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2026

LOCAL PILOTING TOOLKIT

**A toolkit based on our local piloting processes,
offering guidance for future initiatives.**

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Comparative
Research
Network:



Stowarzyszenie
Dla Ziemi



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Introduction

The Local Piloting Toolkit (D6.1) serves as a comprehensive synthesis of the methodologies, lessons learned, and best practices emerging from local piloting initiatives implemented across multiple European contexts under the Empowering Creative Minds project. Funded within the Creative Europe framework, this project is dedicated to supporting vulnerable creatives—including but not limited to migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), LGBTQIA+ individuals, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups—who are at risk in relation to mental health and trauma.

Trauma frequently disrupts the natural psychological and physiological flows through which experiences are integrated into a coherent narrative of the self. Because traumatic memory is deeply internal and non-verbal—often stored as fragmented sensory, emotional, and physical tensions—traditional, talk-based interventions can sometimes induce performance anxiety or secondary triggering. Acknowledging this primary challenge, the local pilots operationalised a series of trauma-sensitive, non-hierarchical, and embodied artistic methodologies. By prioritising non-verbal exploration, sensory awareness, and the physical transformation of materials, these initiatives established spaces of care, solidarity, and mutual trust.

This toolkit documents four distinct piloting frameworks implemented by cross-disciplinary consortia in Germany, Poland, Luxembourg, and Ukraine:

- **TRAUM-A: The Depths of the Self** (CRN, Berlin): Used the tactile medium of paper collage to lower inhibition thresholds and allow migrant women to process personal narratives of grief and trauma through the unconscious patterns of visual storytelling.
- **Broken Sculpture** (CRN, Berlin): Anchored in somatic healing and material science, this two-day workshop guided young LGBTQIA+ creatives and migrants through the physical act of breaking salvaged masonry to externalize internal fractures, subsequently rebuilding the aggregate into new structures using eco-friendly geopolymers.
- **Embodied eco-somatic reflection & Feldenkrais-informed somatic awareness** (Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi", Poland): Merged dance improvisation, Feldenkrais movement awareness, and nature-based grounding with the screening of the dance film *Leaving Can't Stay*, allowing an international group of cultural workers and displaced individuals to experience emotional regulation and collective flow without the pressure of verbal disclosure.
- **Different Mirrors & The Power of Shadow** (DOURI, Luxembourg / UNAEDI, Ukraine): Deployed the Artwem behavioral system (comprising expressive writing, thread-based life-line modeling, and pastel containment frames) alongside charcoal art therapy in a technical college-museum and traditional micro-embroidery needlework to foster somatic regulation, cultural heritage mapping, and psychological safety under wartime conditions.



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First serie of workshops : TRAUM-A: The Depths of the Self

The workshop series titled "TRAUM-A: The Depths of the Self" was facilitated by Anja Söyünmez and Ercan Arslan. These sessions used collage as a central methodology because it allows unconscious thoughts and feelings to surface, creating a visual map of the "mind's eye." This artistic practice serves as a powerful, low-threshold tool for participants to explore hidden personal stories and address trauma indirectly.

The **initial sessions** took place on March 3 and 4, 2026, at M7 (Mainzer 7) in Berlin.

The first day hosted 7 participants, while the second day hosted 9.

The group consisted of migrant women of various ages who are facing financial and social disadvantages.

Located in Neukölln, these sessions invited older women artists of migrant backgrounds to engage with their inner worlds. The fragmented nature of collage was used to mirror the often fragmented memories or realizations associated with trauma.

The **second iteration** occurred on May 22 and 24, 2026, at the Spore Initiative at Hermannstraße 86, Berlin.

This group included migrant women, immigrants living in Berlin from diverse backgrounds, as well as one minor.

Also held in Neukölln, these workshops provided continuity for returning participants while welcoming new faces. The change in location and outreach methods allowed for a broader community of immigrants to use collage as a medium for self-exploration and healing.





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Feedbacks

The participants found the collage methodology highly enjoyable, especially since, for some of them, their typical creative practice centers around traditional painting. Introducing this new tactile medium provided them with a complementary artistic tool that seamlessly allowed them to connect raw physical textures to their deeply personal narratives of pain and grief. The participants viewed the collage technique as an innovative, fresh pathway for exploring personal creativity through visual storytelling. While the initial preparation phase—which required conceiving a core idea, sourcing representative visuals, and composing them on paper—initially demanded a brief adjustment period, the group quickly overcame this hesitation threshold. Once settled in, the participants became intensely eager and engaged, balancing a strong desire to find the perfect imagery to articulate their stories with a keen, artistic eye for aesthetic composition and balance.

Participant recommendations

Future workshops should prioritize allocating more time for the exercises, as participants significantly benefit from a slower pace that allows them to ease into the methodology comfortably.

Organizers should consider it an absolute necessity to supply a vast and diverse selection of magazines covering a wide array of topics to give participants adequate creative choices.

Organisers' recommendations and best practices

Facilitators noted that collaborating with a cohort of women who already possess a baseline familiarity with art-making serves as a major advantage to the workshop's workflow. Gently and gradually introducing the heavy theme of trauma proved to be highly effective and well-received by the group. This gentle progression demonstrated that embracing informal, creative dialogues around mental health successfully alleviates emotional pressure, thereby cultivating a safe space for organic, intuitive experience sharing among participants.

To optimize the impact of future iterations, organizers and facilitators must remain gentle with the participants, establish clear and open channels of communication, and deeply trust the unfolding creative process.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Collage
Keywords	Collage, trauma, unconscious
Description	This workshop invites artists and creatives, beginners and professionals alike, who identify as being at risk, particularly in relation to mental health, to explore landscapes of the self through collage. Open to all working creatively, it offers a supportive space for those who critically engage with the world yet often lack spaces of care. If artists continuously hold space for others, we ask: who takes care of the artists? Through guided exercises using various materials, participants move between individual making and shared reflection. No prior experience is required. The process invites pause, curiosity, and compassion - creating space for mindfulness, care and solidarity.
Learning objectives (skills)	Engaging with one's own traumatic experiences, understanding them and unlocking them gently through art making in a group. Empowerment and community building. Learning technical art practice.
Duration	5h (Preparation, event, postprocessing)
Tools, materials needed	Magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue, papers (colourful/white), pens & pencils
Useful references	The Surrealist Movement



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Second serie of workshops : Broken Sculpture

The workshop titled "Broken Sculpture" was co-facilitated by Rodney LaTourelle and Maxine Salmon-Cottreau over two intensive sessions on April 10 and April 12, 2026. The event was hosted at the Lucky Garage venue in Berlin, drawing a focused group of 10 unique participants. The targeted cohort consisted entirely of migrants who are socially and psychologically at risk due to the challenges of displacement and migration. Additionally, the majority of these participants were young creative practitioners who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. To support this specific group, the facilitators implemented the "Broken Sculpture" methodology, which is a specialized creative and somatic framework structured into four distinct development phases.

The concept of trauma was explained in the context of this workshop: it can be understood as an experience that overwhelms a person's capacity to cope, leaving parts of the mind and body holding on to intense feelings, sensations, and meanings that were never fully processed. Instead of becoming a completed story, trauma often remains fragmented—felt as recurring images, emotions, bodily tension, or patterns of avoidance. These fragments can shape how people relate to themselves, others, and their environment, sometimes long after the event has passed.

Because trauma is stored in pieces—sensory, emotional, physical—it can feel both deeply internal and difficult to express in language. People often struggle not because they are weak, but because trauma interrupts the natural flow through which experiences are integrated into a coherent narrative of self. As a result, individuals may feel stuck between holding on to painful memories and trying to push them away.





Comparative Research Network e.V (CRN)

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Second serie of workshops : Broken Sculpture

This workshop aims to help people work with trauma, as it uses materials, movement, and narrative to address the fragmented nature of traumatic memory. By selecting a piece of salvaged concrete or brick to represent aspects of their experience, participants externalize what is difficult to carry internally. The object becomes a physical counterpart to an emotional reality—something that can be held, observed, marked, broken, and transformed.

The act of inscribing and then breaking the material mirrors the way trauma disrupts a person's sense of continuity. But unlike the original wounding event, this break happens under the participant's control, in a supported environment. This reversal of helplessness invites agency, embodiment, and emotional release.

As the fragments are mixed into a new sustainable geopolymers concrete, participants engage with the symbolic possibility that broken pieces can become ingredients for something new—not erased, but re-formed within a larger, meaningful structure. This reflects how healing works: not by erasing the past, but by integrating it into a broader and more coherent narrative.

Shaping the final form allows participants to imagine and author a different relationship to what happened. The new object becomes an anchor for a reconfigured story—one where the person is not defined by the trauma, but actively participates in transforming it.





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Second serie of workshops : Broken Sculpture

The **first phase** presents the framework of the project, participants introduce themselves and the concepts and definition of trauma are introduced.

Participants are then asked to reflect on paper what they'd like to address through the workshop without sharing with others.

The goal is to create interpersonal familiarisation: establishing a safe, small-group environment. Working together but separately, each participant externalizes a relevant trauma narrative that will inform the transformation process.

The **second phase** is the deconstruction (the act of rupture), participants manually break salvaged cement and masonry, rather than starting with new materials, the methodology requires the physical confrontation of the old. The old, leftover materials metaphorically correspond to their trauma narrative. This stage represents the "breaking down" of traumatic experiences into manageable components. The creation of aggregate—rough, jagged fragments that serve as the raw material for the new medium.

The **third phase** is the mold-making: participants are free to use materials and tools available in the space and create a mold freely aligned with their goal. Using mold-making as a metaphor for boundaries and the "vessels" we inhabit. These exercises build the technical tactile skills required for the later stages. The form that the molds will shape corresponds to the participants' desire to transform the trauma narrative into a representative, transformational material presence.

The **fourth phase** is the sustainable reformulation, the "ruins" are reintegrated into a constructive state using advanced material chemistry, using geopolymers cement. Unlike traditional Portland cement, this low-carbon alternative emphasizes a commitment to a "sustainable future" and a reduced "footprint." The introduction of pigment color allows for individual agency and the emotional "tinting" of the experience. The recycled gravel (old trauma) is bound by the geopolymer (new perspective/resilience).

The **final stage** focuses on the output, which rejects the pressure of "perfection" or "wholeness." The participants are invited to come for a second day when the material has dried to see their sculptures, discuss them, and bring them home. Forms are cast to intentionally highlight edges, cracks, and gaps. Utilizing an open aesthetic, the methodology views the final object not as a finished story, but as an ongoing "assemblage" of parts. The "broken" nature of the sculpture is celebrated as a truthful representation of the healing process.



Comparative Research Network e.V (CRN)

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Feedbacks

Participants gained specific artistic skills in handling geopolymers concrete, understanding environmental impacts (low-carbon vs. Portland cement), and the spatial reasoning required for mold-making. For many, the "smashing" of material served as a physical manifestation of internal struggle, allowing them to externalize and rationalize emotions like frustration and anger.

Participants also described that intense physical work acts as a "threshold" or a mind-reset, providing a mental space where they could either focus deeply or find a much-needed break from thinking. The realization that trauma physically changes bodily pathways, and that sharing coping mechanisms in a group helps create "new paths" in the nervous system.

Most found the deconstruction phase highly therapeutic. For some, the resulting "rubble" felt even more representative of externalized trauma than the act of smashing itself. The transformation of the material was seen as more healing than the final object. The process of thinking through the change—from solid stone to dust to a new form—was the primary driver of value.

There was a noted debate regarding the "beauty" of the molds. One participant felt that an aesthetic mold was "untrue" to the nature of trauma, while another admitted to focusing on the mold's beauty as a way to avoid the harder, "truer" emotional work.

Concerning group work, even those initially reluctant to work in a group found the collective mixing of materials and shared vulnerability to be a crucial support system.

Suggestions for the next workshops

A request was formed for more time to sit with the materials and the process, suggesting that the transformation might be too intense to be rushed.

Structure: Some participants desired more explicit guidance or "scaffolding" during the more abstract phases of the workshop with clear guidelines and examples of moulds. Providing an overview at the beginning of all the phases would also have been welcomed.

One participant noted that writing provides structure to the chaos of trauma; integrating formal writing exercises alongside the physical smashing could help bridge the gap between "acting" and "rationalizing."



Comparative Research Network e.V (CRN)

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Feedbacks

Feedback from the organisers (Best practices)

What worked well

- Linking "smashing" with "thinking" was highly effective. Having participants think about specific traumatic memories *while* physically destroying the salvaged masonry allowed for a somatic release that words alone couldn't achieve.
- The "Connective Exercises" successfully lowered barriers. Even for those who found it difficult to talk about their trauma in a group, the shared manual labor (mixing, pouring, cleaning) provided a non-verbal way to bond.
- The geopolymer concrete served as a perfect metaphor for self-care and rebuilding—demonstrating that even if the "pathways" of the past are broken, they can be bound back together in a new, sustainable way.

Recommendations for future workshops

- Organizers should be prepared for participants who find "crushing" counter-intuitive or even triggering. Providing alternative ways to deconstruct the material (e.g., more controlled disassembly) could accommodate different temperaments.
- Clearly mark the transition between the high-energy "breaking" and the quiet "molding." These act as psychological thresholds that need to be held with care by the facilitator.
- While "structure" is requested, it is vital to keep the "open aesthetic of rupture." Future initiatives should provide clear *technical* instructions while remaining open-ended about the *emotional* outcome.



Comparative Research Network e.V (CRN)

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Toolkit

Methodology name	Broken Sculpture
Keywords	Somatic healing, geopolymers science, deconstruction, assemblage, low-carbon, Trauma externalization
Description	A two-day intensive workshop that guides participants through the physical act of breaking salvaged masonry into aggregate, which is then bound with eco-friendly geopolymers cement. The process focuses on the "aesthetic of rupture," allowing vulnerable creatives to externalize and reformulate trauma into new, structural forms.
Learning objectives (skills)	somatic regulation, understanding the science behind, sculptural technique, mould making, conceptual framing.
Duration	10 hours (Spread over 2 days; 12:00 – 17:00 daily) with a 48-hour curing interval.
Tools, materials needed	Salvaged cement/masonry, hammers, mallets, safety goggles, heavy-duty gloves, buckets, geopolymers cement (pre-mix or binder/activator), liquid/powder pigments, mixing containers, stirring tools, reusable silicone or wood/plastic containers, release agents, dust masks (N95), aprons, and eye protection
Useful references	<i>The Poetics of Space</i> (Gaston Bachelard) regarding the "vessel." <i>Vibrant Matter</i> (Jane Bennett) on the agency of materials. <i>Kintsugi</i> philosophy (The beauty of the broken). COPE Workbook for the concepts of trauma: https://cope4hope.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Workbook_COPE.pdf



Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



The movement, eco-somatic, and artistic reflection workshops

The movement, eco-somatic, and artistic reflection workshops was designed and led by choreographer Agnieszka Sikorska, with somatic educator Alesia Seraya joining to co-facilitate on the first day. The program took place over two separate days on May 16 and May 17, 2026, in the outdoor natural spaces of Bratnik, Poland. The sessions engaged a diverse group of 26 unique participants, including local community members, cultural workers, and women with migration experiences. To support this cohort, the facilitators deployed a non-hierarchical, trauma-sensitive approach that utilized eco-somatic activities, movement improvisation, Feldenkrais-informed body awareness, and intuitive drawing. These non-verbal, somatic practices were directly connected to the project's dance film *Leaving Can't Stay*, providing a safe, symbolic space for the participants to experience emotional regulation and collective connection without the pressure of direct autobiographical or verbal disclosure.

The Local Pilot Workshops were not conceived as traditional art workshops focused on performance or technical artistic production. Instead, they were designed as a trauma-sensitive embodied process where movement, rhythm, attention and collective presence became tools for reflection, regulation and connection.

At the centre of the process was the understanding that difficult experiences are often carried not only in language, but also in breath, tension, rhythm, sensory memory and relational patterns. Because of this, the workshops intentionally moved away from direct narration and toward non-verbal, somatic and artistic forms of exploration.





Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



The movement, eco-somatic, and artistic reflection workshops

Participants were invited to slow down and enter a shared space of embodied attentiveness before reflection or conversation emerged. Rather than asking participants to explain personal experiences, the process created conditions where emotions, memories and bodily sensations could appear gradually and voluntarily through movement, silence, drawing, rhythm and shared presence.

Nature was not treated as background scenery, but as an active participant within the process. Trees, sounds, textures, wind and spatial openness became elements supporting grounding, regulation and sensory awareness. Working outdoors changed the rhythm of attention and encouraged participants to reconnect with forms of perception often absent in everyday stress-oriented environments.

The workshops were rooted in embodied listening — understood not only as listening through words, but through movement, breath, rhythm, silence, proximity and collective awareness. Participants explored how tension changes through movement, how relational trust can emerge through shared actions, and how the body responds in contact with others and with the environment.

Movement improvisation, intuitive drawing and reflective practices were approached not as therapeutic techniques in a clinical sense, but as artistic languages capable of creating space for imagination, emotional reflection and agency.

The dance film *Leaving Can't Stay* functioned both as an artistic outcome of the project and as a reflective tool within the workshops. During the first workshop day, participants watched the film collectively and worked around its themes through drawing, movement improvisation and reflective exercises. The film created a shared symbolic and emotional space where participants could engage with themes of transition, rupture, support and resilience without pressure for autobiographical disclosure.

An important principle of the process was the creation of a non-hierarchical atmosphere. Facilitators did not position themselves as experts interpreting participants' emotions, but rather as guides accompanying a collective process of attentiveness and exploration. Slowness, consent, voluntary participation and respect for boundaries were treated as essential values throughout all activities.

The workshops demonstrated that embodied artistic methodologies can create meaningful spaces for reflection, regulation and resilience-building — especially when they combine movement, nature, collective presence and creative practice within a carefully facilitated and ethically grounded environment.



Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



The movement, eco-somatic, and artistic reflection workshops

The workshops emerged from the broader artistic and research process developed within the Empowering Creative Minds project — a Creative Europe initiative supporting vulnerable creatives through reflective and artistic methodologies.

The wider research process included:

- interviews with artists working with trauma;
- Needs assessments focused on vulnerable creatives;
- co-creation events organised in partner countries;
- choreographic and somatic movement research;
- artistic exploration connected with the creation of the film *Leaving Can't Stay*.

The artistic and choreographic research drew inspiration from:

- Anna Halprin's approach, specifically *Dance as a Healing Art*;
- Body Weather practice;
- Contact Improvisation and Partnering;
- Feldenkrais-informed movement awareness;
- David Zambrano's *Couple Dancing*;
- Artistic and somatic practices explored during co-creation events in Luxembourg and Lublin.

The process also incorporated intuitive drawing practices developed together with Alesia Seraya; breath, touch and contact exercises explored during co-creation activities; rhythm and collective listening practices connected with "Pulse of the Community".

These inspirations informed both the artistic language of the film and the embodied methodology later adapted into the Local Pilot Workshops.

The dance film *Leaving Can't Stay* became one of the artistic outcomes of the project and an important reflective element within the workshops themselves. The film explores themes of transition, displacement, resilience, collective support and the search for safety within and between bodies.





Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



The movement, eco-somatic, and artistic reflection workshops

The Local Pilot Workshops combined:

- grounding and body awareness practices
- TRE-inspired warm-up exercises
- movement improvisation
- partner work exploring touch, balance, weight and resonance
- eco-somatic activities connected with nature
- intuitive drawing
- reflective writing
- Feldenkrais-informed body awareness practices
- silent walking practices;
- collective reflection and sharing.

The methodologies were designed to:

- support emotional regulation
- strengthen body awareness
- create non-verbal forms of expression
- encourage collective presence and attentiveness
- build relational trust and safety
- support reflection through movement and creativity.





Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



Feedbacks

The evaluation demonstrated exceptionally high participant satisfaction, with a 4.89/5 average score and 100% of the cohort feeling safe, respected, and properly accommodated.

Quantitative metrics revealed that 93.3% of participants experienced improved wellbeing and ranked the somatic and movement activities as the most valuable elements of the program. Qualitatively, the workshops were experienced as grounding, restorative processes that successfully reduced bodily tension, heightened emotional awareness, and restored personal agency following difficult life events.

Direct participant testimonials emphasized that the combination of mindful breathing, group reflection, and outdoor nature-based settings facilitated a profound sense of relational safety and personal pacing without forcing anyone to verbalize their trauma. Ultimately, the pilot proved that non-verbal, trauma-sensitive artistic methodologies create secure, accessible pathways for emotional regulation and mutual connection.

Organizers recommend that future initiatives maintain this multimodal structure in nature-based environments, establish clear boundaries, dedicate additional time for partner-based practices, and incorporate independent post-workshop regulation tools to ensure long-term continuity.



Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



Toolkit (DAY ONE)

Methodology name	Embodied Eco-Somatic Reflection
Keywords	eco-somatics, embodied listening, movement improvisation, trauma-sensitive art, body awareness, collective presence, resilience, grounding, relational movement, artistic reflection, sensory awareness, breath work, collective care, non-verbal communication
Description	This methodology combines movement practices, eco-somatic exercises and artistic reflection within a nature-based and trauma-sensitive environment. Participants engage in grounding exercises, movement improvisation, body awareness, partner work, drawing and collective reflection. The process supports emotional regulation, embodied listening and relational awareness through non-verbal and creative forms of participation. The methodology creates a safe and non-hierarchical space where participants can reconnect with bodily sensations, creativity and collective presence without pressure for artistic performance or verbal explanation.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop body awareness, emotional regulation, sensory perception and embodied listening skills. The methodology strengthens non-verbal communication, relational trust, attentiveness, and the ability to recognise and respond to bodily signals. It also supports creativity, self-reflection, resilience, and the capacity to engage with difficult experiences through movement, nature-based practices, and artistic exploration.
Duration	4–5 hours (single workshop format) or adaptable for multi-session programmes.
Tools, materials needed	Outdoor natural environment or spacious indoor studio; comfortable clothing suitable for movement; paper, drawing materials and writing tools; optional blankets, mats or cushions for grounding and reflection exercises; projector and screen if film-based reflection is included; facilitator experienced in movement-based and trauma-sensitive practices.
Useful references	Anna Halprin – Dance as a Healing Art, Feldenkrais Method – Awareness Through Movement, Body Weather practice, David Zambrano – Couple Dancing TRE (Trauma Release Exercises) and movement-based trauma awareness approaches Paulina Rewucka – Ghostly Matters: Olga Saroka – Psychological First Aid Kit for Migrants Trauma-sensitive arts and movement facilitation approaches Trauma-sensitive movement and arts-based facilitation approaches



Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"



Toolkit (DAY TWO)

Methodology name	Feldenkrais-Informed Somatic Awareness
Keywords	somatic awareness, Feldenkrais-inspired practice, body perception, gentle movement, self-observation, nervous system regulation, body-mind connection, movement exploration, relaxation, attentive presence, breath awareness, self-care, embodied learning, trauma-sensitive facilitation
Description	This methodology is inspired by the Feldenkrais Method and focuses on developing awareness through gentle movement and attentive self-observation. Participants are guided through a sequence of slow and accessible movement explorations performed mainly on the floor. The exercises encourage noticing sensations, movement patterns, muscular effort, breathing, and the relationship between different parts of the body. The process supports relaxation, self-regulation, and increased body awareness while creating opportunities to discover new and more efficient ways of moving. Reflection is based on direct bodily experience rather than performance, correction, or achievement.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop body awareness, sensory perception, and the ability to recognise habitual movement patterns. The methodology supports nervous system regulation, relaxation, concentration, and self-care. Participants strengthen their capacity for attentive listening to bodily signals, improve movement efficiency, and explore the relationship between physical sensations, emotions, and overall wellbeing.
Duration	2–4 hours (workshop format) or adaptable for longer educational programmes.
Tools, materials needed	Quiet indoor space; yoga mats, blankets or soft floor surfaces; comfortable clothing allowing unrestricted movement; optional cushions and supports; experienced facilitator familiar with Feldenkrais-inspired and trauma-sensitive approaches.
Useful references	Moshe Feldenkrais – Awareness Through Movement Moshe Feldenkrais – The Potent Self Ruthy Alon – Movement Intelligence Somatic Education approaches Trauma-sensitive movement facilitation Embodied learning and body awareness practices Contemporary somatic education methodologies



DOURI



Different Mirrors

The local piloting initiative featured a workshop series officially designated as "Different Mirrors". The program was led by visual artist Walid El Masri with assistant coordination Yusra Amounah, spanning five intensive sessions conducted between April 25 and May 19, 2026.

Session 1: Saturday, April 25, 2026

Session 2: Sunday, April 26, 2026

Session 3: Saturday, May 2, 2026

Session 4: Sunday, May 3, 2026

Session 5: Tuesday, May 19, 2026



The workshop series successfully engaged a multi-generational group of 13 participants, which brought together young Ukrainian artists, elderly individuals, and people from diverse cultural and creative backgrounds. To support this diverse cohort, the facilitators implemented the original Artwem methodology, an art-behavioral system designed by Walid El Masri to safely try to get over psychological resistance, establish a restorative cognitive flow state, and process trauma without direct verbal confrontation. This comprehensive system was applied through five distinct, progressive developmental phases that systematically guided participants through sensory and motor warm-ups, structural still-life deconstructions, Pennebaker expressive writing protocols, three-dimensional thread-based life-line modeling, and localized pastel color containment exercises.

Phase 1: Sensory Warm-Up (Spiral Flower, Iris, Take-off & Landing breathing)

Phase 2: Structural Deconstruction (still life analysis, blind & tactile drawing, air drawing)

Phase 3: Memory & Trauma Work (Pennebaker expressive writing, memory drawing with eyes closed)

Phase 4: Material 3D Embodiment (Life-Line with coloured glue-soaked threads on board)

Phase 5: Emotional Containment & Reconstruction (pastel short-stroke colouring inside geometric containment frames)



DOURI

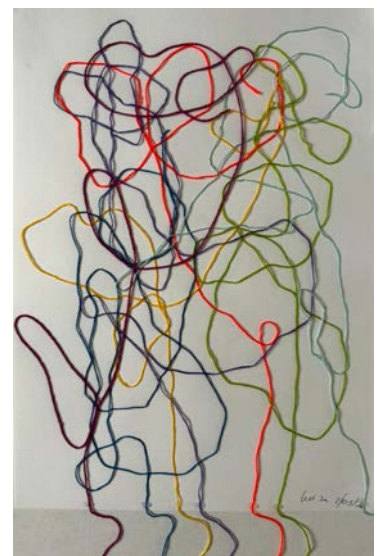
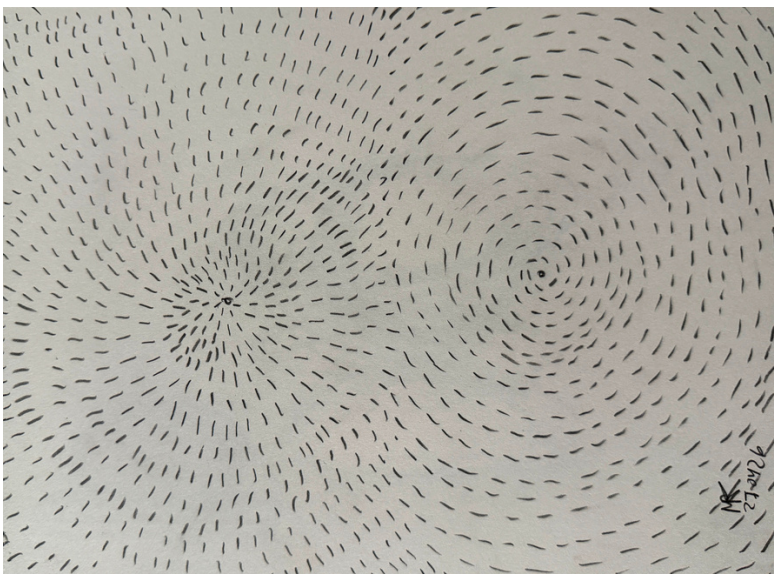


Feedbacks

Participant's feedbacks

The workshop forced participants to face a blunt truth: art is a raw tool for internal confrontation, not a shallow exercise in aesthetics. This heavy psychological confrontation only worked because the steep technical difficulty consumed their cognitive focus, leaving the nervous system with no room for intrusive self-criticism.

- The mechanics of catharsis: Participants found that venting their trauma through the Pennebaker writing protocol was meaningless without the aggressive, physical act of tearing up and destroying the paper, which provided a necessary physiological purge. Following this clearing, moving from rough, sticky thread-work to strict pastel containment borders was the only layout that safely processed their trauma. The raw weight of this method was proven when One participant broke down crying while drawing her father's house, achieving a brutal but liberating emotional release.
- The structured exercises completely hijacked the participants' attention, forcing them into a state of total absorption. This intense mental focus had a direct physical payoff; one participant arrived completely drained but experienced a total energy reset once her hands were forced to work.
- The impact was sharp enough that one participant, an art educator, demanded to be taught the Artwem techniques so she could use them as a clinical psychosocial tool for her own students, while multiple participants flatly stated they needed follow-up sessions to continue the work





DOURI

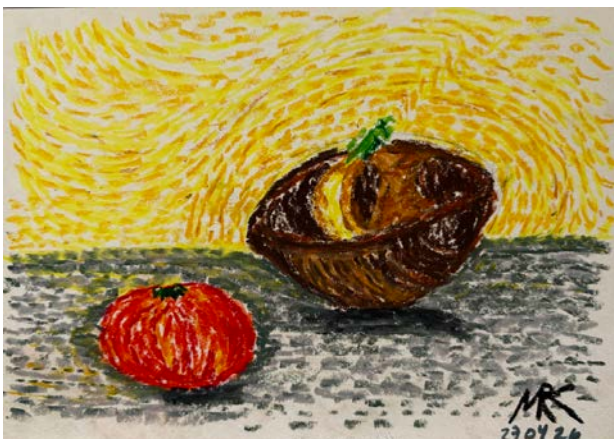


Feedbacks

Organisers' feedbacks

- **Venue Dependencies:** The success of the project relied heavily on the strict psychological pairing of the environments. Rotondes used the stark movement of passing trains as a blunt metaphor for life-lines and departure, while the Musée Rural acted as an unyielding, historic anchor for roots and memory.
- **Facilitators confirmed** that the rigid operational sequence—forcing participants from pencil lines to sticky threads and finally into geometric pastel borders—was the only way to successfully kill off their perfectionism and creative self-judgment.
- **Overcoming resistance:** The unvarnished power of this physical approach was demonstrated by a participant's husband who flatly refused to draw because he had zero experience, yet the mechanics of the workshop dragged him into a total flow state within fifteen minutes, completely flipping his behavior and making him demand a spot in all future sessions. Furthermore, organizers discovered that feeding the participants in the garden beforehand was a mandatory physiological trick to lower baseline defensive tension and force social bonding before hitting them with the intensive work.

Future initiatives must stop scheduling sessions at 14:00 because the natural post-lunch slump ruins participant focus; sessions must either be moved to morning or evening slots, or facilitators must drastically ramp up the physical warm-up to shock the body awake. Finally, coordinators must implement an unyielding 24-hour attendance confirmation system to stop last-minute cancellations from bleeding resources and destabilizing the group's internal dynamics.





DOURI



Toolkit

Methodology name	Artwem
Keywords	Catharsis , mindfulness, containing frame, flow state, expressive writing, bottom-up, trauma processing
Description	Artwem is an art-behavioural toolkit that uses graduated motor sequencing to process trauma and rebuild creative confidence. It moves through five phases: isolating the critical eye (air drawing, blind contour), structural deconstruction (short-stroke still-life analysis), memory release (Pennebaker expressive writing, then destroyed), material embodiment (a coloured-thread Life-Line on board), and emotional containment (pastel short strokes inside small geometric frames). Each phase hands off to the next, progressively converting intangible emotional weight into physical, manageable form.
Learning objectives (skills)	Technical, motor and muscular skills, control, rhythm, artistic techniques such as pastel and others, cognitive and analytical skills, memory, behaviour and psychological skills, resilience, relaxation, calm, capacity to frame, self-regulation.
Duration	5 sessions × 150–210 minutes = 12.5 hours total training time
Tools, materials needed	Specialist graphite pencils range of hardness grades: 6H (grids), HB (foundation), 2B, 4B, 6B (shading), blue ballpoint pen (for Spiral Flower exercise contrast with pencil), Felt-tip colour markers / Feutres (for life-line draft mapping on A4), Dry pastel sticks, drawing eraser (used as 'white pencil' for light highlights, not for correction), small stiff-bristle painting brushes (for blending graphite and pastel), coloured wool and cotton threads varied textures (rough and smooth) in multiple colours, PVA white liquid glue (acid-free) + flat, low-sided containers for thread soaking, small stiff brushes for pressing and filtering excess glue from threads, heavy cardboard / mounting board (to absorb glue moisture and support thread weight), scissors, white drawing paper medium texture (A4 and A3 formats), thick cardboard sheets for thread Life-Line works (min. 3mm), protective plastic table covers, wet wipes and cleaning cloths, bluetooth speaker + carefully curated music playlist (warm-up, expressive, and restorative tracks), mall 3D models for observational exercises: geometric solids, natural objects, small still-life objects.
Useful references	Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions. Feldenkrais, M. (1972), Awareness Through Movement Porges, S. W. (2011). The Polyvagal Theory. W. W. Norton Malchiodi, C. A. (2020). Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy. Edwards, B. (1979). Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain Arnheim, R. (1974). Art and Visual Perception Klee, P. (1953). Pedagogical Sketchbook. Praeger



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The Power of shadow

The local piloting phase featured a workshop series titled "The Power of Shadow".

The two-day program was co-facilitated by art therapist Yurii Babii and psychologist Krystyna Chemerys on March 14 and 15, 2026. The event engaged a substantial cohort of 29 participants, bringing together creative practitioners, educators, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

To support this vulnerable group, the facilitators combined specialized somatic movement and tactile art-therapy methodologies. On the first day, the facilitators utilized charcoal art therapy to give participants a direct opportunity to activate the natural energy of the medium through raw pressure, physical gesture, and movement, effectively transforming internal trauma into visible creative images. To establish a supportive environment and force a sense of presence in the here and now, the facilitators integrated the "Moving Through Space (Exploring the Field)" exercise from the Empowering Creative Minds Training Handbook, which targeted spatial awareness, non-verbal connection, and a sense of collective flow. They further solidified the group dynamic by utilizing another handbook exercise called "The Triangle" before concluding the first day with a mandatory verbal reflection titled "What I came with and what I am leaving with".

On the second day, the workshop shifted focus toward traditional micro-embroidery, which served as a historic, grounding practice that allowed participants to explore cultural heritage symbols and become fully immersed in the creative process on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels. Before commencing the needlework, the facilitators forced a shift into practical action by introducing the Cadavre Exquis (Exquisite Corpse) collaborative drawing technique, which drastically improved the group atmosphere, allowed participants to align their creative energies, and resulted in a shared artistic product. The entire intensive course concluded with a final reflective exercise titled "My Energy in Colour and Texture," where participants mapped out their internal states and recognized that each applied technique successfully unlocked new emotional sensations and personal psychological resources.





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Feedbacks

The quantitative evaluation from 29 participant responses proved that the workshop was highly successful, with 93% finding the artistic concepts completely clear and 97% praising the structural flow of the program. The cohort felt exceptionally safe and comfortable, yielding a near-perfect average rating of 4.93/5 for their comfort in expressing thoughts.

In terms of lessons learned, the sessions significantly heightened the participants' self-awareness, teaching them to pause, slow down, and exist entirely in the present moment. Participants also gained a stronger awareness of mental health by mastering specific grounding and mindfulness techniques. Through the specific art therapy methods utilized, they discovered that charcoal drawing, micro-embroidery, and medallion-making serve as potent tools for raw emotional release. Furthermore, the internal group dynamics shifted dramatically as participants recognized the absolute necessity of trust and openness, noting that they quickly felt like a tight-knit family of "close strangers".

By the end of the workshop, the cohort reported feeling completely recharged, mentally resourced, and deeply inspired by creating from the heart rather than succumbing to overthinking, which allowed them to thoroughly relax and reset. During the practical sessions, working with charcoal made participants realize that the best results in life and nature require deliberate physical effort. The charcoal process directly exposed their inner states on the surface, explicitly highlighting which areas of their lives required strengthening and which aspects needed to be completely let go. Given the current wartime realities, the embroidery session served as a vital bridge to ancestral connection, allowing participants to directly voice their deep, internal needs through the selection of traditional symbols.

as a critical resilience tool, reinforcing the hard truth that caring for mental health in times of war is an absolute necessity.



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Feedbacks

When evaluating the specific methodologies, participants awarded high marks for clarity and praised the highly structured, logical flow of the activities. They described the entire environment as deeply supportive and therapeutic, noting that everyday, simple materials were transformed into powerful expressive tools. For instance, ordinary charcoal was described as a total revelation for its ability to drag hidden emotions into light. The cohort explicitly stated that these creative practices reduce stress, build emotional self-regulation, improve overall mental health, and give the quiet, internal unconscious the necessary space to move outward. To build upon this success, participants suggested establishing a regular schedule of more frequent sessions to maintain this family-like atmosphere, expanding the program to include movement and music, and emphasizing that such practices are absolutely mandatory during times of war.

The organizers' feedback confirmed that the pilot succeeded because it maintained an unyielding safe environment where participants consistently felt emotionally secure. Communication remained flawless throughout the event, as trainers delivered accessible explanations and combined empathetic facilitation with a balanced blend of creative practice and direct psychosocial support. This specific combination of creativity and psychological exercises generated a deep, restorative, and inspiring group dynamic.

To guide future initiatives, organizers recommend establishing regular sessions to ensure continuity of impact and scaling outreach to loop in more participants, with a strict focus on highly vulnerable groups. The methodology should be further diversified by integrating music, storytelling, and movement-based exercises. Operational management must continue using structured evaluation forms to monitor and adapt the project. Finally, coordinators must build active partnerships with cultural institutions and mental health professionals, while securing long-term funding to permanently embed creative therapy as a critical resilience tool, reinforcing the hard truth that caring for mental health in times of war is an absolute necessity.

“Я навчилася зупинятися і відчувати момент.” (Translation: “I learned to pause and feel the moment.”)

“Звичайне вугілля стало для мене відкриттям — воно допомогло виразити емоції.” (“Ordinary charcoal was a revelation for me — it helped express emotions.”)

“В час війни турбота про ментальне здоров'я — це необхідність.” (“In times of war, caring for mental health is a necessity.”)



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Moving through space (Exploring the field)
Keywords	movement, spatial awareness, non-verbal connection, embodied attention, group presence, room dynamics, attentive walking, sensory orientation, collective flow, facilitation through movement, exploration of space
Description	Participants begin by walking freely around the room with slow, attentive movement. The facilitator encourages them to explore the whole space, noticing where it feels open, full, quiet, or dynamic. As they move, participants pay attention to direction, rhythm, distance, and the presence of others, gently adjusting their path to balance the room. They may hum softly or breathe audibly to support orientation and to sense the shared rhythm of the group as a living organism moving together.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop spatial awareness, embodied attention, and the ability to sense relationships between self, others, and the environment. The exercise strengthens non-verbal communication, responsiveness, and awareness of group dynamics. It also supports calm concentration, movement-based listening, and the experience of collective flow through shared rhythm and attentive presence.
Duration	15-25 minutes
Tools, materials needed	Open room or studio space with enough area to move freely, optional soft sound or silence, and a facilitator able to guide attention through voice, breath, and pacing.
Recommandations	Can be used as an opening, warm-up, or transition exercise in movement-based workshops, theatre and dance sessions, creative group processes, and community activities focused on presence, trust, and embodied connection



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Toolkit

Methodology name	The Triangle
Keywords	movement, relational awareness, collective geometry, spatial perception, inner sensing, group dynamics, non-verbal coordination, trust, embodied listening, alignment, attention, playful recognition
Description	Each participant silently chooses two other people in the group without revealing who they are. The group then begins to move slowly through the space while each person tries to position themselves so that they form an equilateral triangle with the two people they have chosen. Participants continuously adjust, observe, and sense the movement of others, relying on attention and inner perception rather than verbal instruction. As more people feel they have found their triangle, the collective movement gradually slows and settles into stillness. At the end, the facilitator invites everyone to show with their hands who they had chosen, often creating a moment of recognition, surprise, and shared laughter.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants deepen relational awareness, spatial perception, and trust in their own inner sensing. The exercise strengthens concentration, non-verbal communication, and the ability to respond to others through movement and observation. It also develops a sense of collective order, shared geometry, and group coherence by allowing structure to emerge without explicit coordination.
Duration	15-20 minutes
Tools, materials needed	Open room or studio space with enough area for the group to move freely and safely, and a facilitator able to guide the process with calm instructions and enough pauses for observation and stillness.
Useful references	Can be used as a movement-based group exercise in theatre, dance, facilitation, team-building, and community workshops focused on trust, awareness, collective intelligence, and embodied interaction.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Charcoal Expression Method
Keywords	art therapy, charcoal drawing, process-based creativity, embodied approach, symbolic work, group dynamics, safe creative space, inner state, shadow and light, grounding, presence, collective interaction
Description	This one-day art-therapy methodology uses charcoal drawing as a way to explore one's inner state, work with emotions, and engage with the symbolic contrast of shadow and light. Through grounding, awareness, and group-based exercises, participants build contact with themselves, the space, and the group before creating their own visual expression.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop awareness of the present moment, emotional sensitivity, and self-regulation skills through a creative process. They learn to observe inner processes, express emotions in a safe way, and use charcoal as a material for symbolic and visual exploration. The methodology also supports grounding, body awareness, trust, and non-verbal communication within a group.
Duration	5 hours
Tools, materials needed	Textured paper, graphite pencils (black dry pastel), willow charcoal set, gold leaf (loose, gold 2.5), brushes, dry glue, canvas.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Reflection: What I came with and what I am leaving with
Keywords	reflection, closing circle, personal insight, expectations, outcomes, self-awareness, group sharing, learning process, emotional check-in, meaning-making, participatory evaluation, verbal expression, safe space
Description	Participants strengthen self-awareness, critical reflection, and the ability to articulate personal learning. They practice identifying change over the course of an activity, naming emotions and expectations, and translating experience into words. The methodology also supports active listening, empathy, confidence in sharing, and collective meaning-making within a group.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop awareness of the present moment, emotional sensitivity, and self-regulation skills through a creative process. They learn to observe inner processes, express emotions in a safe way, and use charcoal as a material for symbolic and visual exploration. The methodology also supports grounding, body awareness, trust, and non-verbal communication within a group.
Duration	20-25 minutes
Tools, materials needed	Printed reflection table or worksheet, pens or markers, flipchart or whiteboard (optional), sticky notes (optional), and a calm space for individual writing and group sharing.
Recommandations	Can be used as a closing reflection after workshops, training sessions, creative laboratories, or community-based learning activities.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Cadavre Exquis
Keywords	collaborative drawing, surrealism, playfulness, trust-building, creativity, confidence, collective artwork, low-pressure creativity, trauma-informed facilitation, group connection, visual storytelling
Description	Cadavre Exquis is a collaborative drawing game for small groups in which participants create a surreal collective figure one section at a time. A sheet of paper is folded into equal parts, and each person draws one segment while only seeing two small connecting marks from the previous artist rather than the full image. After each turn, the paper is folded again and passed on. When the final part is complete, the paper is unfolded to reveal an unexpected and often humorous collective creature, creating surprise, laughter, and shared discovery.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants strengthen trust, playful collaboration, and confidence in creative expression without the pressure of producing a perfect individual artwork. The exercise supports imagination, visual responsiveness, and the ability to build on minimal cues from others. In trauma-informed settings, it offers a safe way to contribute to a shared creative process, reducing performance anxiety and encouraging connection through collective joy rather than verbal self-disclosure.
Duration	20-45 minutes
Tools, materials needed	Paper sheets, pencils, pens, or markers; a flat surface for drawing; and small groups of 3-6 participants. The paper should be folded into equal sections before starting so each person can draw one part and hide it before passing it on.
Recommandations	Useful for art workshops, youth work, community-building, trauma-informed creative spaces, intercultural group activities, and team sessions focused on play, trust, imagination, and low-pressure collaboration.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Microstitch Method
Keywords	micro-embroidery, textile art therapy, symbols, tradition, ethnoculture, thread as metaphor, meaning-making, individual symbol, co-creation, acceptance, emotional release, anxiety reduction, resource recovery, inner balance
Description	This one-day methodology uses micro-embroidery and symbolic work to help participants slow down, reconnect with cultural heritage, and create personal meaning through thread and ornament. The process supports self-expression, trust, co-creation, and emotional restoration while encouraging reflection through the making of a wearable object.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants develop concentration, emotional regulation, and symbolic thinking through textile-based creative practice. They strengthen patience, sensitivity, fine motor coordination, and the ability to translate inner states into symbols and visual details. The methodology also fosters trust, co-creation, acceptance of others, and reflection through making.
Duration	5 hours
Tools, materials needed	Embroidery threads (set of 24), clasp and pendant fittings, thin satin ribbon, B-700 glue, needles, embroidery hoop.



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Toolkit

Methodology name	Reflective exercise: My energy in colour and texture
Keywords	reflection, colour awareness, texture exploration, energy mapping, sensory expression, creative self-observation, embodied reflection, non-verbal communication, emotional literacy, resource recognition, group sharing, closing reflection
Description	This reflective exercise invites participants to explore how their energy changed over the two days through colour and texture. By choosing colours, materials, and tactile associations that reflect their internal state, participants give visual form to emotions, sensations, and shifts in energy. The process helps them notice how each technique opened new feelings, perceptions, and inner resources during the workshop.
Learning objectives (skills)	Participants strengthen emotional awareness, sensory perception, and the ability to reflect on inner processes through creative language. They practice identifying and expressing changes in mood, energy, and personal resources, while connecting artistic techniques with lived experience. The exercise also supports imagination, self-expression, and confidence in sharing personal reflections within a group.
Duration	20-25 minutes
Tools, materials needed	Coloured paper or worksheet, coloured pencils, markers, oil pastels or paints, textured materials or collage elements (optional), pens, and a comfortable space for reflection and group discussion.
Recommandations	Can be used as a closing or integrative reflection after multi-day creative workshops, art-based learning sessions, and community activities focused on emotional expression and personal resource discovery.



Conclusions

Lessons learned & best practices

The evaluation of the local pilots demonstrated high quantitative and qualitative success rates, with participants reporting reduced bodily tension, improved emotional self-regulation, and an enhanced sense of personal agency.

The summarised findings across all implementations offer vital insights into trauma-informed creative facilitation:

Firstly, the efficiency of the physical-cognitive link that has been illustrated in the example of intensive physical tasks (such as the smashing of concrete with mallets or the manipulation of charcoal and heavy threads). They act as an effective cognitive reset. It was described that this physical exertion bypasses the critical mind, dissolving perfectionism and providing a somatic outlet for frustration and anger before abstract creative work begins.

Secondly, allowing participants to see physical materials transform—from fractured concrete rubble into bound geopolymers stone, or from a blank page into geometric containment frames—serves as a psychological mirror for internal reconstruction metaphorically. Healing is reinforced not by erasing past ruptures, but by integrating historical "aggregates" into a stronger, broader narrative.

Thirdly, trauma-sensitive environments require meticulous facilitation tracking. Facilitators must deliberately manage the transitions between high-energy physical output (e.g., expressive writing, destruction or material breaking) and quiet, introspective integration phases (e.g., silent walking, mold-making, or closing circles).

Lastly, in our project's context, group activities that rely on non-verbal interaction—such as collective concrete mixing, eco-somatic partner mirroring, or collaborative drawing games (*Cadavre Exquis*)—successfully lower relational barriers. Participants establish deep, family-like bonds as "close strangers" through shared manual or kinetic presence without the burden of autobiographical self-disclosure.

Guidance for future initiatives

As a roadmap for sustaining and scaling up these practices, this toolkit puts forward several core recommendations for future initiatives:

- **Expand time allotments:** Participants require significant periods to overcome initial inhibition thresholds, ease into somatic methods, and sit with the emotional vulnerability brought up by the creative process.
- **Clarity in explanations:** While maintaining an open aesthetic that rejects rigid definitions of "perfection," future implementations should deliver highly explicit technical instructions and concrete physical examples to prevent abstract phases from becoming disorienting or triggering.
- **Diversify material and environmental inputs:** Facilitators are encouraged to employ multimodal toolkits—pairing visual art with movement, incorporating outdoor nature-based settings to lower cortisol, and ensuring a diverse collection of topical stimuli (e.g., multi-genre magazines, varied thread textures, and regional cultural ornaments).
- **Ensure structural continuity and professional alliances:** To transition these interventions from isolated events into long-term resilience tools, future projects should implement robust attendance-stabilisation frameworks, prioritise multi-session continuity, and actively collaborate with institutional mental health professionals and local cultural repositories.

Thanks to the local piloting processes, we were able to illustrate that when art-behavioral, somatic, and material practices are implemented within a carefully structured, ethically grounded, and compassionate environment, they unlock pathways for self-insight, collective solidarity, and structural psychological exploration towards recovery.



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