

Little Golden Moments

in the Midst of a Global Crisis



Bluecoat

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to everyone involved in this response to the Covid restrictions: the artists for their adaptability and unwavering commitment, *Belong* customers who approached the arts sessions with curious minds and open hearts, *Belong* experience coordinators, support workers and community support workers for their infinite kindness and exemplary problem solving skills, *Belong* at Home area managers for their cheerful efficiency and practical know-how, the family members for their enthusiasm and generosity of spirit. Everyone, in the words of artist **Alan Dunn**, took a 'leap in the dark with nothing to base it on except a belief that we could try to have genuine moments of connection via technology.'

These moments of connection would not be possible without our generous funders. *Where the Arts Belong* forms part of the Celebrating Age programme funded by Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation, with additional support from The Rayne Foundation. *We Belong Together* was funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Thanks also to Alan Dunn for suggesting the title of this publication.

Published in Great Britain in 2022 by Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BX
thebluecoat.org.uk

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ISBN: 978-1-9164015-3-2

Design by mikesstudio.co.uk
Printed and bound by LT Print



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The Bluecoat

The Bluecoat is Liverpool's contemporary arts centre – the first in Liverpool, the oldest in the UK. Inside its landmark building is a working home for artists, and a place where audiences can experience art in new ways. We strive to connect audiences with artists and encourage mutual learning and exchange. Our renowned outreach programmes focus on those who would otherwise face barriers to involvement in the arts.

“ Lockdown was a difficult time for everyone in our communities. We found that by working outside of Bluecoat's galleries we have been able to make a real difference in people's lives. We have also found ways to support artists whose practice focuses on working with people from all areas of our society in collaborative ways.

During lockdown we had to find new ways to do this important work. Through our partnership with the innovative dementia care provider Belong, and the artists from our programme, we discovered that it is indeed possible to still touch the lives of people with dementia, and the staff who support them, in a virtual way.

In this publication you will find suggested activities and ways of working from artists who engaged with Belong villages and the Belong at Home service through video link connections with customers and support workers. Our mission was to bring the joy and mystery of creative experiences to people despite an inability for us to work with them in person.

At Bluecoat we are committed to continuing our work in finding new ways to engage with people in all stages of life and to bring the transformative work of artists outside of the gallery in the most accessible ways.

Mary Cloake,
Chief Executive, The Bluecoat

Belong

Belong is a not-for-profit organisation, operating award-winning care villages and community services that support people to live well as their needs change. Expert nursing and dementia care is provided in specialist households and its Admiral Nurses provide bespoke input for people with dementia and their carers. As a Gold-accredited Investor in People, Belong offers a range of exciting career pathways, backed by training and coaching to ensure its people excel.

“ Where the Arts Belong is proving to be an exciting collaboration, providing an outlet for creativity and a vehicle for wellbeing and social interaction. Participants report how much they enjoy interacting with the artists and each other, and how much they look forward to seeing their work brought to life. They have gained the confidence to attempt new art forms and, importantly, have benefited emotionally, reporting reduced feelings of isolation and a stronger sense of belonging.

Susan Goldsmith,
Chief Operating Officer, Belong

Introduction

Where the Arts Belong is a groundbreaking partnership between the Bluecoat, Liverpool's centre for contemporary art, and pioneering care provider Belong. Since 2018 the project has brought art and artists together with people living with dementia and those who love and support them. We worked in a range of care settings, creating connections and celebrating imagination.

In March 2020, when the UK entered lockdown, life changed in unforeseen ways for almost everyone and artists' visits to Belong care villages had to stop. In response to Covid restrictions we began work with the home care branch of Belong on *Where the Arts Belong* at Home. Artists used iPads to connect with customers and community support workers, exploring new ways of working and playing together.

Then, early in 2021, during the third national lockdown and with many vulnerable people having been isolated for the best part of a year we launched *We Belong Together*. Artists and apartment tenants connected, again remotely, to tackle loneliness by making stories, soundscapes and sculptures together. In addition, the artists held online arts training sessions for Belong team members.

This publication is both a record of this time and a set of prompts to inspire your own creative engagement with people you love and support. We've tried and tested each activity in person and on a digital screen. All are dementia-friendly and Zoom-friendly. You don't need to have any arts experience, just be willing to have a go!

We hope you will make these activities your own, finding little golden moments of humanity as you do so.

Tabitha Moses, Project Facilitator. March 2022



I loved it! It gave me such satisfaction. You encouraged me to be more creative.

Dave, Participant



Musical Sharing with Francisco Carrasco



Sharing songs and discussing the meanings behind them is an excellent way of getting to know each other and connecting through music without needing additional skills, materials or equipment, and this fun, music sharing activity can happen in many spaces without being intrusive.

It is engaging, creative and lots of fun, and can be a great icebreaker to encourage a person to open up. It also shows them they have a lot to contribute, their voice is important and they have amazing stories to share.

Duration

Approximately an hour but can last longer

Suitability

One-to-one, small group

Describe in three words

Fun, calming, connecting

Materials needed

Internet access, a playback device such as a smartphone or tablet or CDs and a CD player, a speaker if available and a pen and paper

Setting

Any quiet space where you can play music to each other

Activity

1. Invite your partner (or members of the group) to pick up to three songs that mean something to them – songs they wish to share and that are part of their life's journey. This could be the song from the first dance at their wedding, one that reminds them of someone or makes them feel good to listen to. You might need to ask a family member to help choose songs in advance. Ensure the songs are associated with a positive memory. The right song can give a boost, or be calming. Choose three songs of your own and make a note of them all. Your own songs should be either calming or upbeat, so that the sharing is enjoyed by both parties.

2. Play your first song and tell your partner the title and singer and why it means something to you.

3. Invite your partner to share one of their songs. Gently ask questions about the

song, why it is so important to them and how it makes them feel. Let the person share in their own time and way as the song plays, allowing them space to listen and think

4. As songs are shared, the memories and feelings they evoke will help you get to know each other better.

5. If you have had help from a family member you may need to start the conversation with your partner by asking questions about the song: What do they recognise, where they heard it first, what does it remind them of?

You could also...

Compile a playlist of the songs to be played at a later date. With a group you could make themed playlists, e.g. dancing songs, holiday songs, songs that remind us of a loved one.

Artist Notes

I was invited to be part of the project as a musician. My first thoughts centred around being flexible and learning from participants and community support workers. My sessions focused on getting to know the staff I would be working with, their interests and technical knowledge, which included taking them through a simple process of recording sounds on smartphones and tablets. My aim was to build their confidence to get involved and create a situation that allowed participants to have a positive experience, using music as the tool for connections, and accessing memories and feelings that would enhance their experience.

I have worked in many different settings with people from diverse backgrounds, as well as being involved in developing creative practice for a range of physical and mental health programmes. My approach for this project therefore came with a background of a tried and tested methodology that is completely people-centred. This means that, even where there is a set theme, the work is ever-changing and adapts to the speed, needs and background of participants. Previous sessions have consisted of conversations, music listening, songs connected to the participant and creating a situation that the staff member and the customer can continue to explore after my involvement ends.

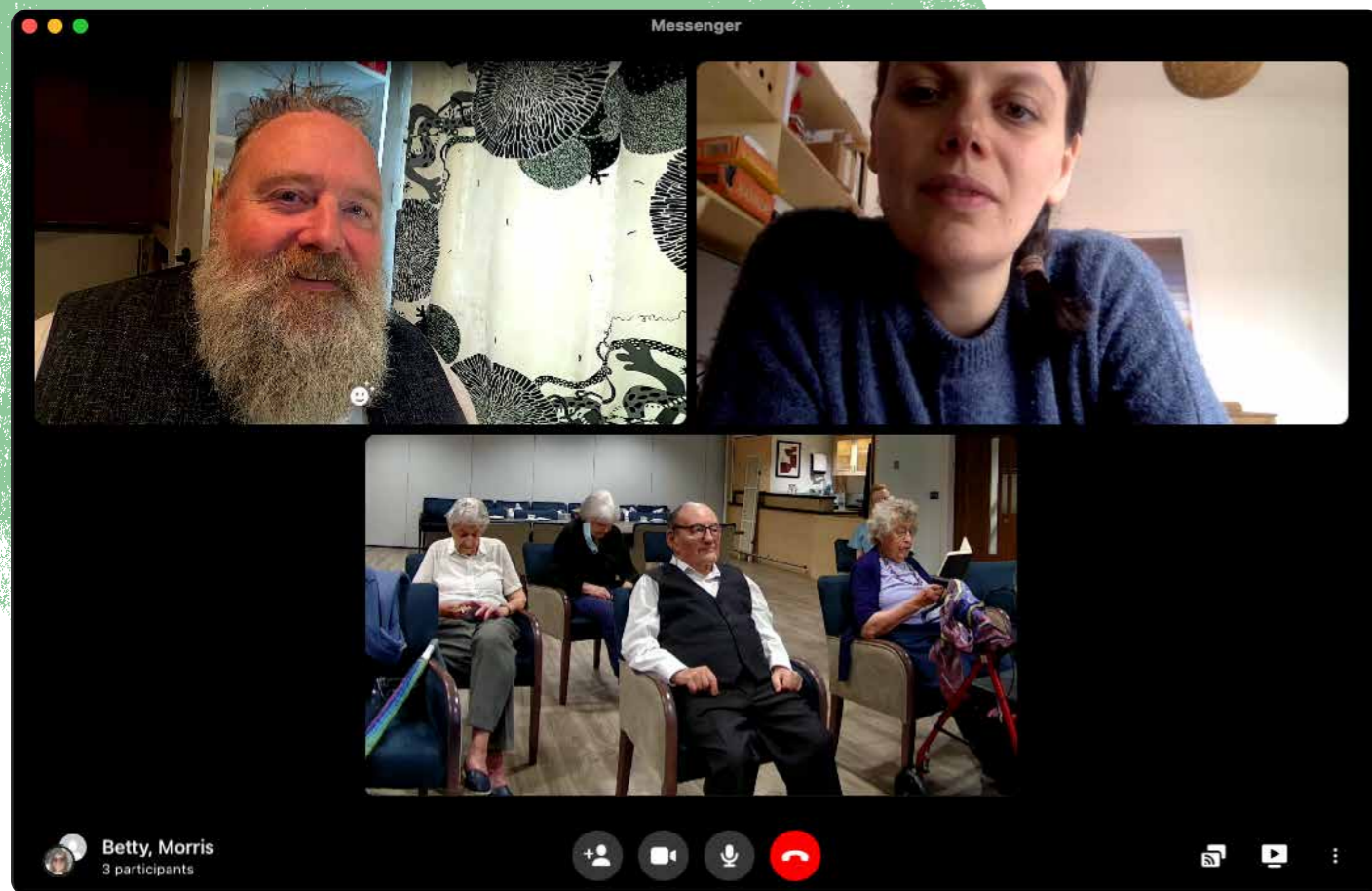
My top tip is to learn about your participants' musical journeys, what they listened to, what music they love and also to share yours, and then to connect through shared musical experiences.



Customers had not been able to see their families or socialise or go out – we've been able to bring some more cheer in their lives.

Alyson, Community Support Worker

Telling Tales Together with Gav Cross



This is a fun way to create new stories together, inspired by the old school storytelling games we used to play.

Duration
20–40 minutes

Suitability
One-to-one or a small group with two facilitators

Describe in three words
Playful, collaborative, inspiring

Materials needed
Flipchart and pen or laptop, screen and projector

Setting
Somewhere where everyone can hear each other

- Warm-up**
1. Go around the group telling a story, one word at a time.
 2. Capture the story word by word and read it back to the group when a sentence is complete.

- Activity**
1. Once used to this exercise, continue with new stories. This time everyone adds to the story a full sentence at a time.
 2. Capture the story on a flipchart or with live typing at a large scale if that is possible.
 3. Recap regularly and discuss and develop the activity together.
 4. Aim for a clear beginning, middle and end, with rich characters and intrigue.
 5. The genres of the story may chop and change, depending on what the individual sentence-maker wants the story to become.

You could also...
...read out and discuss short stories written by the participants outside of the sessions.

Artist Notes
It was my privilege to be invited to host a series of storytelling workshops, based online, for a group of Belong customers. I structured their six sessions around different themes, approaches and activities, starting with how stories from our childhood influence us as readers. We made up and improvised stories together, looking at different genres that interested us as a group. We shared stories from our own history based on prompts that I gave, we shared storytelling techniques and had a right good chat!

Though I had planned the sessions I had always intended to adapt them, in response to the group's interests and what they felt had value for them. Having the sessions mapped out in advance allowed me to be nimble with content and ideas, and helped me to change the direction of the sessions.

Once we got to know each other it was a delight to laugh together, listen to each other's stories and laugh at the nonsense of me being on a gigantic screen. Throughout my practice, laughter has to be the glue that binds people together.

I wasn't just there to tell stories but to listen to amazing stories about some incredible lives. It was a fair exchange, I think!

As a group we aimed to complete a satisfying short story. Regular performances of the story helped and inspired conversation and direction. We created surprisingly coherent stories that veered from thriller, via horror, to sadness and often laughter.

My staff training session involved a run through of some of the activities I use to start conversations, reflections from the activities manager that I was able to share, and some signposting to resources for starting a storytelling club.

My top tip would be to listen, celebrate and laugh together. It seems that age was no barrier to our discussions, and that was to do with our ability to listen to each other.

“
Realising that you've got people that are just as keen as you... makes you want to do it.

Margery, Participant

She Sells Seashells (Beach Soundscape Orchestra) with Alan Dunn



This activity involves unusual sounds made by everyday and household objects and tongue twisters. It doesn't rely on lots of verbal communication and is filled with laughter. The theme of National Beach Day has been chosen to illustrate the process, but it can be linked to any other event such as National Reading Week, The Olympics or the anniversary of the first steam train.

Duration

45 minutes

Suitability

Ideal group size four (maximum six) and two facilitators

Describe in three words

Fun, noisy, collaborative.

Materials needed

Any 'non-musical' objects, e.g. marbles in a metal tin, pasta or rice in a container, plastic ruler, cheese grater, bells, whistles, seashells, elastic bands and hands. Props related to your chosen theme, e.g. the beach. Laptop and projector if using Zoom.

Setting

Ideally in a carpeted room (for better acoustics) and closed door, no background noise, and good speakers if done on Zoom, with tables to lay out instruments.

Warm-up

1. Project the words She sells sea shells on a sea shore on a large screen for everyone to attempt saying, getting faster and faster.

2. If that goes well, try another phrase: Surely we shall see the sunshine soon. Say it faster, take turns and try different accents.

Activity

1. Devise a name for the orchestra, as a bonding moment.

2. Invite everyone to take an object and explore the different noises and rhythms it can make.

3. Now act as 'conductor' and cue in different elements. It is important to announce each new version, giving each one a funny title. Work towards a final 'premiere' at the end.

4. Introduce the theme of 'the beach' and reveal your props, such as inflatables, sun lotion for aromas, ice cream, pebbles, seashells.

5. The activity starts by developing the rhythm of slow waves. Invite the group to close their eyes and really listen. This is the background.

6. Then, as the conductor, introduce foreground noises – is that an ice cream van, a bicycle on the prom, or a donkey?

7. Real seashells can be rustled, elastic bands gently pinged to sound like the pinging of yacht sails, and – using mouths and throats – make animal noises. Be imaginative: the splash of a fish, the theme-tune from Jaws, a monkey, volleyball, fizzy drinks and picnics.

8. During breaks, discuss other beach memories and try to conjure up other sounds and sensations.

Documentation

Record the sessions for later listening, using an iPad like a camera to capture sounds close-up (right next to someone's hand), far away (at the door of the room) and then mid-distance (somewhere in between). You could film sessions, focusing on people's hands and the objects being played.

You could also...

... develop the beach theme by going for a walk on a beach or visit a funfair, recording the sounds of rollercoasters, waltzers, people laughing.

If a projector is available, there are some great 'point of view' videos to act as further inspiration.

A scaled-down version is possible as a one-to-one in someone's home with a support worker or family member.

Artist Notes

My PhD explored relationships between sound art and the everyday and I have been developing creative projects with older people since 1993 with the Castlemilk Pensioners' Action Group in Glasgow. I'm interested in using that lifetime of listening to create new experiences and compositions and, in the Belong homes and villages, we explored the sounds of everyday objects by forming new orchestras.

We purchased boxes of instruments including plastic rulers, megaphones, bicycle bells, metal dog bowls and elastic bands. We worked together to overcome our inhibitions and listened to these unusual but familiar sounds, giving them new purposes. I brought a very catholic taste in music and sound to these sessions, from early Dada art recordings to pop music and, alongside this stimulus, there was an emphasis on improvisation and letting go.

We read out tongue twisters and spoonerisms and created soundscapes for trips to the beach, train journeys and busy restaurants. Sometimes we couldn't hear each other properly, or masks muffled our comments, but through these foggy and frustrating technical spaces – metaphors perhaps for debilitating conditions – we always found a way of communicating with each other and making memorable moments.

During the staff training we considered sounds from experimental composer John Cage and The Vegetable Orchestra and used a 'descriptive vs critical' writing exercise to understand more about what we were doing – activating the ears, becoming more aware of our surroundings, being playful and imaginative, communicating non-verbally, and broadening our understanding of what art might be.



...we freestyle and see where the mood takes us! It's definitely lifted our spirits.

Alyson, Community Support Worker

What's all this? with Roger Hill



This activity offers both familiar and new experiences of the wider world in various dimensions, as well as lots of opportunities to share thoughts, ideas and imaginings with each other through conversation.

Duration

As long or as short as suits the participants, and as often as makes for congenial contact

Suitability

One-to-one, small group

Describe in three words

Wonder, wondering, together

Materials needed

A range of images, objects and songs according to the needs and capabilities of the participant(s). If using digital images, you'll need a laptop or tablet and, if using Zoom with a group, a projector and screen.

Setting

A quiet space without interruptions, where conversations can be shared

Activity

1. Consider your participant's awareness in relation to the strength of their:

- Attention (to things around them)
- Looking (at something particular)
- Recognition (identifying what is seen)
- Expression (saying what is seen)
- Feeling (expressing or exhibiting a reaction to and/or interest in what is seen)
- Choice (deciding between things seen)
- Initiative (applying that choice)
- Invention (producing new ideas or connections)
- Control (taking over the process)

2. Determine where participants are on this scale (higher up – interaction restricted; lower down – strong interaction and initiative), and plan to increase their capacity for interactions through the activities.

3. Create a collection of material you think may match the participant's interests and experiences, deciding on, for example, images, objects, songs, and a medium to share them with, such as a tablet screen, table-top, music player, pack of laminated cards. This is not a memory exercise, so there should be nothing that requires the participant to recall their personal past.

4. Put your collection in a container such as a bag, box, tray (covered over), or digital file on a tablet/laptop screen. Invite the participant/s to join you in seeing what's in there.

5. Encourage the participant/s to open up the container and consider the items, inviting them to identify or describe each. Encourage touch, smell, and perhaps tasting. There is no need for recognition, in fact simple description is better, together with what it makes them think of. Welcome any expressions of feelings about the items.

6. Invite participant/s to choose a selection of items to keep in front of them, by running through the collection again and inviting them to indicate preferences, based on what they like or what interests them.

7. Examine the preferred items and invite participant/s to give each a human dimension, e.g. *Who do you think owned this? Who do you think that is in the picture? Who would sing this song? Who would you like to give this to as a present?* Encourage as much reflective detail as possible.

8. Invite participant/s to choose one item and join you in creating an imaginary story based around it. Write down the story as it unfolds. When the story is finished, tell it back to the participant and ask what they make of it. At the end of the session, recap on what you have done together, giving participant/s the chance to do the remembering.

Creating a story

A story usually starts with a human connection. It then proceeds to an action: *What did they do with (the item)?* Then a consequence: *What happened when they did that?* Then introduce a 'someone' or something else: *What did their family/ other people think about that? Or was anybody bothered about that?* Eventually you arrive at a situation that needs resolving, which you can develop with participants, giving the odd story-nudge to fill out the progress of the narrative: *There must have been a big argument – what was everybody shouting about?* And a story ends with sorting out all the elements: *How did they solve that problem? Was everybody happy?*

You could also...

...repeat the exercise, refining the choice of items so that participants focus more closely on the things that interested them previously. However the container should always have new and unexpected things. Ask participants what kind of items they'd like to find in the container. If you get as far as a story you can progress to writing, making drama, film, paintings, sculpture, collage, graphic novels.

Artist Notes

As one of the original artists on the project, I have always been as keen on discovering more about, and understanding, the experience of dementia as I am in countering its effects. I know expert advice suggests it cannot be 'cured' or 'reversed' but I am committed to the idea that, in some cases, the process can be arrested and the experience of it ameliorated.

My work on the project has therefore been about developing individuals' awareness of the world around them in order to counter the 'inwardness' of dementia, and providing stimulus, together with opportunities to react to that. The work is based on the idea that levels of awareness can be noted and scaled. From that starting point I have deployed as stimulus the kind of material I use in my own art – stories, conversation, images, sounds – as well as objects from the collections we have been given access to.

I have encouraged various types of expression derived from these stimuli, according to the basic level of individual attention, awareness, expressiveness and 'readiness to share'. The results include everything from choice-making and craft activities to autobiography and curating. Work has been in groups, usually with carers and/or family present and participating, but also in one-to-one situations.

It's clear to me now that we must learn to value all kinds of contributions from participants and create suitable sharing occasions for everybody to appreciate their achievements. My top tip is: always vary the offer until you intimately know their likes, dislikes, interests and capabilities.

“
It's enabling somebody to express themselves and finding different mediums to be able to do that. It's learning to play again.

Kate, Family Member

Making Palissy Plates with Brigitte Jurack



This activity does not rely on lots of verbal communication, so do not worry if participants are silent – they are letting their hands take the lead.

The theme of Palissy plates embraces a rustic look and accommodates a wide range of possibilities, including just simply making a platter full of clay leaves and small worms.

Air drying clay is an option but real clay (also called school clay or Crank) is a more satisfying material to work with, though it does need firing in a kiln. You might partner with a local school, college or ceramic artist to get the clay works fired at a reasonable cost.

Working with real clay requires planning, networking, basic preparation and awareness of health and safety guidance (see 'Setting').

Duration

50 minutes, plus preparation and cleaning time

Suitability

One-to-one or groups, ideal group size six and two facilitators

Describe in three words

Messy, joyful, fun

Materials needed

A range of items such as a whole fish or crab, sea shells, lemon, parsley, snail shells, garden leaves, savoy cabbage leaves. Pictures of creatures such as frogs and salamanders. Cardboard plates, Crank or school clay (or air drying clay if a kiln is not available), a set of basic wooden modelling tools, a clay cutting wire, plastic aprons, dining forks. A 10–12kg bag of clay will be enough for three people.

Recommended clays:

Buff School Clay 1120–1280°C

Raku Crank Modelling Clay

1060–1280°C

Buff Earthenware / Stoneware Clay

1120–1280°C

Recommended varnish:

Polyvine clear gloss lacquer. It is acrylic based, fast-drying and odour-free.

Setting

An uncarpeted area with wipe clean floor. Clay is safe to use as long as it is handled in its wet/damp condition. Avoid clay dust and clean surfaces with a vacuum cleaner and damp cloth or mop. Excessive handling leads to dry skin so a barrier cream can be used.

Participants need to work on hard wipeable surfaces (tables, or wooden boards) and wear plastic aprons to avoid dusty clothes.

Prepare the working surfaces and clay in advance. Remember, don't give out the tools at the very beginning.

Warm-up

The aroma of the fresh fish will fill the room, heightening the senses and triggering all sorts of responses, from memories of fishing trips to hating seafood, to shrieks of laughter or disgust.

Activity

1. Give each person three tennis ball sized lumps of clay to knead on the table, just like kneading dough. Cover the cardboard plates with clay to the thickness of the small finger (1cm) and smooth it. The clay can be pushed into shape or rolled out like

pastry. (See this instructional video: <https://brigittejurack.de/korea.html>)

2. Invite the group to make a clay fish that will lie across the plate. Then make the 'garnish' – sea shells, leaves, seaweed, a frog. At this stage, use only hands and fingers – they do the thinking, making and imagining here.

3. Attach the fish and everything else to the clay plate, using a fork to scratch the contact surfaces of the clay, which will enhance the connection between plate and fish.

4. Give out the modelling tools to create detail (fins, eyes, patterns) and strengthen the connections of the fish with the plate. Repeat this activity with fruit, vegetables, starfish and small amphibians such as frogs and salamanders. Keep an open mind as to what a fish or a radish looks like, as it emerges in the participants' hands. Don't aim for realism – it doesn't need to look like the real thing or something bought in a shop. Just the key features (eyes, scales, mouth, tail, fin) can accommodate a range of expressions and sensibilities.

5. Store the finished plates on a strong board or tray, loosely covered with plastic (you can use the aprons). If you want to keep them for display, take them to the kiln for firing (or let them air dry). If not, you can reuse the clay for other sessions.

6. The Palissy plates can be painted after firing (or drying) with gouache or acrylic paint and varnished with water based acrylic gloss varnish.

Artist Notes

I am very much a hands-on maker and I explore the world around me through sculpture and drawing. I am interested in using observation and imagination and I am fascinated by the childlike joy we experience when digging into clay, soil or sand. I use the fundamental experience of touch and, with *Belong*, I explored the sensually rich and tactile world of clay, embracing the 'magic' of non-verbal body memory – everybody has played with mud – and imagination.

'Accepting the wonky' is always a good mental start, since it prevents us from comparing our artefacts with factory made objects. It is also very useful to have as few tools as possible and, when working with clay, our hands are the main tools. Taking part is more important than the final product and, within the context of art, 'anything goes'.

Having a freshly caught fish, sea shells, a stuffed bird or colourful fruit and vegetables to look at and touch heightens our senses. And a rubber frog or colourful picture of a frog is better than simply the word 'frog' – neither staff nor customers are familiar enough with the anatomy of a frog, so it helps to look at one.

During the staff training session we considered how to continue to embrace the wonky by looking at examples in contemporary art and from the long history of ceramic ware, including Toby jugs, Jubilee plates, Palissy ware, Staffordshire figures, Roman mosaics and cauliflower teapots.

“The improvement in speech and frame of mind was incredible to witness. As soon as people had clay they just relaxed and created some fantastic work.”

Dan, Experience Coordinator

Creating Space to Play with Mary Prestidge



This activity is like having a good conversation. There are four stages; the first is about arriving and settling in. Each stage has the possibility to evolve from a quiet state to a more energetic one. Stages 2, 3 and 4 are options to use depending on the time available, and can be carried out in an order that seems most appropriate to what the participant(s) needs or desires.

Duration

Four short activities, up to 40 mins total

Suitability

One-to-one, small group

Describe in three words

Movement, noticing, calming

Materials needed

Lightweight objects such as a scarf or cushion.

Setting

A quiet, undisturbed room with enough space for seated or standing participants to move arms and torso without bumping into each other or furniture. A circle is ideal for a group; if one-to-one, face each other.

Warm-up and Activity

The facilitator steers and guides the activities, giving the following invitations to the participant(s), while also being involved. Notice and respond to the dynamics and flow of exchange and play between all participants.

1. Getting settled and finding a place to begin 3-5mins

Sit facing each other, with room to move your arms and body. Start by adjusting/wiggling shoulders, back, hips, arms, legs, feet and invite your partner to do the same. Rest your hands on your lap, with feet flat on the floor. Take time to notice your breathing. Finally, come to rest and be still.

2 Breathing, and watching the body move 5-15mins

Take a few minutes to listen to and feel your breath as it fills the lungs and moves and expands the body. As you breathe out, notice how the body relaxes and seems to fall, particularly the shoulders and arms. See what else you notice moving in this cycle of breathing, from the smallest rise and fall to expansion around the ribs. Try closing your eyes – this can help to focus and sense the movement inside the body.

Suggest some ways to increase and expand the movement, for example extending the arms: reach outward as the breath comes in and curve the arms back towards the body as the breath exhales. Synchronise the moving with the breath, as though the breath is moving and shaping you. Allow the head and spine to move too so that the whole torso can experience a range of movement. Let the fingertips and eyes lead the way, reaching in multi-directions towards the walls, floor and ceiling.

Take 1-2 minutes each to watch each other with this activity. Share any thoughts or sense of a memory that you noticed while observing.

3 Checking round the body 3-5 mins

Rub the hands together, warming them up to bring mobility and sensation to the whole hand. Brush, squeeze, rub, pat, tap and slap your body with your hands. Trace around the arms and shoulders with your palms and fingers, noticing the contours and textures of the body. Feel the muscle, skin or bone through different types of touch, for example a light delicate stroke of the hand and fingertips across the surface of the skin (particularly around the face), or a strong squeezing action of the whole hand to feel the deep tissue of the upper arm or bones in the wrist. Tap and slap around shoulders, hips

and thighs to bring different energy and liveliness.

Invite the participant(s) to share any thoughts or comments from the activity.

4 Dancing scores (duet and solo) 5-15 mins

This involves playing with and passing an object, such as a cushion or scarf. Take turns to hold, look at and feel the object. Hold and manipulate it in different ways to explore what it can do and how it can change – can it, for instance, balance on different parts of the body? Try to move slowly; throw and catch; pause and find stillness. Pass the object to the other person and watch them move with it. This becomes a solo dance, one person moving with the object, the other watching. The watcher could also mirror the movement of the solo dancer and become a partner in the dance.

Take time to reflect and comment on what you liked or didn't like, and what you felt or noticed while moving or watching. Hopefully memories will be stimulated.

You could also...

... bring in some of your own objects to work with, to enliven activity. This could involve dressing up – e.g. gloves, an apron, headgear – which will evoke and stimulate stories.

Following the flow and interacting with what is unfolding opens up possibilities for moving the activity in a different direction and introducing a completely new topic.

Artist Notes

After a conservatoire dance training and career as a contemporary dancer, I explored new creative and expressive possibilities through improvisational dance. I developed new material through a more holistic approach that integrated mind and body, and movement, with an emphasis on the senses to guide and stimulate the imagination.

As an artist and facilitator, I enable individuals to engage in activities on an intuitive level, taking time to observe and notice small gestures or one's breathing, for example. I don't believe in a hierarchy of ability and I aim to challenge and raise people's expectations of their potential. Human senses and capabilities are far beyond a set of aesthetic and cultural values.

In the Belong setting, I recognised several subtleties of engaging people, such as allowing enough time for playing, listening and observing, and letting things wander, get lost and be found again. The Belong at Home sessions gave me and the staff many challenges – needing to find a way to encourage a playful interaction and engagement without the distractions of speaking, and to allow time for things to evolve.

The shift for staff, from support worker to artist-facilitator and back again, is a major part of the work. Each member of staff had their own personal relationship and understanding with their customers. My role was to encourage and expand this relationship – to give time to listen, to trust and to follow the unfolding nature of the activity.

“
I've really enjoyed it. It's something different – something I thought I couldn't do, but I can!

Amy, Community Support Worker

“

It's bettering your ability.
The more you get told, the
more you try, the more you
do it. The more you do it,
the better you get at it.

Margery, Participant



About the artists

Francisco Carrasco was born in Chile and came to the UK in 1975 as a child refugee. He is a composer, musician, writer, maker and director who uses the arts to create stories and give voice to the voiceless.

www.lumacreations.org

Gav Cross is a storyteller with a background in community arts and teaching. For the last 20 years he has worked in various contexts, creating his own storytelling shows for families. He has worked with the Bluecoat as a performer and has facilitated special projects with its inclusive arts group, Blue Room.

<https://linktr.ee/gavcross>

Alan Dunn studied at Glasgow School of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. He now lectures in Art & Design at Leeds Beckett University. He develops large-scale collaborative projects for the public realm, including Bellgrove Station Billboard Project, RAY + JULIE, FOUR WORDS and tenantspin.

www.alandunn67.co.uk

Roger Hill is a Liverpool-based writer, education-worker, performer and broadcaster. He has worked in many capacities with, and at, the Bluecoat, including performing his own solo performances, teaching parents to read books with their babies, as an Associate Live Artist, and running a regular storytelling group.

www.rogerhill.net

Brigitte Jurack studied at the art academy in Düsseldorf, University of Bonn, Glasgow School of Art and Chelsea College of Art and Design. She is a practising artist and is Head of Sculpture and Time-Based art at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University.

www.brigittejurack.de

Mary Prestidge is a dancer, teacher and improviser. Originally an Olympic gymnast, her first dance work was with Ballet Rambert. Mary has since been instrumental in the development of new and experimental dance in the UK. She continues to develop her artistic work as part of Liverpool Improvisation Collective.

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I was genuinely amazed and it made me realise how helpful in terms of wellbeing these sessions could be.

Dan, Experience Coordinator





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That was fun wasn't it!

Denys, Participant