



## Arts and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB)

Understanding the connection between the Arts and health.

To understand how the arts support SEWB, we can look at different models and examples of how arts and health interact. These help explain the many ways creative activities can support individual and community wellbeing.



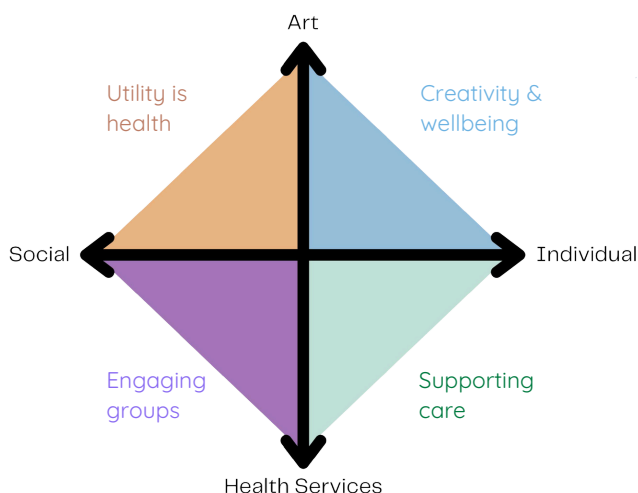
### Models that explain the arts-health connection

#### 1. The Arts and Health Diamond Model

This model shows how arts programs can range from:

- Individual focus (supporting one person's health) to social focus (supporting groups or communities).
- Art-focused (creative expression) to health-focused (embedded in health services).

As programs shift closer to the 'health' end, the role of the arts may become smaller. But this doesn't mean arts and health are opposites - they can work together in many ways.



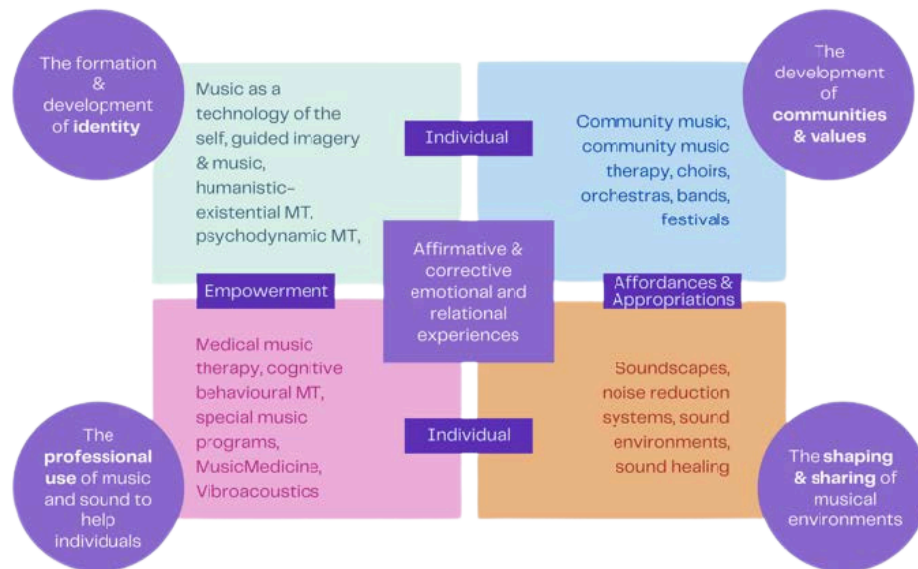
#### 2. Ansdell's Continua Model

Using music as an example, this model looks at:

- Individual vs. social outcomes, and
- Mind vs. body focus.

Projects focused on the mind and individuals may help people build identity. Those focused on the mind and social experiences can build community and shared values.

Projects that support the body may help with physical regulation and emotional balance. Many arts programs actually cover several of these areas at once.



#### How the Arts contribute to SEWB

Population group	Increased or Enhanced	Decreased or Reduced	Develops or Promotes
Young people	<u>Self-esteem, achievement, motivation, and hope</u>	<u>Emotional problems</u>	<u>Empowerment, social connection, and social-emotional development</u>
Clinical populations	<u>Quality of life after cancer treatment</u>	<u>Patient stress, anxiety, and depression</u>	Patient recovery and relaxation
Experiencing mental ill-health	<u>Confidence, self-esteem, and self-understanding</u>		
The elderly	Self-worth	Depressed mood	<u>Positive aging</u>

## How the Arts promote SEWB

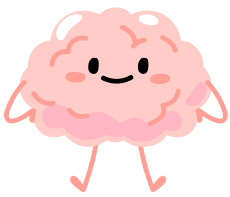
### ● The Arts and Flow

The arts can help people enter a state of flow - a feeling of being fully engaged, focused, and creative. Flow is pleasurable and linked to mindfulness, attention, and learning.



### ● The Arts and the Brain

Scientific studies show that making and experiencing art:



- Lowers stress hormones like cortisol
- Calms brain activity
- Boosts the immune system
- Helps the brain respond better to stress

Neuroaesthetics is an emerging area of neuroscience that looks at how the brain responds to beauty and art. Though still controversial, this research shows that art sparks complex brain activity that influences how we think, feel, and behave.

If we could invent the perfect tool to boost wellbeing, creativity, and learning - it might look exactly like the arts.

### ● The Arts and Human Evolution

The brain rewards us for engaging with the arts using chemicals linked to pleasure and survival.



This suggests that creativity and expression have always been important for human connection and communication.

### ● Creativity, Empathy, and Wellbeing



Creative people often show more empathy - they are more in tune with the emotions of others. Creativity encourages open-mindedness, helping people relate better to others and build stronger relationships. This, in turn, improves SEWB.

### ● The Arts and Self-Expression

Creative activities provide powerful ways to express thoughts and feelings - especially for people who struggle to put emotions into words. The arts help people better understand themselves and make sense of their experiences.



### ● The Arts and Human Frailties

Authors De Botton and Armstrong identified seven common human struggles - and how the arts can help with each:



- Forgetting: Art helps us remember important moments and lessons.
- Pessimism: Art reminds us of the good in life.
- Despair: Art connects us to others by showing that everyone experiences hardship.
- Disintegration: Art helps us see ourselves as complex, ever-changing people.
- Blind spots: Art can increase self-awareness.
- Comfort zones: Art challenges us and promotes personal growth.
- Boredom (Ennui): Art helps us appreciate life with a sense of awe and wonder.

### ● Aesthetic Education: Seeing the world differently

Philosopher Maxine Greene believed that art can help us see the world in new and more meaningful ways. She described the act of deeply engaging with a painting, a piece of music, or a performance as “lending it your life.” This kind of engagement encourages people to stay curious, listen deeply, and imagine new possibilities for themselves and the world.

