
MIND AND BODY

CREATIVITY IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**OUR
CREATIVE
VOICE**

Visual and performing arts in healthcare environments help to reduce sickness, anxiety and stress

Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, 2017

When we think of art and creativity, we often think it as something to do in our spare time to have some fun – going to the cinema for the evening, meeting pals at a gig or making a wee picture on a rainy afternoon. While these have obvious positive effects – offering distraction, providing space to socialise, alleviating boredom – they also bring huge benefits to our physical and mental health. Taking part in creative activities can help us relax and reduce anxiety, give us a sense of achievement and fulfilment, and make us feel more positive and better able to cope with stress.

Art and creativity can play a major role in the prevention of ill health and in the promotion of health. The arts help develop social cohesion and reduce social inequalities, both of which play a role in determining our health. The impact of trauma and the risk of cognitive decline can be reduced by engaging with creative activities. Arts interventions can also encourage healthier behaviour, such as healthy living or engaging with health care.

When it comes to the treatment and management of illness, access to the arts plays a significant role. It can help support people recovering from mental illness after trauma and abuse and can improve the experience of hospital inpatients and those in intensive care. It can also support palliative care and bereavement. When visual and performing arts are brought into healthcare environments it can help reduce sickness, anxiety and stress. Creating the opportunity to take part in arts activity in care homes can improve social connections between residents and staff.

Music therapy reduces the need for medication in people with dementia while poetry and song bring about positive responses like becoming more verbal and enthusiastic. Research has also demonstrated a positive link between participation in artistic and creative activity and the prevention and treatment of depression, chronic pain, and frailty.

Art and creativity also improve health and wellbeing for the youngest members of our society. When the youngest babies hear lullabies, their heart rates are calmed. Hospital stays are considerably reduced when there is live music in neonatal intensive care. Children's social development is improved through reading while music can support their speech and language development.

For our mental health, art and creativity have a vital role to play. It doesn't matter whether we are skilled at the activities or not, taking part in things like painting, pottery or music helps us manage our emotions, build confidence and explore solutions to problems. Arts activities for children and young people help support positive peer relationships, foster a sense of belonging and provide a path away from damaging behaviours. Benefits such as these show why access to arts is a social justice issue: the arts can improve children's life chances and their health, and develop active citizens who contribute to our society.

The benefits of art and creativity to our health and wellbeing are significant and wide-ranging. It is essential, therefore, that we promote arts engagement at individual, local and national level, and raise awareness of the impact that creativity has on the health of our citizens.

Arts and creativity have profound effects: they are not additional to our lives but are intrinsic to our health and wellbeing.

Art and creativity have a positive impact on both mental and physical health. Findings have shown that the arts influence the social determinants of health, support child development, encourage health-promoting behaviours, help people experiencing mental illness and support care for people with acute conditions

What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? World Health Organization, 2019

People with dementia respond positively to poetry and song in a care home setting, becoming more verbal and enthusiastic

Arts and Older People in Scotland – Luminate, 2017

FIND OUT MORE:

The art of life and death

(University College London, 2019)

Find out more about the links between arts engagement and mortality.

Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing

See more from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing and their work to raise awareness of the benefits that the arts can bring to health and wellbeing.

How do artistic creative activities regulate our emotions?

Dive deeper into the research on how artistic creative activities influence our moods and affect our mental health.

What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? World Health Organisation, 2019

Get more information on the global evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being, covering the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness.