

# Employability Newsletter: Psychology and the arts



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## Welcome Letter from Editor

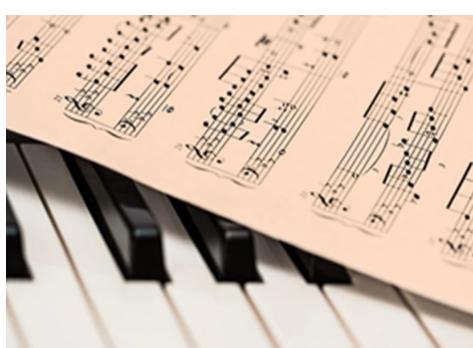
Welcome to this Newsletter, which outlines careers related to psychology that use the arts. This can involve using the arts therapeutically to improve mental health and wellbeing (for example, using the visual arts to help children communicate their feelings in art psychotherapy). It also covers how applied areas of psychology can use the arts (e.g., health psychologists can use visual methods to help patients describe pain); and finally discusses how the arts can be used as a research tool (e.g., using creative methods in qualitative research to help deepen understanding of lived experience). I hope that this Newsletter will be informative and interesting, whether you have a passion for the arts yourself, whether you are interested in working with people therapeutically, or interested in conducting psychological research in your careers (in which case an understanding of how the arts can help will be useful!).

**Dr Nicola Holt**



## The arts in psychotherapy

Psychotherapy involves talking with a trained professional to help improve mental health or reduce emotional distress. There are various types of psychotherapy that focus on using the arts to help people express their feelings. This is based on the idea that talking is not always enough, or the most effective way, for experience to be explored and shared, especially for groups who may find talking difficult. Art-based psychotherapies have protected titles, by the Health and Care Professions Council, and accredited training is required. They include art therapy, music therapy, dramatherapy and dance and movement therapy. Each art form has unique benefits, tapping into imagery, embodiment, storytelling and metaphor, which may help people to express, communicate and gain insights about themselves in psychotherapy. These experiences are shared in a therapeutic space and discussed through traditional talking methods (e.g., psychodynamic psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy).



# The arts in psychotherapy

Here you will find brief descriptions of the main art-based psychotherapies, links to their professional bodies and accredited training, to videos exemplifying practice and review papers examining the evidence base in a specific context.



## Art therapy

**What is it?** Art therapy is a type of psychotherapy that uses the visual arts, including painting, drawing, clay work and sculpture, to help people express their thoughts and feelings. Art therapists may work within various traditions, such as psychodynamic, cognitive behavioural or mindfulness-based psychotherapy, so do also including 'talking therapy'. However, visual art is used to help people access and explore experiences that can be difficult to put into words. Art therapists are skilled with using art tools (e.g., neat pencil drawing versus messy acrylic paints) to fit with people's needs and preferences. Art therapy is used in a range of settings, including hospitals, schools, prisons and community hubs, and with a wide range of ages and diagnoses. You can learn more about art therapy as a career [here](#).

**Professional organisation:** [The British Association of Art Therapists](#).

**Training:** To practice as an art therapist it is necessary to complete training that is approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). There are 11 courses currently, and you can learn about them and the entry requirements [here](#).

**Video:** Here is a [video](#) about art therapy as a career from NHS Health Careers.

**Systematic review:** Regev, D., & Cohen-Yatziv, L. (2018). Effectiveness of art therapy with adult clients in 2018—what progress has been made? *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1531. [Link](#).



## Music therapy

**What is it?** Music therapy uses music, sound and rhythm to help people to communicate and to improve their well-being in psychotherapy. This can be one-to-one or in groups. Again, music therapists may work with a broad range of people, and choose to specialise in certain areas, such as child development, adults with learning difficulties or dementia care. You can learn more about music therapy as a career [here](#).

**Professional organisation:** [The British Association of Music Therapy](#) (BAMT).

**Training:** Training approved by the Health and Care Professions Council is required. You can find details [here](#).

**Video:** [Here](#) is an introduction to music therapy from the BAMT.

**Systematic review:** Aalbers, S., Fusar-Poli, L., Freeman, R. E., et al. (2017). Music therapy for depression. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (11). [Link](#).



## Dramatherapy

**What is it?** Drama therapy is less commonly used than music and art therapy. Dramatherapists use storytelling, role playing, puppetry, voice and movement to help improve wellbeing, through imagination and insights gained through expression. You can learn about working as a dramatherapist in the NHS [here](#).

**Training:** Training must be accredited by the HCPC: you can find details [here](#).

**Professional organisation:** [The British Association of Drama Therapy](#).

**Video:** [Here](#) is a video of a dramatherapist in the NHS describing her work.

**Systematic review:** Feniger-Schaal, R., & Orkibi, H. (2020). Integrative systematic review of drama therapy intervention research. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 14(1), 68–80. [Link](#).



## Dance and Movement Therapy

**What is it?** Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) uses the movement of the body and dance in psychotherapy to help communicate with and relate to others. Again, it is a form of psychotherapy used for diverse populations, from children to older adults, and for people with lived experience of various diagnoses, including anxiety, depression and Parkinson's disease. You can learn more about the profession [here](#).

**Professional organisation:** [The Association for Dance Movement Psychotherapy](#) (ADMP).

**Training:** This is not protected by the HCPC, but training accredited by the ADMP is required, through one of three [post-graduate courses](#).

**Video:** [Here](#) someone who experienced diagnosis of an eating disorder explains how DMT helped them.

**Systematic review:** Pessoa, R. F., Neves, C. M., & Ferreira, M. E. C. (2019). Dance therapy in aging: A systematic review. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 19(2), 1180-1187. [Link](#).



## Poetry therapy

**What is it?** The use of poetry and other forms of creative writing within psychotherapy is less established than the other art forms in the United Kingdom, but uses creative expression of the written or spoken word to help improve wellbeing (e.g., through making poems, reading poems, or

# The arts in applied psychology

Here you will find examples illustrating how the arts can be used in a range of psychology professions, including clinical psychology, occupational psychology, forensic psychology, educational psychology and health psychology.

other forms of creative writing, such as journaling). This enables the use of metaphor, free association, and meaning making through narration. The aim is to express feelings and memories in less linear and more creative ways than traditional talking therapies allow.

**Professional organisation:** [International association of Poetry Therapy](#).

**Training:** The term poetry therapy is not protected in the UK and courses are aimed at teaching existing psychotherapists how to embed creative writing into their practice, for example: [learn more](#).

**Systematic review:** Ramsey-Wade, C. E., & Devine, E. (2018). Is poetry therapy an appropriate intervention for clients recovering from anorexia? A critical review of the literature and client report. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46(3), 282-292. [Link](#).

**Video:** [Here](#) is short film from the BBC about how poetry can support wellbeing.

## The arts in applied psychology

In the previous section we described specific professions that use the arts within psychotherapy. However, the arts can be used in other psychological professions, and outside the context of psychotherapy. Rather than helping to provide material for talking therapies, art interventions can help with: relaxation and stress-reduction; developing a sense of community; communicating health symptoms, such as experiences of pain; and diagnosis, in the form of art-based, projective tests. In the current section we will give examples of how the arts can be used within applied psychology.



## Clinical psychology

**What is it?** [Clinical psychologists](#) use psychological theory and research to help improve people's mental wellbeing. This can involve psychotherapy, but also other evidence-based interventions, such as positive psychology interventions or interventions to help with memory recall for patients with dementia.

**Example of art-based intervention:** [Dr Kat Taylor](#) is a Clinical Psychologist who works with children and young people, and manages the Greater Manchester i-THRIVE Arts, Culture and Mental Health Programme. As part of this she developed a 'Creative Care Kit' for young people (aged 13-19), which was distributed to over 22,000 young people in Greater Manchester. The kit included a broad range of art based activities, from poetry to movement, and aimed to improve wellbeing and reduce feelings of loneliness during the coronavirus lockdowns. You can learn more about the project and download the kit [here](#).



### Example of art-based intervention:

[Dr Amee Baird](#) is a clinical neuropsychologist with an interest in music and dementia. For example, [one piece of work](#) investigated how, in a case of severe aphasia in dementia, shared music, in particular singing favourite songs, helped to foster recognition of a partner and carer (musical memories being better preserved in such cases).

## Health psychology

**What is it?** [Health psychologists](#) use knowledge of psychology to help improve people's health behaviours (e.g., smoking cessation, coping with a life-altering medical diagnosis, such as cancer, or managing a chronic condition, such as chronic pain or breathlessness).

**Example of art-based project:** Health psychologists can recommend and evaluate the impact of various arts for health interventions, as described in [this article](#), for example craft groups for people diag-



nosed with cancer to help improve wellbeing through social bonding and manage pain through absorption in making, or [singing for lung health interventions](#). The arts can be used not only to help manage health conditions but to help to understand the lived experience of those with a health condition and to disseminate this to the public. For example, health psychologist [Dr Jo Wray](#), who works at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, collaborated with an artist and bioengineer to use the arts to explore and share what it feels like to be a patient with heart disease. You can learn about their exhibition [here](#) and read about its impact [here](#).



## Occupational psychology

**What is it?** [Occupational psychologists](#) use psychological theory and research to optimise performance and wellbeing in the workplace, on an individual and organisational level.

**Example of art-based intervention:** [Vicky Elsey](#) is an occupational psychologist and academic based at Northumbria University. She researched the efficacy of the well-established [expressive writing](#) procedure for stress-reduction in the workplace. [Her research](#) supported the use of writing about intensely positive experiences in one's life, for 20-minutes a day, over three days, to improve workplace wellbeing. In particular, job satisfaction and stress were reported to decrease following the intervention (more so than in an active control condition).

# The arts in allied health professions

In this section we will explore additional careers where artists and managers work in health settings to improve people's wellbeing through the arts, including arts for health facilitators, social prescribing link workers and hospital art managers.

Art-based workplace interventions are varied and include writing [gratitude journals](#), [walls of gratitude](#), and activities to reduce stress, such as origami workshops for NHS staff run by [Dr Lizzie Burns](#).



## Educational psychology

**What is it?** [Educational psychologists](#) use psychological theory and research to optimise the experience of children in their schools and to support parents in helping meet their children's needs in the home environment.

**Example of art-based project:** Drawing, and drawing while talking, can be used to help children to communicate thoughts and preferences about school and learning. For example, [Jane Williams](#), a Senior Educational Psychologist with an interest in Autistic Spectrum Disorder developed the '[Drawing the Ideal School Technique](#)' to both help identify children's feelings about the school environment and reduce feelings of anxiety about school.



## Forensic psychology

**What is it?** [Forensic psychologists](#) use psychological theory and research to help understand criminal behaviour and develop interventions to help those detained in forensic settings.

**Example of art-based intervention:** Music interventions are commonly used in forensic settings, including choirs, singing, and making and writing music. For example, [Professor Laura Caulfield](#), at the University of Wolverhampton, [evaluated the impact](#) of a music programme run by a Youth Offending Team, reporting improved compliance, wellbeing and musical ability amongst those who participated.

## The arts in allied health professions

In the previous sections we have described how the arts can be used to help people express themselves in psychotherapy and how psychologists can use the arts to: learn about people's experiences; help improve care and management of health symptoms; and decrease stress in various settings. In the next section we will look at additional careers, that are non-psychological, but which work with the arts in the NHS and community care to help improve wellbeing and reduce emotional distress.



## Arts for health facilitators

**What are they?** Art for health facilitators are dancers, artists and musicians, who are not therapists or psychologists but who lead art-based workshops for different groups with the hope that this will improve their wellbeing. There is no formal training for this role, but many artist-led art interventions are commissioned by health providers and there is growing awareness of a need for training and supervision for this role as the use of arts for health interventions increases.

**Example:** [Dr Emily-Rose Cluderay](#) discusses her work as a dance for health practitioner, which led to her completing a PhD on the benefits of dance for new mothers at the University of Derby.

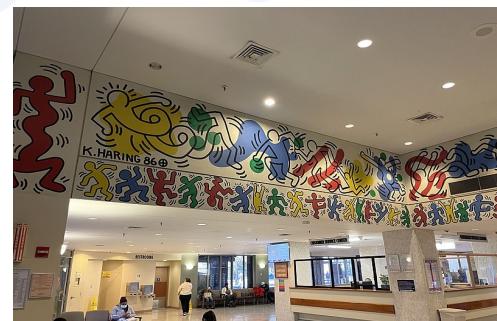
## Social prescribing link workers

**What are they?** Social prescribing refers to health professionals prescribing non-clinical, community-based activities for people, with the expectation that this will improve their psychosocial wellbeing. In its 'Long Term Plan' the NHS intends to embed social prescribing in every GP surgery over the next few years. Link-workers play a 'navigating role' and



discuss the various programmes available for 'prescription' with an individual and they work out together what their needs are and what programme they would like to try, such as nature walks, art, music or dance workshops, cookery or carpentry classes, yoga or sport, etc. This is a crucial role in the social prescribing process, that provides support for people through the process of joining a group and beyond.

**Professional body:** You can learn more about this role on the website of the [National Association of Link Workers](#).



## Hospital art managers

**What are they?** Did you know that many hospitals have an art programme that includes exhibitions, live music events, art for wellbeing workshops, the commissioning of artwork in the hospital—all aimed at using the arts to improve the wellbeing of staff and patients? Hospital art managers organise these events and activities. You can read about this role and qualifications needed in this [NHS factsheet](#).

**Example:** Southmead Hospital in Bristol has an arts programme called [Fresh Arts](#), which you can learn more about in this [wonderful film](#) about some of their work, including poetry on prescription and a department of kindness.

**Other roles** include **managers of community art programmes**, such as [ArtLift](#) in South Gloucestershire, and **arts for health evaluators** who are commissioned to demonstrate the impact of programmes, such as [Willis Newson](#), Bristol.

# Profile: Researching art and health

Dr Nicola Holt



This is an old picture of me, aged about 26, with peers at the end of a week-long art therapy 'Spring School'. I had a wonderful week and loved painting and making art with artists and psychotherapists, and was at a cross-roads. Should I train as an art psychotherapist or accept a PhD scholarship to do research on creativity and states of consciousness, part-time, while working as a research assistant? I chose the latter. Six years later, while working as a research fellow, I started wondering about art therapy again, and did a year-long foundation course in art therapy with Sheffield NHS Trust. I loved it, again, and again, had another dilemma at the end of the year, whether to train in art therapy or accept a position as a psychology lecturer. I chose the latter.

I felt more comfortable with my decision this time, I felt like a researcher, not a practitioner, I kept asking questions, and felt more comfortable working out why things worked, and wanted to help to build the evidence base for the arts and health.

I had always been interested in art, drawing and painting, especially, and, without fully realising it, used the arts (including poetry and music, too) to improve my wellbeing, throughout young adulthood. As a psychology undergraduate I was fascinated by what the psychology of perception could tell us about art, and did my dissertation on developmental psychology and children's drawings. In a masters degree on consciousness studies, I noticed states while painting that I came to understand as the flow state, as well as recognising the role of daydreams and dreams in the creative process, and interviewed artists about altered experiences while painting for my masters thesis, which led to a PhD exploring this from experimental and psychometric perspectives.

Since working as a psychology lecturer, my aim to build the evidence base for the arts and health had a slow start, while I found a balance between teaching and research, and became a mother (twice) and added maternity leave and childcare into the mix. My research has not necessarily gone in the directions I expected. I began using the experience sampling method to learn more about the mechanisms by which art can improve wellbeing in daily, life, tracking fluctuations in the conscious experience of artists around their art-making practice. I met an artist practitioner running art workshops at the MShed in Bristol and, with participants, we co-produced a method of evaluating its impact on wellbeing. This partnership expanded, and led to me evaluating the impact of art on prescription programmes in Bristol on wellbeing, tracking changes in mood and wellbeing over time, and conducting interviews with participants to learn about their experiences. More recently, I have been researching art on prescription in secondary care (in hospitals) and whether it can help with experiences of chronic health conditions, and art workshops for women who have experienced sexual violence. It has been really wonderful to work with these people and try to help build the evidence base for art on prescription, which has been severely lacking, and help to work out what the active ingredients are, to try to improve practice, too.

As my research has expanded in the last couple of years I've worked on additional, collaborative international projects, including a project with children in Kashmir, an area of conflict, using the arts to help children's wellbeing, and a project in South America, using the experience sampling method to identify the personal resources that help improve mood and mental health in everyday life (including use of the arts). Analyses of these are still underway, and I wonder what projects I will be working on next.

While all of the careers mentioned in this Newsletter have revolved around practice, and using the arts directly, to understand perspectives and improve wellbeing, it is important to note that methods are only used if they have a strong evidence base, and research careers are an important part of this process. Nevertheless I do wonder if I will start to look into training to become an art therapist again!

## Inspirations and links

[Art Therapy Northern Programme](#) where I did my training.

[Maureen Cox](#)'s work seeking to understand why young children 'draw what they know' rather than 'what they see', which inspired my undergraduate dissertation.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book [Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience](#), and Marion Milner's [On Not Being Able to Paint](#), which inspired my Master's dissertation.

A talk by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on the [experience sampling method](#) at the 2004 European Conference of Positive Psychology. I have been obsessed with the method ever since.

[Stanley Krippner](#) and [Charles Tart](#)'s work exploring altered states of consciousness in the 1960s, which inspired my PhD research (who I got to meet at conferences and who are still researching today).

[Gordon Claridge](#), who examined my PhD, and got me interested in creativity and schizotypy.

Andrea Gilroy for her book [Art Therapy, Research and Evidence-based Practice](#), which helped me realise that I wanted to be a researcher not a practitioner.

Theodore Stickley and Professor Di Crone for their pioneering research on art on prescription.

Artists Julie, Barbara and Becki at [CreativeShift](#), Bristol, who are pioneers of delivering art for wellbeing.

Donna Baber, programme manager at Fresh Arts, Bristol.

## My research

For links to some of the research I discuss in this profile, please refer to my [Researchgate](#) profile.

You can find out more about my [current research](#) on the arts and health here, too.

# Art as a research tool

In this section we will examine various art-based research methods, including photo-voice, journaling, timelines, story completion and body mapping (but many other methods exist, using poetry, performance, sculpture and film). The arts are also used to communicate research findings to the public (e.g., [animations](#)).

## Art as a research tool

Many psychology practitioners, such as clinical and health psychologists, are 'practitioner-researchers', conducting research in areas in which they specialise. We have seen that art is used in psychotherapy to help people access and communicate experiences—this also translates to research, where the use of the arts can lead to rich and nuanced data. Art-based or 'creative' research methods have been growing in popularity in recent years due to the depth they provide in qualitative research but also because they can be engaging and empowering for participants. In this section we will briefly introduce some art-based research methods.



## Photo-elicitation

**What is it?** Photo-elicitation or photovoice gives participants cameras to take photographs of aspects of their lives over a period of time. The photographs are then discussed and shared with a researcher to elicit more in-depth information. The method can not only provide visual information, but can engage and empower participants as co-researchers and lead to more in-depth interview data. There are even special cameras to help with this process: [Probetools](#).

**Example:** [Sibeoni et al. \(2017\)](#) used photo-elicitation to learn about the family interactions of adolescents receiving psychiatric care, and report that this led to new insights, provided autonomy and facilitated good research relationships.

## Visual journaling

**What is it?** Solicited journals can be used in research, alone, or alongside additional methods. These can include visual data such as drawings and scrapbooking to capture lived experience over a specific period of time.



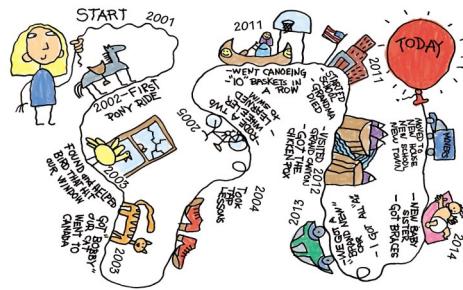
**Example:** [Minkoff and Riley \(2011\)](#) used drawing diaries with children to understand their use of time, along with rating scales and interviews. The latter helped to garner in-depth understanding of children's conceptions and art-work.



## Mapping

**What is it?** Drawing maps can be used in various ways to understand people's concepts and the relationships between them and places, people and communities—their 'mental maps' (e.g., drawing social maps or concept maps).

**Example:** [Gabb and Singh \(2014\)](#) describe the use of emotion maps, where emotion stickers were placed on a floor-plan of the home, over a period of time, to help track dynamics and changes in feelings in familial relationships.

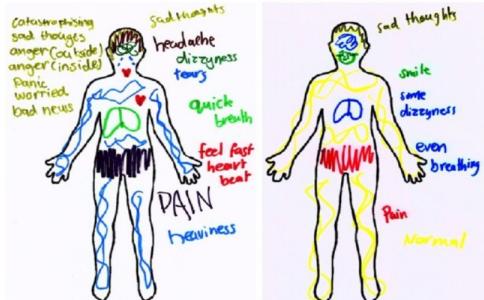


## Timelines

**What is it?** A method of eliciting key events in a person's personal history in relation to a specific event or aspect of identity, defining one's own concepts

rather than responding to predetermined interview questions. Timelines can be explored in more depth in interviews.

**Example:** [Mazzetti and Blenkinsopp \(2012\)](#) recommend visual timelines for investigating stress and coping, especially in organisations undergoing change. They argue that the method is more engaging and nuanced than questionnaire methods.



## Body mapping

**What is it?** Whole-body mapping is a participatory method that begins with tracing around a person's body to create an outline. This is then filled in to produce an image that reflects embodied experience in relation to a particular event or context.

**Example:** [Boydell et al. \(2018\)](#) used this method to explore experiences of a physical health intervention for young people diagnosed with psychosis, focusing on the embodied nature of health. The method not only facilitated reflection but was described as therapeutic by participants.



## Story completion

**What is it?** Story completion is a useful method for exploring attitudes to subjects, especially when these might be difficult to talk about. The method involves reading a 'story stem' written by the researcher/s and then writing what happens next.

**Example:** [Hayfield and Wood \(2018\)](#) used the story completion method with bitstrips (creating digital comic strips) to explore understandings of sexuality and appearance, arguing that combined writing and visual data enabled deeper insights into attitudes about appearance.

# Further links and resources

In this, final, section are links to some resources to help you explore the careers and topics outlined in this Newsletter further, including art activities to try, organisations, text books, journals and employment resources.

## Summary

I hope that this Newsletter has been useful in highlighting the varied and multiple ways in which the arts can be used in psychology—in many settings – for therapeutic purposes, for research and for public dissemination. The arts have a large role to play in psychology.

In recent years awareness of the health benefits of participating in the arts in various ways has been growing, leading to an expansion of therapeutic practice and research to expand the evidence-base. In this section I will provide you with resources to continue learning about the field of 'art and health' yourselves (in addition to those provided throughout this resource).



## Art for Health organisations

- [World health Organisation](#)
- [Arts & Health South West](#)
- [Arts Council](#)
- [National Centre for Creative Health](#)



## Policy documents

- [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Report](#)
- [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Report](#)

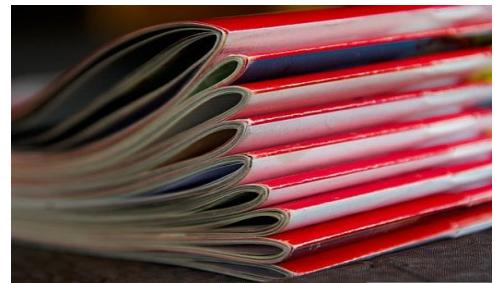


## Text books: Art and health

- Clift, S., & Camic, P. M. (Eds.). (2016). *Oxford textbook of creative arts, health, and wellbeing: international perspectives on practice, policy, and research*. Oxford Textbooks in Public Health.
- [Art for Health book series](#) edited by Professor Paul Crawford
- Clift, S., & Stickley, T. (Eds.). (2017). *Arts, Health and Wellbeing: A Theoretical Inquiry for Practice*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

## Text books: Art as research

- Mannay, D. (2015). *Visual, narrative and creative research methods: Application, reflection and ethics*. Routledge.
- Pauwels, L., & Mannay, D. (Eds.). (2019). *The SAGE handbook of visual research methods*. Sage.
- Kara, H. (2015). *Creative research methods in the social sciences: A practical guide*. Policy Press.
- Kara, H. (2020). *Creative research methods: A practical guide*. Policy Press.



## Journals

- [Arts & Health](#) (edited by myself)
- [Journal of Applied Arts & Health](#)
- [Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture & Health](#)

## Employability event

You can find out more about some of the careers mentioned in this Newsletter by watching online talks by experts in psychology discussing career pathways and additional tips for success. These are talks from Arden's Social Science Virtual Career and Employability Event held 19th-23rd September 2022 and are full of tips to help you work towards your career goals and to help work out what those goals might look like. You can access them on Sharepoint [here](#) (you will need to be logged in to your Arden account).

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Music therapy image, p. 2, from [canceractive.com](#). Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Puppet show image from the [Healing Art of Kashmir](#) project.

Hospital art, p. 4: [Main Lobby](#) of Woodhull Medical Center with Keith Haring's 1986 Mural (by Williamsburger26). Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Drawing a Life Map, p. 6, by Thoughtful Learning: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Body mapping image, p 6. from [Kozlowska et al. \(2017\)](#). Available via license CC BY-NC 4.0

## Why not try some art?

Are you interested in taking part in some art yourself? Below are links to some activities for you to try.

- [Colouring for relaxation](#)
- [Zentangling](#)—a kind of structured doodling
- Try some [origami](#) with Dr Lizzie Burns
- Why not spread the love with some guerrilla kindness craftivism, like making a [kindness jar](#).
- Put on your favourite music and [dance!](#)
- [Sing](#) along to your favourite songs.
- Try some [mindful drawing](#) activities
- Sign up to [free online art](#) workshops
- Try writing a [haiku poem](#)
- Try [writing](#) about intensely positive experiences
- Play [exquisite birds!](#)
- Join a choir (even [online!](#))