond the space of therapy.

Strengthening Communication and Empathy

Dance therapy enhances communicative abilities through non-verbal channels. Mirroring, synchrony, and shared movement cues foster mutual recognition and attunement. When participants respond to each other's gestures, shapes, or rhythms, they engage in an embodied conversation that builds relational trust. This relational movement is particularly meaningful for young people who experience difficulty with verbal articulation or social interpretation. DMT thus becomes a bridge to empathy and a tool for building communication confidence.

Promoting Inclusion and Belonging

In dance therapy, every movement, whether subtle, bold, sustained, or fragmented holds expressive value. This principal dissolves hierarchies between "trained" and "untrained" movement, as well as between disabled and non-disabled bodies. Practice fosters an environment where difference is not a deficit but a contribution. Inclusive movement rituals, group shapes, and co-created sequences help cultivate a shared sense of belonging and collective authorship.

Enhancing Cognitive, Motor and Sensory Integration

Dance therapy stimulates multiple sensory channels simultaneously: kinaesthetic, visual, tactile, and auditory. These multi-sensory experiences strengthen coordination, spatial memory, proprioception, and motor planning. Young artists learn to navigate space, follow rhythm, respond to cues, and adapt their bodies to dynamic environment skills that support both artistic practice and activities of daily living. Sensory-sensitive participants benefit from structured, predictable movement patterns that help regulate overwhelming stimuli.

Cultivating Creative Agency and Artistic Identity

By inviting personal choices — tempo, gesture, spatial pathway, emotional quality — dancers become authors of their movement. This autonomy fosters self-esteem and nurtures a sense of artistic identity. Young artists not only participate but contribute creatively to shared choreographies, sequences, or group improvisations. This embodied authorship strengthens confidence and supports long-term engagement in cultural and artistic contexts.

Implementation Framework

The Implementation Framework provides a clear and practical structure to ensure that dance movement therapy interventions are delivered safely, ethically, and effectively across diverse professional contexts. It supports practitioners in translating core DMT principles into concrete and consistent practices for planning, facilitation, and evaluation, helping to align therapeutic intention with day-to-day decision-making and delivery.

Before starting dance therapy sessions, it is good practice to conduct an introductory phase to gather information, which is useful for understanding participants' sensory profiles, communication needs, mobility levels, possible emotional triggers, and support needs. This may involve interviewing caregivers, teachers, or relevant clinical and educational staff to enable activities to be designed that are appropriate to individuals' abilities and goals.

Another key element is the accessibility and preparation of the space, which should be organised in a flexible and inclusive manner. Obstacle-free environments, adjustable lighting, low noise levels, and clear orientation promote comfort and tranquillity. Using chairs, cushions, tactile markers, ribbons, or props can support different sensory and motor

modalities, while visual or symbolic schedules can increase predictability, which is particularly important for neurodivergent participants.

The structure of the session also contributes to emotional safety. Sessions typically include:

- Arrival and grounding
- Body warm-up
- Expressive/thematic exploration
- Group connection or shared creation
- Reflection and closure

Finally, to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions, professionals are encouraged to document participants' progress at each meeting. They can make notes on observations of motor behaviour, emotional responses, relational dynamics, and progress towards goals. These reflections can take various forms, such as body notes, sketches of spatial paths, photographic material (with consent), or descriptions of significant gestures. Periodic supervision also supports professional growth and the ethical processing of the work.

Additional Resources

- "Introduction to Dance/Movement Therapy" (Video): This introductory video explains the basic principles of dance/movement therapy, illustrating how movement can support emotional expression and wellbeing.
- "Therapeutic Dance vs. Dance/Movement Therapy" (Video):
  A brief explanation of the difference between recreational or therapeutic dance activities and formal dance/movement therapy practice, with examples from clinical and community contexts.

- "A Lesson in Dance Movement Therapy" (Video): This video shows a guided DMT session, demonstrating warm-ups, attunement exercises and expressive movement techniques used by trained facilitators.
- "Dance/Movement Therapy and Autism" (Video): A brief piece demonstrating how DMT can support autistic individuals through sensory regulation, non-verbal communication, and rhythmic interaction.
- "Dance/NYC Disability Task Force" (Video): This resource introduces inclusive dance practices and disability advocacy initiatives within the New York City arts community, highlighting accessible creative pathways.
- "AXIS Dance Company" (Video): A profile of AXIS Dance Company, featuring integrated dance work with disabled and non-disabled dancers and showcasing inclusive contemporary performance approaches.

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Assessment Questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Dance therapy focuses on mastering dance techniques and choreography.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Group movement experiences can foster empathy, trust, and a sense of belonging.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. The central purpose of dance therapy in inclusive art programmes is to:

- Encourage competition and performance.
- Facilitate emotional expression and social connection.
- Train professional dancers.

4. What is a key ethical guideline for dance therapy sessions?

- Participation must be voluntary and respectful of personal boundaries.
- All participants should be touched during activities.
- Only those with prior dance experience may join.

5. In a mirror dialogue exercise, participants are expected to:

- Observe and empathize through movement.
- Replicate gestures mechanically.
- Lead without awareness of others.

Artistic Minds

Module 15

Accessibility and Design of Artistic and Cultural environments

Module 15: Accessibility and Design of Artistic and Cultural environments

Learning objectives

This concluding module explores fundamental practices and principles for designing accessible and inclusive artistic and cultural environments. It promotes accessibility as a key element in enabling everyone to enjoy the arts. It presents the relevant principles, best practices, and operational strategies to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in cultural experiences, as both audience members and artists.

Through this module, learners will:

- **Be familiar** with international principles on accessibility and inclusive design.
- **Get to know** the main challenges that limit access and participation in artistic and cultural environments.
- **Learn** how to promote a culture of inclusion by developing activities that are accessible and usable for people with disabilities.

Content description (Highlighting Opportunities and Challenges)

Designing cultural and artistic spaces to be accessible and usable is a fundamental step in enabling people with disabilities to participate fully in cultural life, as both visitors and artists. **The right to accessibility** is enshrined in Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). Accessibility is defined as the ability to access the physical environment, the social, economic, and **cultural environments,** transport, information and communication technologies,

and all public services and facilities. Consequently, if accessibility serves as a means of promoting and supporting the implementation and respect of human rights, then **access** represents a fundamental objective that must be safeguarded by the competent bodies (Greco, 2017). These considerations encourage organisations and industries within the Arts and Culture sector to reflect on the **usability** of their content and information. This ensures that visitors can engage authentically with their experiences, and that they have real opportunities to explore, participate, and learn (Giaconi et al., 2021).

Numerous studies (e.g., Mastrogiuseppe et al., 2021; Münch et al., 2022) have emphasised the significant challenges faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergent conditions when it comes to accessing and enjoying artistic content and spaces. Although not exhaustive, the obstacles can be summarised in the following two categories:

- **Perception with content resources:** This refers to the ability to perceive content, whether it is visual, auditory, tactile, textual, or multimedia. Perceptual barriers arise when content cannot be accessed through a person's functional senses. For instance, individuals with visual impairments are unable to appreciate a painting or sculpture without audio descriptions, alternative text, or tactile models. Similarly, people with intellectual disabilities may struggle to understand overly complex content without simplification or visual aid. Background noise, echoes, murmurs, and loud sounds can cause sensory overload, anxiety, and disorientation in people with neurodivergent conditions and/or sensory hypersensitivity.
- **Physical Interaction:** Relates to physical and motor obstacles that prevent people from accessing works of art or the devices that

display them, or from using materials and spaces to create art. Some examples of obstacles that can make artistic environments difficult to enjoy architectural barriers are stairs, steps, or narrow passages. Crowded or poorly organised spaces can also make it difficult for people with balance, vision, or coordination issues to move around safely. Additionally, many modern works or installations require active visitor participation, without being accessible to everyone. Common obstacles include interactive devices (touchscreens, buttons, and knobs) that are placed at inaccessible heights for wheelchair users and short people, and a lack of alternative controls, such as voice activation or larger buttons. Signage that are illegible or incorrectly positioned can hinder people with IDs from understanding routes and moving independently in space.

The good news is that there are established theories and methodologies that can help those involved in the design of artistic and cultural spaces and activities. The principles of **Universal Design** and **Design for All** can help experts and professionals by emphasising the importance of people in creative and design processes from the outset. These approaches aim to develop products, environments, and services that are accessible and usable by all, regardless of physical, cognitive, or sensory abilities, thus ensuring equity and inclusion (Harte et al., 2017). The concept of Design for All is widely recognised and applied and is intertwined with inclusive design paradigms that promote autonomy, active participation, and empowerment of users. This approach allows for an accurate understanding of users' real and diverse needs and encourages the co-creation of spaces that reflect and enhance their lived experience (Dong & Vivat, 2008).

In the context of artistic production involving artists with disabilities, the implementation of these strategies yields multiple **benefits**: it boosts participation in cultural and artistic spaces, fosters a sense of community belonging and cultivates vital skills such as communication, decision-making and social activism. Furthermore, it contributes to improving the overall well-being of those involved. From a professional perspective, collaborating with young artists with disabilities through co-design offers valuable opportunities to refine participatory design skills, adapt practices to different needs and operate effectively within diverse communities (Almeqdad, Q. I. et al, 2023).

However, it is important to recognise the **challenges** inherent in the co-design process. This methodology requires more time and resources than a traditional top-down approach. From the initial stages of conception and design, the process must be accessible and usable. To this end, facilitators who are trained in participatory methodologies and mediation techniques and have a good understanding of the principles of Universal Design for Learning are necessary. Without adequate training and preparation, the co-design process may be ineffective or fail to deliver the desired results (Labattaglia, O., 2023).

In conclusion, a fundamental goal for arts and educational organisations is to design cultural contexts that allow everyone to express themselves and achieve meaningful learning goals. For this reason, it is crucial to cultivate a broad culture of accessibility that reaches every level of society and encourages a shared understanding of people's diverse needs. Recognizing that creating accessible content is not only an ethical responsibility but also a means of enriching cultural appreciation for everyone. Accessibility becomes synonymous with inclusion, enrichment,

and collective participation, thereby transforming artistic and cultural experiences into moments of authentic sharing and social growth.

Suggested activities for individual or group work

Activity n.1: What Is It Like?

Purpose: Explore empathy and understanding different disabilities through creative artistic expression.

Method: Small group work.

Duration: 60–75 minutes.

Materials: Stones or small objects, magazines/newspapers, printer/computer access, glue, scissors, pens, paper, materials for disability simulation (e.g., blindfolds or noise cancelling headphones).

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Create a simple art activity. We suggest, for example, "Story Stones": provide participants with 5-6 stones and various tools such as magazines, newspapers, access to a printer/computer, and ask them to decorate them. Story Stones offer a playful and symbolic way to express feelings, explore inner narratives, and gain emotional awareness through creative storytelling.
- **Step 2:** Invite each participant to take on the role of a person with a specific disability and access need, as part of empathy and perspective-taking exercise (Tip: select a diverse range of conditions that represent a broad spectrum of sensory, cognitive, and physical experiences). Ask participants to complete the activity while embodying that perspective.
- **Step 3:** Upon completion of the activity, ask both trainers and participants to list what difficulties they faced and how this can be fixed (e.g. a participant who took on the role of a person with a hearing impairment may have found it difficult to follow verbal

instructions — a useful adaptation could be to provide a sign language interpreter or clear written guidelines.).

Activity n.2: Accessibility Treasure Hunt

Purpose: Identify real-world accessibility challenges and evaluate how public spaces meet legal accessibility standards.

Method: Fieldwork and observation.

Duration: 60-90 minutes

Materials: Accessibility law flashcards, ✅ and ❌ stickers, notebooks or digital devices for notes, assigned case studies describing a person with disabilities.

Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Trainers are assigned a case study of a person with disabilities. (e.g., physical disability – requiring the use of a wheelchair). They are given a set of flashcards referencing the accessibility law and its definitions (e.g., ramps should be ___ degrees), and a set of ✅ and ❌ stickers.
- **Step 2:** The trainers visit an establishment and imagine they are escorting the person (they can choose to take on the role of a spectator – e.g., watch a play or take on the role of a service user – e.g., follow a dance class). The establishments should be related to their specialty (dance teacher will visit dance studios etc.) The trainers will then use the flashcards to guide them to placing ✅ ❌ stickers on accessibility features/structures according to their ability to adhere to the rules of the law (e.g., a ✅ sticker if the ramp is the number of degrees required or a ❌ sticker if there are no accessible toilets in the establishment.)

- **Step 3:** Upon completion of this activity, the trainers should write a letter to local authorities highlighting the problems they encountered and asking/offering appropriate solutions).

Activity n.3: Accessibility Architects

Purpose: Develop creative design solutions to make professional spaces inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.

Method: Group design and discussion activity.

Duration: 60-90 minutes.

Materials: Printed images of rooms (specific to each profession, e.g., theatre, dance studio, classroom), pens, paper, digital design tools, craft materials, and access to online videos or examples of accessible spaces.

Instructions:

- **Step 1**: Trainers and participants are given a printout of a room (one for each specialty – trainer, e.g., a dance studio for a dance professional, theatre for a drama therapist, etc.). The room is deserted and in an old building and the print outs include different angles (high-angle, low-angle, eye-level, bird's-eye view, and Dutch angle).
- **Step 2:** Everyone has access to digital tools, paper and pens, and other materials. They discuss what different problems are faced when entering these rooms with various disabilities (e.g., “Anna” has a hearing impairment. “Anna” is asked if she sees any problems in the theatre that might affect her accessing it – no speakers, no space for an interpreter near the stage etc.). Every participant with a disability is asked to study the room and comment similarly (what problems might you face if you try to access this space?)
- **Step 3:** Once all potential accessibility problems are mentioned, participants are asked to write down/mention solutions based on

their experiences. They can also watch material related to spaces that are known to be fully accessible and compare notes/solutions.

- **Step 4:** Once all solutions are written down, participants may use any material available to create the solutions (e.g., Induction - Hearing-Loop Systems for people with hearing impairments in a theatre – with clearly marked signage where loop coverage is active). With all solutions printed/drawn/designed, participants place the solutions all over the printed space to create an inclusive accessible space.

Impact of the learned on activities with young artists

To adopt inclusive strategies in artistic activities with young artists with ID and/or neurodivergent it is essential that MH professionals and CCS experts adopt the principles of Design for All and Universal Design. The perspective of the user is an "expert voice" at the centre of the creative process, right from the conception stage. **Co-design** thus becomes a key tool for refining professional practices. The solutions developed reflect, enhance, and improve the experiences and diverse needs of young participants.

Many studies have highlighted some practical tips that can be used to promote the creation of inclusive environments for people with disabilities (Mostafa M., 2014; Scavuzzo G. et al, 2020; Simpson S., 2015.). For example, at the organizational and operational level, it is crucial to introduce **predictability** and **structure**. For some people with disabilities, this can foster a sense of well-being, facilitate learning and improve concentration during the activity in question (Giaconi et al., 2021). It is useful to share objectives, rules, and a detailed agenda in advance -broken down into short time units (e.g., 10-minute intervals) - and to use timers or visual cues to indicate the start and end of each activity. In communication concepts should be conveyed through **multiple sensory channels**, reducing reliance

on exclusively verbal explanations (use of visual, sound, or tactile aids). It is also advisable to adopt simplification strategies, such as the use Easy-to-Read materials, to ensure clarity and linguistic accessibility.

It is preferable to favor visual channels over verbal ones, using symbols, explanatory images, visual cues, and color codes to facilitate conceptual orientation and prevent cognitive overload in complex environments. Make sure information is not communicated by color alone — use symbols, patterns, or text labels as well.

Activities, when carried out in groups, should be structured in socially manageable contexts - for example, groups of about five participants with a moderator - to encourage more personal interaction and reduce social pressure. It is equally important to provide Escape Spaces or quiet spaces, sensory-neutral environments where participants can regain calm and concentration. Often, simply knowing that they are available helps to reduce anxiety from overload.

Finally, the integration of **assistive technologies and digital tools**, such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR), can broaden the modes of expression for some participants and foster personalized, multisensory artistic experiences, further enhancing participation and inclusion.

Additional resources

- Council of Europe. Disability Strategy 2017-2023. HUMAN RIGHTS: A REALITY FOR ALL CONFERENCE REPORT (2017): The report presents accessibility as one of the priorities to be addressed.
- Designkit: Kits and resources for putting human-centred design into practice are available on the website.

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit (2022): A useful toolkit for creating a policy for inclusive artistic practice developed by the Arts Council.
- Please Touch! An Inclusive Art Experience (2020): As part of the Horizon ARCHES project, the installation 'Please Touch!' was developed, which includes multidisciplinary solutions for museums, developed in participatory co-design with users with disabilities.

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Assessment questions

In this section, you will find five questions designed to help you evaluate what you have learned in this chapter. Each question has only one correct answer. The answers are available at the end of the e-book.

1. Accessibility only concerns physical spaces, not information or communication technologies.

- TRUE
- FALSE

2. Universal Design and Design for All aim to create environments usable by everyone.

- TRUE
- FALSE

3. What is the main goal of Universal Design?

- To create luxury artistic environments
- To design for a specific disability
- To make environments usable by all people

4. Which of these is a physical barrier?

- Complex language in exhibition texts
- Stairs and narrow passages
- Overly bright colors

5. Why is predictability important for some people with disabilities?

- It limits creativity
- It reduces anxiety and aids concentration
- It increases uncertainty

Appendix

Answers to self-assessment questions

Appendix: Answers to self-assessment questions

There are five final self-assessment questions at the end of each chapter of the course. This section provides the correct answers, enabling readers to check their understanding of the covered content. We recommend that you review the contents of the chapters again if you encounter errors or have doubts about your answers.

Module 1

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ C

Module 2

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ C
5. Question 5: → ✅ A

Module 3

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ C
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 4

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ A
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 5

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ C
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 6

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ A

4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 7

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ C

Module 8

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ C
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ A

Module 9

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 10

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ A

Module 11

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ C
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 12

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ A
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

Module 13

1. Question 1: → ✅ TRUE
2. Question 2: → ✅ FALSE
3. Question 3: → ✅ C
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ A

Module 14

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ B
4. Question 4: → ✅ A
5. Question 5: → ✅ A

Module 15

1. Question 1: → ✅ FALSE
2. Question 2: → ✅ TRUE
3. Question 3: → ✅ C
4. Question 4: → ✅ B
5. Question 5: → ✅ B

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