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University of Brighton



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Visual arts practice for resilience: A guide for working with young people with complex needs

Written by: Sue Winter, Lisa Buttery, Laura Gahan, Sam Taylor, and Emily Gagnon with Angie Hart and Hannah Macpherson.

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Visual arts practice for resilience: A guide for working with young people with complex needs

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Who might find this guide helpful?

- Trained community artists, youth workers and art therapists interested in using resilience ideas in their work with young people.
- Practitioners, parents and young people who already use resilience-based approaches.
- Policy makers and people interested in commissioning more arts for resilience projects.

What are the aims of the guide?

- To offer practical advice and ideas that are affordable and accessible, and can be put into practice with groups of young people.
- To show how you might put resilience theory into practice and facilitate art-based activities.

This isn't a one size fits all approach – some young people may benefit from collaborative work that helps them with their social skills. Others may want to develop a particular talent or skill set, so work will need to be sensitive to the needs of the individuals and the group.

Using the guide

We don't give step-by-step advice on how to do specific art processes e.g., how to mono-print or plaster cast. If these processes are new to you, we suggest you learn how to do them first, before attempting to teach others. All the examples of practical art activities that you might want to try out are enclosed in boxes throughout the document, linked to the aspects of resilience that we think can be promoted through each activity.

Introduction

Where has this work come from?

This guide has been written drawing on our experiences of a wider research project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, including a series of practical workshops called 'Make your Mark'. The project explored how community visual arts practice can help young people flourish and connect with their communities despite adverse experiences they may have faced. The research focused on young people with disabilities and young people facing mental health challenges, and explored the potential resilience benefits of visual arts for these people.

A series of collaborative art workshops were held in Brighton in the spring of 2012 as part of the research project. Young people with moderate learning disabilities and young people facing mental health challenges participated in the workshops, which explored creativity and ideas of self and belonging. The project also involved a review of existing research findings in this area, including academic literature in the fields of resilience research, disability studies, arts for health practice, and geographies of health and impairment, and on what is known as 'grey literature' housed on community and policy websites.

This resource has been developed drawing on our research findings, the practical experience of running art workshops for young people, and from the work that Professor Angie Hart and collaborators have been doing for a number of years, putting resilience theory into practice. The research was a collaboration between the University of Brighton, and community partners Art in Mind, which is a Brighton-based volunteer project for young people aged 16-25 who have experience of mental health issues, and boingboing, a social enterprise focusing on supporting children and young people to develop resilience. All those involved in the research, including the young people who participated in the art workshops, contributed to the development of this resource.

To give you a flavour of what the young people who participated in our project thought about it, there are quotes throughout the guide from some of the young people who were able to give verbal feedback about their experience of the art workshops.

We hope you find this resource helpful. However, it is not designed to replace the work of art therapists. In fact in the wrong hands we understand it is possible that art workshops with vulnerable people may cause more harm than good - so make sure you have appropriate support in place and that you do not work with people beyond your capacity or qualifications.

What do we mean by resilience?



Self portrait by James

There are so many definitions of 'resilience'. For the purpose of this research we've defined 'resilience' as the ability to do well despite stressful life challenges, and to achieve good outcomes against the odds.

We know that disabled people and those with mental health issues face enormous adversity, not just as a result of the demands of managing their impairments or mental health, but because of disability discrimination and prejudice. In order to combat this, young people need to be supported to develop resilience.

But how do you help a young person become more resilient? Professor Angie Hart and collaborators have been looking at the resilience theory and seeing how it can be applied in practice to help children and young people withstand and recover from stressful life challenges, strengthened and more resourceful. Angie and others have come up with a resilience framework (see the Appendix) that helps translate the resilience theory into practice. The Resilience Framework (adapted from Hart, Blincow, & Thomas, 2007) is a way of working with children and young people that offers a coherent framework for finding the best ways of helping them to get through when life is particularly tough.

This resilience approach puts theory into practice so that young people, parents and practitioners can use the method in their daily lives. It is an evidence-based and user-friendly way of working with disadvantaged children and young people. The Resilience Framework takes its inspiration from resilience theories, research and practice experience, and highlights the ordinary things that need to happen to foster resilience in children and young people facing adversity. It's been tried and tested over a number of years. We applied the Resilience Framework to the design and delivery of 'Make your Mark', the 10 week art workshops with young people. This resource draws on all aspects of our research.

The Resilience Framework takes the knowledge from resilience research, experience and practice, and organises it into a framework under five compartments – Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping, and Core Self – each of which includes a range of quite specific principles or techniques to use when trying to help a young person build their resilience. For more information about the Resilience Framework, and Resilient Therapy, the approach behind it, have a look at the www.boingboing.org.uk website.

Applying the Resilience Framework to a programme of art activities

Basics

“What “Basics” does is to put the ordinary events and the practical things that go on in life into the spotlight, because they are truly significant.” (Aumann & Hart, 2009, p. 55).

You need to think about providing the 'Basics' for young people to participate in an art project. Somewhere they'll feel safe, secure and able to express themselves with appropriate people to support them.

So what are the 'Basics' you'll need to get started?

- **A venue** – ideally an art studio space that's large enough for a group of between 8-10 young people to work in, where it won't matter if they make a mess. You'll need access to a sink to wash art equipment.
- **A budget for art materials** to buy a range of materials and equipment. It's a good idea not to spend all the money right at the start, but to keep some to buy materials during the project that the young people might especially want to use.

- **Workers and volunteers** who are trained and experienced in working with young people with disabilities and those facing mental health challenges. Discuss the aims of the project beforehand, agree ground rules, and clarify roles and responsibilities before you start.
- **Digital camera** to photograph young people taking part in the project.
- **Refreshments** – have a range of food and drink. Some young people might not have eaten anything beforehand.
- **Risk assess** whatever you're doing in relation to the group of young people you're working with.

Example of facilitator rules:

- Accept and respect young people's creative self-expression.
- Trust in young people's creative processes.
- Suggest ideas rather than direct young people in their artistic process.
- Respect young people's artwork without intervening or adding to it.
- Respect young people's right to participate at levels they feel comfortable with.
- Contribute to group feedback.
- Accept young people's mental health and disabilities, and provide appropriate support.
- Provide other co-workers with constructive feedback.
- Reflect on own artistic and creative expectations, and not let them interfere with young people's creative process.

Suggested session structure

Welcome activity. When beginning the session it is important that young people have a ten to fifteen minute gathering time when they can have a drink and snack as other young people arrive. While young people are arriving it is good to have a welcome activity organised. This is a gathering time activity that gives young people something to do while the rest of the group are arriving. Choose an activity that can be fun, easy to achieve, and can help young people to tune into being in the room and allow them to focus on being creative, which can help ease anxiety. The 'Scribble In' activity outlined in this guide is a really useful welcome activity as it creates a ritual and helps young people to check into the group (see activity box on p. 9 for details).

Check in. After the welcome activity the session can begin with a group check in. Remind everyone of the ground rules / group agreement before going over what the group will be doing that week, as well as reviewing what was done the previous week. Going through ground rules can help create a sense of safety by encouraging young people to know the agreed way of behaving. Feelings of safety can also be encouraged by communicating a clear structure for the session plan and weekly sessions in order that the young people know what to expect. Note that a clear session plan need not prevent the activities themselves being creative and open ended.

Main activity. This can be one of the suggested activities in this resource that can help young people build resilience, confidence and encourage self-expression.

Ending the session. Each week it is important to have clear endings for group art sessions. It is important to have time to review young people's art work and affirm the work that they have produced. It is also important to remind young people when they will meet again and what they will do. This helps them leave with good feelings and wanting to return for the next session.

Debrief after session for workers. We'd recommend making time to debrief at the end of each session to discuss how people are feeling, their perception of how the session went, and how participants seem to be experiencing the workshops, what went well, what didn't go so well, and what to do differently next time.

Making a group agreement / agreeing ground rules

To ensure the group members feel comfortable and 'safe' in the group, it's a good idea to agree clear boundaries to work within, so we'd strongly recommend that you discuss and draw up a Group Agreement together at the start of the project.



Group agreement is pegged on the wall as a reminder of the group ground rules

Resilience Framework Compartment: Basics

Activity: Making a group agreement

It's important to make time at the start of the project to do this. Depending on how much time you have, and the cognitive ability of the group, participants could come up with how they would like to work together over the length of the project, and what would help them feel comfortable and safe within the group. They could do drawings to explore this. The three points our group agreed were: To respect one another (which includes each other's artwork); to keep safe (this could be regarding what they choose to share with the group as well as paying attention to health and safety risks when using equipment or materials); to have fun (emphasising that they have a choice in everything they do). We also suggest that you highlight that there is no right or wrong way to be creative. The agreement should be put up each week and flagged up as a reminder at subsequent sessions.

Aims of the activity:

- To encourage young people to feel safe in the group, and have a shared understanding about the expectation of how they'll be together.
- To encourage young people to feel free from prejudice and discrimination while participating in the group workshops.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Card; coloured pens; letter stamps to stamp their names on the agreement.

“What I’ve enjoyed most about coming to these workshops is the opportunity to do something creative. I’ve not had the chance to do that a lot. Lately I’ve had a lot of things going on [...] and I’ve not really had the chance to [...] have a day where I can just relax and not think about studying or work or anything, where I can just come and do some art and be creative [...] in an island of space where I don’t have to worry about anything.” (Gemma – art project participant)

Resilience Framework Compartment: Basics**Welcome activity:** Favourite food

Together on a large sheet of paper on the floor or large table participants draw or paint their favourite food using paints, marker pens, felt tips.

Aims of the activity:

- To promote discussion about favourite foods, healthy diet, group cohesion.
- To provide a way of sharing personal information safely.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Roll of newsprint paper laid out across the floor; water-based gouache ready-mixed paints in plates with paint brushes; Posca pens; felt tips and markers.



Emily K chooses some grapes

Resilience Framework Compartment: Basics

Activity: Scribble In

Choose one ritual to use as a check in while young people are gathering at the beginning of the session. On newsprint you can simply ask them to scribble how they are feeling that day, or the mode of transport they used, or what they had for breakfast, their favourite animal etc. Once everyone has arrived it would be good to make reference to the Scribble In and what everyone has drawn as a check in to start the session.

Aims of the activity:

- To create a ritual at the beginning of the session.
- Provide a clear indication that the session has started.
- To provide a sense of structure to promote feelings of safety and security.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Newsprint; felt tip pens.

“Being in a group motivates me and reminds me that I am not uncreative and that it is there, it is just that I need to be in the right environment in order to do it.” (Laura – art project participant)

Belonging

“Everyone needs to feel they belong. Even though we are each an individual, we need to belong to groups, however informal, that accept us. Whether it’s family, friends, school mates, work colleagues, even the place we live, it’s the way we create our sense of ourselves, our identity. It’s a basic part of being human and very strong in us all.” (Aumann & Hart, 2009, p. 87).

We can’t stress enough the importance of creating an atmosphere where young people feel relaxed, welcomed, accepted, included and can have some fun. This will help them explore and express themselves freely. To promote young people feeling part of the group, a sense of ‘belonging’ to it and the project, we’d suggest it’s really important that you build in plenty of collaborative art activities that they can do together, or activities they can work on with other members of the group or alongside one another.

A crucial role of any workers on the project is to help young people feel part of the group, connect with one another, and support them to explore their sense of place within their community in a creative way.

“When I’m doing all my art I feel like I belong here and it’s a happy big family just doing art together, so it does make me happy when I come here and I belong to the group, so it’s quite nice just to know that.” (Emily K – art project participant)

To foster a sense of belonging make sure that at the first session you:

- Welcome and greet young people at the front door as they arrive.
- Introduce them to everyone.
- Have an activity that they can get on with / join in with as soon as they arrive.
- When everyone’s arrived and made their name labels get group to do self introductions and say what their favourite food is (helpful to make a note of these to buy for exhibition or for future workshops).

Resilience Framework Compartment: Belonging

Activity: Creating personalised name labels

Each person makes their own name label and decorates it however they choose.

Aims of the activity:

- To engage young people as soon as they arrive (so no one is hanging about awkwardly till everyone is there).
- To have a very non-threatening activity for them to do.
- For the young people to express themselves through the choice of design and materials they choose to make their name label.
- For young people and workers to learn one another’s names.
- To encourage young people to make friends and mix with each other.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Different coloured card; stencils; LetraSet; pens; letter print stamps; collage materials; glue; laminator; double-sided sticking tape.



Marta, Zac and Gemma help each other wash their plaster casts

Resilience Framework Compartment: Belonging

Activity: Making a large group name design

Together, round a large sheet of paper on the floor, participants put their name onto the paper using a plastic 'creature' dipped in paint, attached to 'fishing rods' (bamboo canes) with string to make a large, colourful, shared name design.

Aims of the activity:

- To encourage young people to gain a sense of group ownership and belonging.
- To promote a sense of fun, group cohesion, and a way of learning each other's names.
- To help young people feel that they have found somewhere for them to belong.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Roll of 'Fabriano' paper laid out across the floor; water-based gouache ready-mixed paints (each person chooses what colour they want to use); bamboo canes; string; plastic 'creatures' with tentacles (from the Pound Shop); plastic containers large enough to dip the creatures in.

"I've got to know my friend Marta from work better by doing this. I told her about the project and she wanted to come too. I didn't know her that well but now I have met [her partner] and they are really interesting and inspiring people to be around so that has been a really good benefit for me." (Laura – art project participant)

Resilience Framework Compartment: Belonging

Activity: Personalising a photo album

Participants personalise a photo album using a choice of a variety of materials. On subsequent sessions participants fill it with photos taken at the previous session.

Aims of the activity:

- Having a personalised photo album serves as a reminder of what they've done each week.
- To serve as a record of all they've achieved during the project once it's finished.
- To help young people realise that they belong, and that this is a place where they can focus on good times and places.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

6x4in small flip photo albums; PVA glue; glitter; sequins; Posca Pens (write on most materials); stickers; coloured insulation tape; scissors; foam sheets; photos of each participant, the group and individuals' artwork.



Lisa's mono-print of her home town Brighton

Resilience Framework Compartment: Belonging

Activity: Mono-print of what you like about where you live

For the young people to think about what they like about the village / town / city that they live in – significant places, atmosphere, culture, people, things. You could go out together as a group to take photos, or individuals could bring pictures they've got or taken themselves. From the material they've gathered, the young people make a mono-print to illustrate this. Put the final prints up on the wall and anyone who wants to can explain a bit more about their printed picture. Be aware that some young people may find this too exposing, or might not be able or feel confident to talk in a group. Don't make any assumptions about who will or will not want to speak about their work.

Aims of the activity:

- For the young people to reflect on what they like, or who and what's important in their life.
- For them to learn how to mono-print.
- To help young people to understand their place in the world.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Images of the village, town, city where the young people live e.g., famous landmarks, the surrounding countryside; camera; plastic sheets for mono-printing on; ink rollers; printing inks; paper; newsprint; pens.

Learning

“This not only includes school education, but also helping with their life skills, talents and interests.” (Aumann & Hart, 2009, p. 135).

There are a number of learning outcomes for young people taking part in an arts-based resilience project:

- To learn about themselves, each other and how to relate in a group.
- To learn new art processes: e.g., mono-printing, plaster casting, stencil-making, tie-dyeing.
- To learn what materials and art processes they enjoy or don't like working with.
- To learn to express themselves not only verbally but through the artwork they make.
- To problem solve e.g., when making or designing something.
- To co-operate with one another when they are working on collaborative activities.

Depending on the cognitive ability of the group, you can explore what resilience means, why it's important, talk about the Resilience Framework and how each activity relates to it. We used old antique bottles, each with a Resilience Framework Compartment's label on them, and talked about how building resilience might be described as 'filling up each of these bottles', and paying attention to when one is getting a bit empty.

Resilience Framework Compartment: Learning

Activity: Designing and making plaster cast plaques

Making plaster casts using small objects that have significant meaning or creating designs. A suggested theme would be to find and choose objects which symbolise what the young people want to achieve in life.

Aims of activity:

- For young people to learn how to make plaster casts.
- To express themselves through their choice of objects and designs.
- To encourage young people to think about their career and life plan.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Participants bring in their own small objects that can be pushed into clay (and washed afterwards); a selection of small objects (for those who forget to bring anything); Rocco red clay; rolling pins; short lengths of wood (for 'walls' to create a mould); fine plaster for casting; rubber gloves (for mixing plaster); bowls to mix plaster; water; plastic sheet for young people to make their clay mould on; tarpaulin or large plastic covering for surfaces (easier to remove the spilled plaster).

Resilience Framework Compartment: Learning

Collaborative activity: Making bunting for final exhibition

Participants spray water-based paints onto a large cloth. When dry, in pairs, they rip it into strips, cut it into various lengths and then staple onto lengths of ribbon or string.

Aims of activity:

- To learn how to make bunting.
- To have fun together.
- To use bunting to decorate venue for final exhibition.
- To encourage young people to help with the organisation of the exhibition.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Watered down gouache paints; empty plastic house plant spray bottles; large white or cream cotton or calico cloth; stapler and staples; ribbon or string.

“I find watching people like Pearce and Emily and Zac and Callum, how they deal with the day ahead of them and the task ahead of them and they are all such different people and it is just good to see and understand what upsets them and what doesn't and you know learn about myself and about different people by seeing what they are up to.” (Laura – art project participant)

Resilience Framework Compartment: Learning

Activity: Group collage

As a group make a group collage using paints and collage material. As a facilitator you could suggest a theme, such as the seasons, a day at the sea side, or the area we live in. Allow young people to negotiate their ideas with other group members safely, and encourage them as a group to produce a group collage.

Aim of activity:

- To develop life skills through group collaboration, negotiation and discussion of ideas. If young people have problems with verbalising their thoughts this can be done in silence or through non-verbal communication.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

A large sheet of paper laid out in the centre of the room; paints; sequins; feathers; cardboard; straws; other materials for group members to use.



Marta teaches Pierce to make 3D buildings from foamboard

“I have really enjoyed the project because I am normally quite a closed person and I just enjoy working in my own space and not talking to people and I don't like anyone talking to me. So it has been different working in this shared space in a group. Working in a group it is really different because you have ideas but then you see others and you share ideas.” (Marta – art project participant)

Resilience Framework Compartment: Learning

Activity: Group Totem Pole

Create a group Totem Pole using rings of clay and materials from nature that highlight what young people have achieved while participating on the course. As a group, using clay and materials from nature, encourage young people to make a group Totem Pole. Allow young people to create their own part of the totem pole then as a group encourage them to discuss how they would shape and mould their Totem Pole together.

Aims of activity:

- To encourage young people to think about what they have achieved while participating in the workshops.
- To explore how it can feel to express themselves individually and as a group.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Air drying clay; feathers; flowers; seeds; shells; leaves; anything from outside; wooden standing pole.

Be aware that as workers you are role models and the young people are learning from how you are.

Coping

“Coping is about building up a particular set of skills in children to help them get by in everyday life.” (Aumann & Hart, 2009, p. 137)

Being able to express what we feel is one of the ways which can help us ‘cope’ with life. For some children and young people, expressing themselves verbally may not be possible or may be particularly challenging. Making art can be an alternative way of expressing themselves. Problem solving is one key skill to have in order to cope with life’s challenges. Making art can help a young person learn problem solving skills. For example trying out the materials to see which ones work or don’t work to translate an idea into something visual – a painting, sculpture, print or installation can hone problem solving skills. Or finding a way to make green paint when you only have blue, yellow and red. You may have to learn from trial and error – mixing blue and red will make purple paint, but if you mix blue and yellow it’ll turn green! Solving these problems might boost a young person’s confidence that they may be able to apply to other areas of their lives.

Resilience Framework Compartment: Coping

Activity: Group painting

Cover a large table with white paper and enough space for all group members to fit around the paper. On the table provide paint, water and brushes. Then ask everyone to paint in the space in front of them for ten minutes. After ten minutes ask each group member to move on to the next person’s space to their left and paint. Repeat this until all young people have moved around the table and have painted in all other people’s spaces. Encourage the group to then look at the painting they have created collaboratively as a group.

Aim of activity:

- To encourage young people to work collaboratively, share group space, and negotiate personal boundaries.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Paint; brushes; water containers; water; palettes.

“[...] if you’re gonna be resilient, you need to be able to cope with anything negative that happens and come up with ways to get around that and sort of [...] improving social networking skills as well, because I used to find it quite hard to talk to new people, I was really shy [...] so I would sit and everyone would think, ‘well what’s the matter with her?’ But now that I’ve come here and changed, [...] grown as a person, I find it a bit easier. It’s still a little bit difficult sometimes, but I’m finding it easier just to get chatting to people I don’t know.” (Gemma – art project participant)



Gemma with her calming mobile created for her relaxing personal tent

Resilience Framework Compartment: Coping

Activity: Bravery masks

Encourage young people to create masks that have special powers, so that when they wear the mask it helps them feel strong and brave. Once masks have been created ask all young people to move around the room wearing their masks, acting confident and powerful.

Aim of activity:

- To encourage young people to create masks which metaphorically embody bravery, confidence and power.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Paper plates; card; sequins; feathers; tissue paper; straws; string; scissors; glue. You could also provide mask templates for young people to decorate if you think they are going to struggle technically with making masks.

Resilience Framework Compartment: Coping

Activity: Talking robots

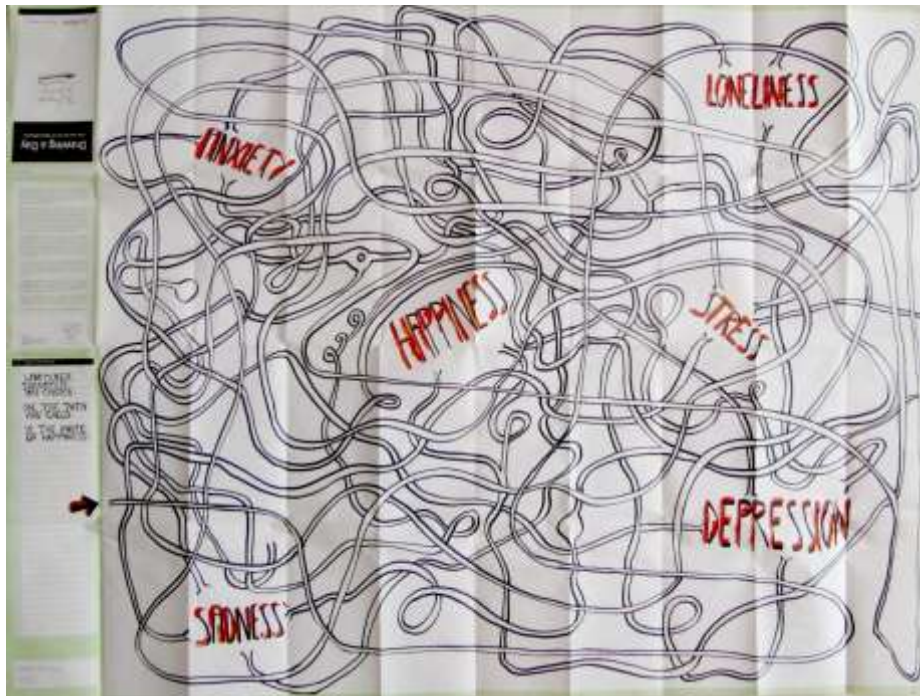
Using junk and cardboard materials in pairs ask young people to create their own cardboard robot. Once robots are made ask young people to encourage their robots to speak to each other about their experience of participating in art workshops.

Aims of activity:

- To problem solve with a partner.
- To explore identity and communication.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Card; tubes; used chocolate boxes, cleaned milk cartons, shoe boxes etc.



Marta's Emotion Map showing the route to happiness

Resilience Framework Compartment: Coping

Activity: Squiggle exercise

Ask group members to form pairs. Using a sheet of sugar paper and a crayon, ask one of the pair to first draw a squiggle, and then their partner to copy their squiggle, drawing a mirror image of it if possible. This continues until the pair have created a drawing together.

Aims of activity:

- To encourage communication, unspoken connection and validation.
- To promote relationship building through copying and imitating their partner.
- To encourage young people to lean on others when necessary.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Marker pens; sugar paper.

"It's built my confidence up, like I can travel on the bus without getting nervous. And when I go home I feel all good about myself, I get on better with my family 'cos if I'm doing art and I'm expressing my feelings about things like college and stuff, and then when I go home and see my family, well my foster family and I feel really cuddly and really happy." (Emily – art project participant)

Core Self

“Instil a sense of hope; help the child to know her/himself; teach the child to understand other people’s feelings; help the child take responsibility for her/himself; foster their talents.” (Aumann & Hart, 2009, p. 203)

Expressing ourselves through art can help us gain a better understanding of who we are, what’s important to us, and give us a clear sense of our own identity. Through all the art activities, it’s important to offer as much choice as possible, to the young people. The colours we like, the textures and materials we respond to, all say a lot about who we are and how we’re feeling.



“Just like when I come out to come here, when I’m doing all the art, it’s just the expression and the stuff that I like, so expressing my feelings, how I’m feeling in the daytime. Cos, if you notice [...] when I’m colourful and stuff, that’s cos I’m happy. And then when I do dull stuff it’s ‘cos I’m sad, so it’s just to express my feelings, so it’s really nice.” (Emily – art project participant)

Emily K paints her self-portrait in bright colours

Resilience Framework Compartment: Core Self

Activity: Designing and making stencils

Individuals design and create their own stencils. Ask young people to choose an image which symbolises something they are talented in or good at e.g., a fishing rod, camera, ballet shoes, paint brush etc.

Aim of activity:

- For young people to reflect on and feel good about their talents.
- To learn how to make stencil designs.
- To express something about themselves through their choice of designs.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Thin foam craft sheets; pens; scissors; craft knives; cutting boards.

“I think that it’s all innate interests and things that I might not necessarily show or display or talk to people about, but the fact that I’m using a creative outlet for it means I can express them in a way I might not be able to if I was just going to talk to someone about it [...] and these are ideas that have [...] that I’m sort of interested in [...] quite important to me, or that I’ve picked up and incorporated into a sort of life philosophy.” (Gemma – art project participant)

Resilience Framework Compartment: Core Self

Activity: Personalising and decorating a tent / creating an installation in and around it

Explain that the tent will be theirs to keep and they can decorate it however they choose or put whatever they want to inside it. Explain that the idea of this is that their tent will express something about themselves, what’s important to them, or things they like, and that they can make whatever they want to on and in it.

Aim of activity:

- To encourage young people to know and express themselves.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Small one ‘person’ festival’ tents (these can be bought cheaply at the end of the summer season); Posca Pens (these paint pens draw on tent fabric); spray paints (can only be used outdoors with supervision); any other materials or equipment the young people request.



Laura starts work decorating the inside of her personal tent

Resilience Framework Compartment: Core Self

Collaborative activity: Putting up and hosting an exhibition

Aims of activity:

- To celebrate the young people's achievements.
- To showcase their artwork.
- For others to see what the young people have learnt and are capable of achieving.
- To have something concrete to work towards.
- To encourage young people to handle responsibility.
- For young people to learn how to curate and mount an exhibition.
- To have a clear ending for the project.

Suggested equipment / materials to use:

Examples of the young people's artwork that they've chosen to exhibit; staple gun; blue tack; name labels to credit everyone's work; an explanation board about the project; the young people's photo albums; a 'thank you' list of everyone who's been involved and acknowledges any funders; some way for people to feedback about what they thought of the project (we used a feedback tree – where people wrote their feedback onto labels and tied them onto the branches of a home-made tree); refreshments.



The whole group prepares for and hosts the final exhibition of their work

Resilience Framework Compartment: Core Self

Collaborative activity: Printing picnic cloth with stencils

Each participant makes prints onto a large white cloth using their stencils. Encourage young people to individually make their picnic cloth, and ask group members to print their stencil on each other's picnic cloth. The picnic cloth can be taken home and used as a memory aid so that young people can remember what they achieved and the good relationships they built while participating in the art workshops.

Aims of activity:

- To create a memory aid that instils a sense of hope for what they have achieved and can achieve.
- To work together to create individual cloths that can be taken home at the end of the project.
- To learn how to make prints on cloth using stencils.

Suggested materials / equipment to use:

Acrylic paints; stencils; stencil brushes or washing up sponges dipped in paint; large sheet of white or cream calico or cotton.

Using the foundation principles behind the Resilience Framework

As we said earlier, the Resilience Framework is adapted from Resilient Therapy (Hart et al., 2007). Resilient Therapy has an underpinning set of principles which support the application of the framework. Known as the 'noble truths' they are: Enlisting, Acceptance, Commitment and Conserving. We suggest that you draw on these four 'noble truths' when conceptualising, developing and delivering art projects with young people.

Enlisting

You can't do it all on your own. It's important to have the right people involved. Having experienced people, with a sound grounding in working with young people facing mental health challenges and disabled young people, is crucial to the success of a project. Get the right people on board at the very start. Don't forget you are 'modelling' resilient ways of working together. Throughout the art workshops, support the young people to see where it might be helpful to 'enlist' someone else's help. For example, when making a piece of art, make it clear that 'collaborating' and 'supporting' one another can be positive and can promote resilient moves.

Acceptance

You may not know what negative life experiences the young people taking part may have had, or how someone's mental health, sensory impairment, physical or learning disability may impact on them. It's important to approach working with them with a

non-judgmental attitude. The group agreement that you draw up together with the young people at the start of the project should reflect this principle. For example, having a more in-depth conversation about what exactly we meant by, “Respect each other”.

Commitment

However long the project is going to last, it's important that everyone involved makes a commitment to the duration of it. For young people to feel secure, it helps to have consistency and continuity with all the workers involved. It's also important for the young people to understand the importance of their commitment to being part of the group and to prioritise attending sessions.

“Because I've started the project I like to see how it continues, and how it's going to end, and because there's an end product with the exhibition, I feel that coming every week and contributing is really important, something important to me, because I feel then that once I've started something I like to see it through to the end.” (Gemma – art project participant)

“It's good for me, I learn from it. I wouldn't have any art in my week or in my life if it wasn't for doing stuff like this and as well I feel responsible towards the group because once you are part of a group you are responsible to it [...] and you let people down if you don't show up.” (Laura – art project participant)

Conserving

This is about finding anything positive to build on, however small that might be. Sometimes you have to really search for something, but it might prove to be the key to a young person's continuing involvement and development.

Conclusion

We hope you've found the guide useful and you're able to put into practice some of these art activities to promote resilience with young people. Please remember not to work beyond your skill level and take advice from those more experienced if necessary. As we said in the introduction, in the wrong hands, art workshops can cause more damage than good, so be careful what you do. That said, we'd be very interested to hear how you've used the guide and to share experience and practice. You can contact Sue Winter at sue.winter@icloud.com, Sam Taylor at www.artinmind.co.uk, or contact any of us via www.boingboing.org.uk.



Other practical guides for arts practitioners, foster carers, parents, young people and workers

- Camilleri, V. A. (Ed.) (2007). *Healing the inner city child: Creative arts therapies with at-risk youth*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Carey, L. (Ed.) (2006). *Expressive and creative arts methods for trauma survivors*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Chambers, H. (2013). Looked after children, carers and culture. Retrieved from <http://www.ncb.org.uk/what-we-do/vulnerable-children/looked-after-children-carers-and-culture>
- Ciardiello, S. (2007). Review the books: Group work activities in generalist practice and Creative therapy: 52 exercises for individuals and groups. *Social Work with Groups: A Journal of Community and Clinical Practice*, 30(4), 108-111.
- Coholic, D. (2010). *Arts activities for children and young people in need: Helping children develop mindfulness, spiritual awareness and self-esteem*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Darley, S., & Heath, W. (2007). *The expressive arts activity book: A resource for professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Gabriels, R. L., & Gaffey, L. J. (2012). Art therapy with children on the autism spectrum. In C. A. Malchiodi (Ed.), *Handbook of art therapy* (2nd ed.) (pp. 205-221). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Jenkins, K. (2000). Mental health and the arts: working together. *The Bulletin of Good Practice in Popular Education*, 5, 51-53.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2012). *Handbook of art therapy* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Myths and Mirrors (2012). Myths and Mirrors community arts. Retrieved from <http://mythsandmirrors.wordpress.com/>
- Nind, M. (2008). *Conducting qualitative research with people with learning, communication and other disabilities: Methodological challenges*. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper. Southampton: National Centre for Rese.
- Randall, P. (1997). *Art works! Prevention programs for youth & communities*. Rockville, MD: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

Other sources of information and recommended resources:

- Aumann, K., & Hart, A. (2009). *Helping children with complex needs bounce back: Resilient Therapy for parents and professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hart, A., Blincow, D., & Thomas, H. (2007). *Resilient Therapy: working with children and families*. London: Routledge.
- Springham, N. (2008). Through the eyes of the law: What is it about art that can harm people? *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 13(2), 65-73.

www.boingboing.org.uk
www.makingisconnecting.org
www.start2.co.uk
www.artinmind.co.uk



Resilience Framework (children and young people) Oct 2012. Adapted from Angie Hart and Derek Blincow (2007) www.boingboing.org.uk

Broad areas	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
Specific approaches	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
		Help child/YP understand their place in the world			
	Enough money to live	Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP	Solving problems	Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
		Keep relationships going			
	Being safe	The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
		Take what you can relationships where there is some hope			
	Access & transport	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Fostering their interests	Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself
		Responsibilities & obligations			
	Healthy diet	Focus on good times and places	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster their talents
		Exercise and fresh air			
	Enough sleep	Make sense of where child/YP has come from	Develop life skills	Lean on others when necessary	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
		Predict a good experience of someone or something new			
Play & leisure	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs		Have a laugh		
NOBLE TRUTHS – underpinnings					
ACCEPTING		CONSERVING		COMMITMENT	
				ENLISTING	

