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AN ARTS-INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH TRAUMA-INFORMED CREATIVE PRACTICES

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GREY BOX COLLECTIVE

THE BASICS

- About Grey Box Collective: Grey Box Collective (GBC) devises **interdisciplinary, experimental, and post-dramatic performances** about **social-emotional wellbeing** (i.e. we make weird art about tough stuff). We work primarily at the intersection of **performing arts, visual arts, educational psychology, and feminist theory**. We aim to explore new forms of expression and make choices to **rebel against the “norms”**. Our work prioritizes investigating broad ideas and typically steps away from traditional plot lines or characters. Individuals who work with GBC understand that GBC is a trauma-informed arts organization **committed to holding compassionate spaces for ourselves and others. We embody multiple truths, we center taking care of ourselves, we get uncomfortable, and ensure sustainable practices are embedded in all that we do. We believe this work leads to a just society. We value honesty, transparency, and quality over quantity. Through our actions, reflections, and art-making, we aim to challenge and re-shape the status quo in our organization, in our bodies, and our communities.**
- We're supported by the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, Arizona Commission on the Arts, Scottsdale Arts, City of Tempe -Community Arts Grant, and Mesa Arts Center's Arts at the Center Foundation.

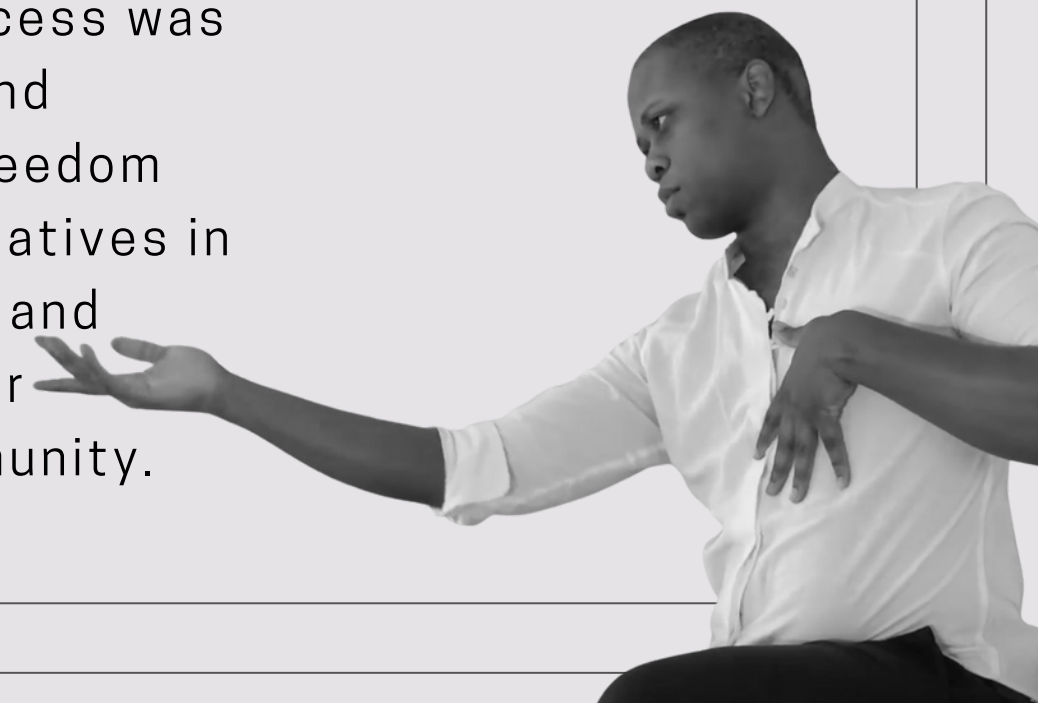


GREY BOX COLLECTIVE

PARTNERSHIP & MORE FROM/ABOUT COLLECTIVE MEMBERS

- Since, 2018, we have partnered with the Trauma Healing Services Department of our local EMPACT - Suicide Prevention Center, La Frontera. Their counselors are present at each of our performances and are able to demystify what happens when someone calls a crisis hotline, explain what resources are available within the community and connect with individuals informally.
- As one collective member put it, “GBC understands the human condition.” The artists that thrive within GBC are working on the fringes of their arts disciplines, are experimental, and are inter/multi/antidisciplinary artists. There seems to be a connect between being on the edges of these art forms and being a part of a marginalized population in the US. About three-quarters of GBC identify as part of a historically marginalized or underrepresented population within the arts including: Neurodivergent (59%), BIPOC/ALAANA (67%), LGBTQIA2S+ (59%), Disabled (34%), Parents (42%) and Veteran (8%). GBC is also intergenerational with an age range of 21 - 47 years old (43% Gen Z, 50% Millennials, 7% Gen X).
- As part of a post-production questionnaire, one collective member stated that, “the creative process was very open ended and the creative power was not hierarchical but democratic. I appreciated this and learned a lot about what a collaborative creative process can look like. I found the respect and freedom very healing personally.” Another shared, “I love the diversity in arts. Having a lot of different creatives in the same space with the same vision is impactful for people of all backgrounds to come together and discuss what they are passionate about.” Other collective member’s responses echoed the similar sentiments to the above quotes; the diversity of art forms brings forth the diversity of the community.

GBC
performance
reel



GREY BOX COLLECTIVE'S

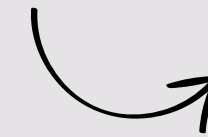
TRAUMA-INFORMED CREATIVE PRACTICES

2022-2023

GBC Founder, Molly W. Schenck is the author of Trauma-Informed Teaching for Dance Educators (being released in summer 2022) and creator of Trauma-Informed Creative Practices (a compassionate methodology to support learning and creativity). She offers workshops (ranging in 2-8 hours) for educators, student leaders, and/or administrators who are interested in folding trauma-informed approaches into their spaces of learning and creativity. This professional development opportunity can be added into the partnership between the school(s) and GBC for teachers and administrators. CEUs may also be available. Please contact molly@greyboxcollective.com for more details.

The body of work by Molly W. Schenck (MFA, MEd.) is rooted in a quest to understand humans. She is fascinated with human movement - whether that is a social justice movement, individuals persisting through systems, or how a body moves through space and time. She is also interested in what interrupts the full expression of movement (stress, trauma, burnout, injuries, chronic pain, etc.). This has guided the evolution of her studies and career path. She worked in higher education as an adjunct professor and administrator for ten years. She taught mind body and group fitness classes for twelve years. She specializes in the intersection of creativity and trauma and is the creator of Trauma-Informed Creative Practices. She is the founder of Grey Box Collective (an interdisciplinary, experimental, post-dramatic, trauma-informed arts organization that devises original performances around topics of social and emotional wellbeing i.e. makes weird art about tough stuff). She is the author of 'Trauma-Informed Teaching Practices for Dance Educators'. She is a certified Trauma Support Specialist, Personal Trainer, a 500-hour experienced yoga teacher (focused on asana, pranayama, and meditation), Certified Teacher of BodyMind Dancing™, a registered somatic dance educator and a Dynamic Embodiment™ Practitioner. For more information visit: mollywschenck.com

Trauma-Informed
Creative Practices
the Podcast



PERFORMANCES

OVERVIEW OF THE PURPOSE & IMPACT OF OUR WORK

Purpose: The works created by Grey Box Collective are considered artistic vehicles for social change that offer brave and supportive spaces for audiences. This performance is a catalyst for initiating transformation, holds time and space for processing the human condition, and serves as a reminder that we are not alone in this journey.

Audience Impact: We consider the impact on the audience throughout the entire performance development process. Audiences in the past have found their experience to be “curiously comforting” to share space within a community while confronting difficult topics. Audiences have also expressed that there is a culture of care they feel at our performances by how we hold space for difficult subjects. Additional recent feedback from the audience includes: “totally unique” “I appreciate seeing multiple nonbinary/trans artists.” “[the costuming] pulled a heartbeat into the show in an unexpected way that felt very tender and loving and moved away from traditional western concert aesthetic.” “This is important art and community support.”

Experimental Film,
PAUSE... prologue



PERFORMANCES

REPERTOIRE: "PAUSE..." AND "UNDERSTANDING OTHERNESS"

Understanding Otherness untangles, uncovers, and illuminates what creates separation and belonging in humanity. This project is an original, interdisciplinary performance that explores the impact of societal inclusion and exclusion on a psychophysical level through a mix of movement, text, and technology. With compassionate consideration, we focus on what brings people together and what divides people. Our underlying curiosity is how does this impact and live in our minds and bodies. This performance was developed by examining overt, covert, and subtle racism and sexism witnessed within the US and was heavily informed by bell hooks and john a. powell's dialogue titled "Belonging Through Connection, Connecting Through Love: Oneself, the Other, and the Earth" which was recorded at the 2015 Othering and Belonging Conference. <https://www.greyboxcollective.com/understandingotherness>

"PAUSE..." an original performance that explores the mental health of grief, loss, and transformation through movement, sound, lights, and film. GBC creative, Micah Jondel DeShazer, states that "In a time where all seems to be in a constant state of loss this experience is something we share to remind us that we are not alone." There has been no shortage of loss in our world over the last year. A loss of lives, livelihoods, "normal", dreams, plans, relationships, habits, beliefs...and the list could go on. "PAUSE..." was created at the intersection of both arts-based and non-arts disciplines to explore new forms of expression that investigate broad ideas around mental health, grief, and loss. GBC creative John Idalis poses the questions, "Do you fast forward through tough times or do you pause? When do you play?" Audiences can expect a one-of-a-kind performance featuring experimental films, original music, live sound design, instant movement composition, electronic light technology, and eco friendly, sustainably constructed costumes. Textile artist and costume designer, Haley Nielsen, utilizes "ecoprinting and natural dying as an expression of mourning" with the hope "that the textures of nature and the natural process of grief and recovery that are layered into the clothing, movement and scenery will come through to [the audience attending] the show." <https://www.greyboxcollective.com/pause>



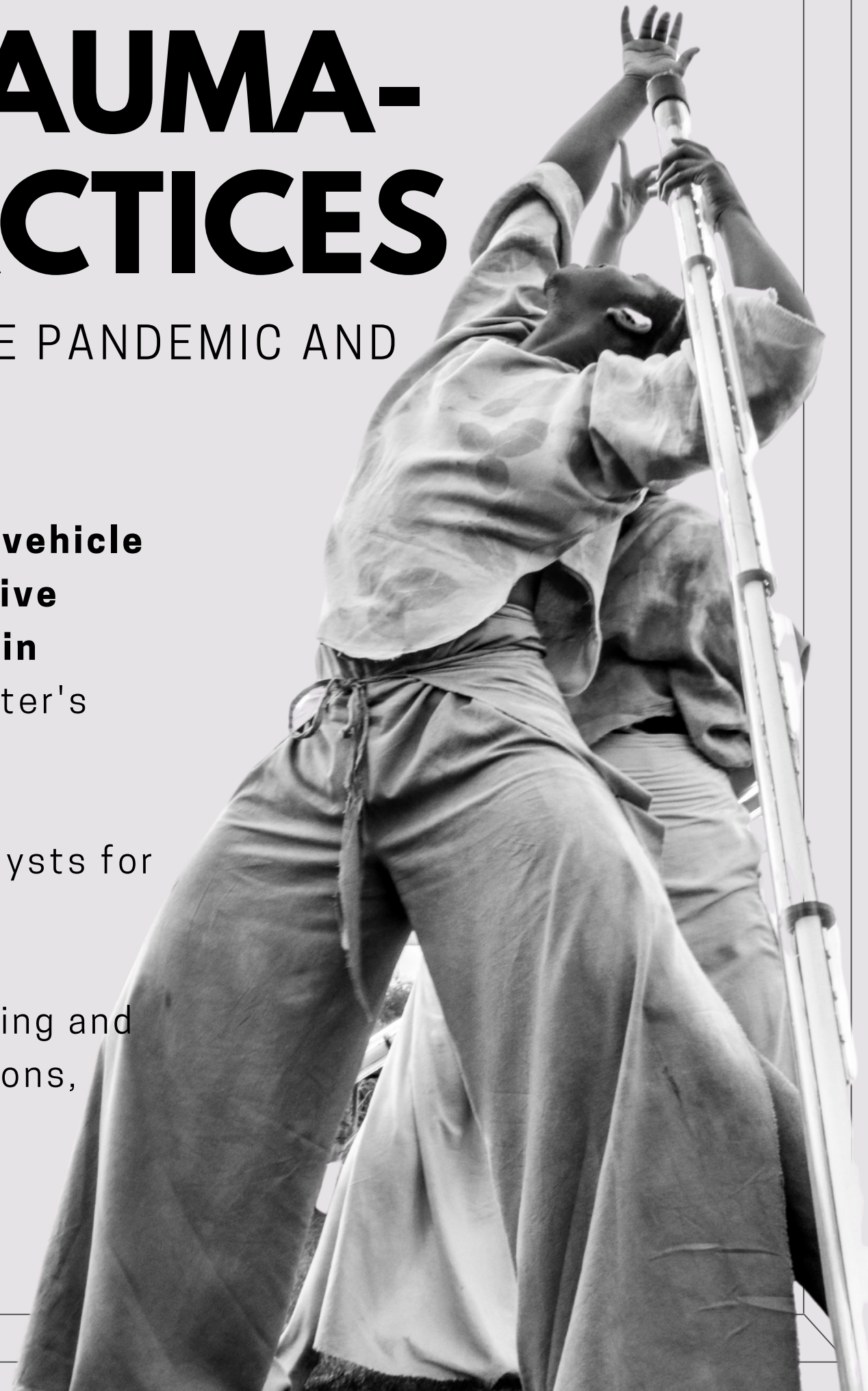
ARTS-INTEGRATION & TRAUMA-INFORMED CREATIVE PRACTICES

THE ARTS/ARTISTS/CREATIVES ARE THE SECOND RESPONDERS OF THE PANDEMIC AND WILL GUIDE US BACK TO OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER

- "In Arts-Integrated Curriculum, the arts become the approach to teaching and the vehicle for learning. Students meet dual learning objectives when they engage in the creative process to explore connections between an art form and another subject area to gain greater understanding in both." (definition of 'arts-integration' from the Kennedy Center's Teaching Artist Program)

- Performances are artistic vehicles for social change, and creative processes are catalysts for transformation

- Trauma-Informed Creative Practices is a compassionate methodology to support learning and creativity through understanding how stress, trauma, and burnout show up in organizations, groups, and individuals



STUDENT CENTERED SERVICES

WORKING & CREATING WITH STUDENTS

Making Dance Theatre Through An Exploration of Social & Emotional Wellbeing: In this arts-integration residency, Grey Box Collective (GBC) will facilitate a series of workshops where students create original movement and text around topics of social and emotional wellbeing. Students, in collaboration with GBC's teaching artists, will experience a brave and supportive environment to creatively explore their personal and community's social and emotional wellbeing. GBC defines social and emotional wellbeing as embodying high levels of self-actualization, understanding the body mind connection, and being connected with the community.

Students will understand...

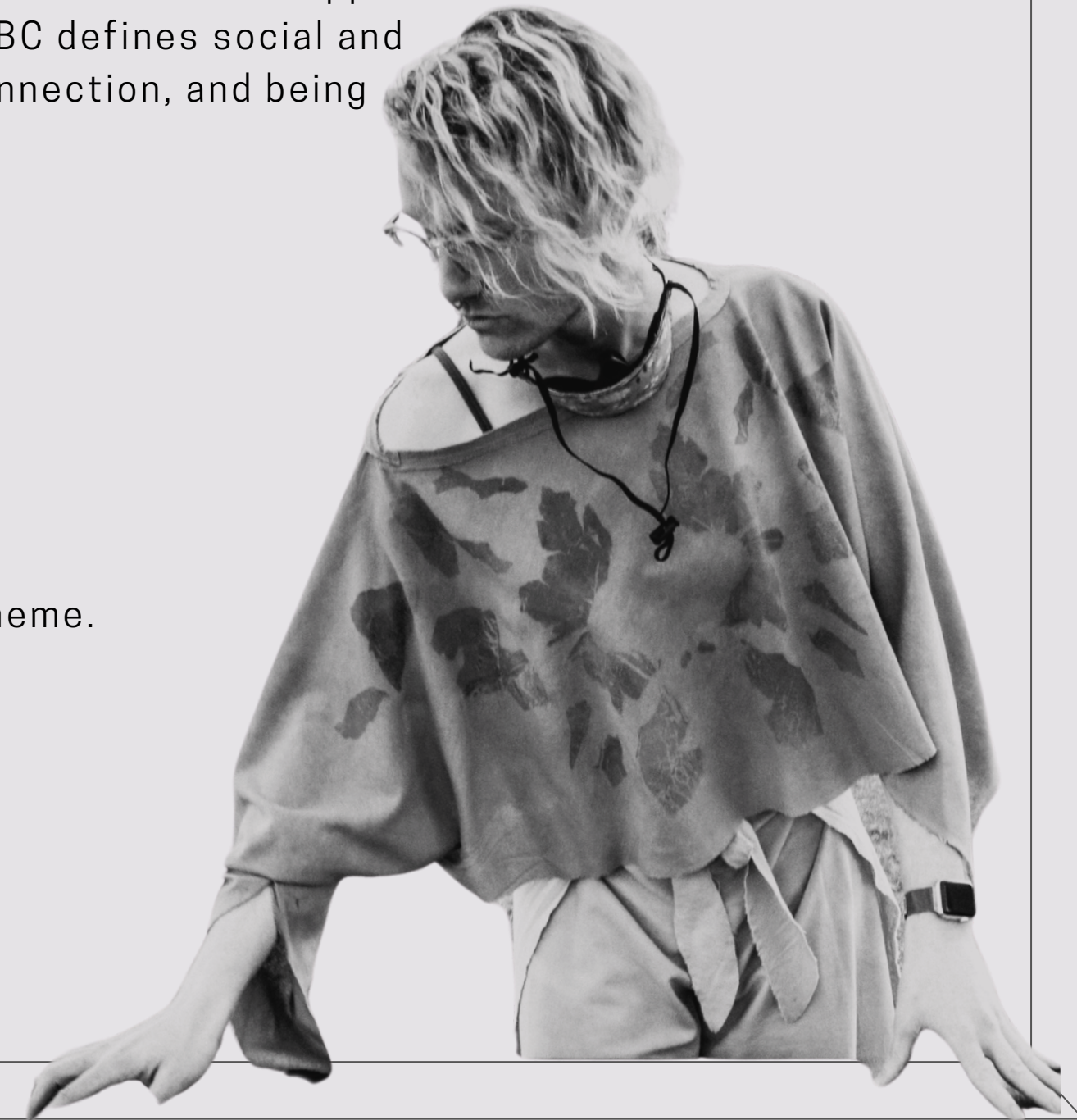
- 1)...the definition of social and emotional wellbeing as related to the explored theme.
- 2)...that wellbeing looks different for each individual and themselves on a daily basis.
- 3)...the role of creativity in building brave and supportive spaces to explore SEW.
- 4)...how devised methodologies can enhance and build on creativity.

Students will be able to...

- 1)...identify healthy social and emotional wellbeing behavior surrounding the explored theme.
- 2)...apply strategies to promote positive social and emotional wellbeing surrounding the explored theme.
- 3)...create original movement and text.
- 4)...work with peers to generate a performance.

Students will appreciate...

- 1)...the importance of discussing challenging topics.
- 2)...how to navigate life both in and outside the classroom
- 3)...the complexity of the creative process.
- 4)...the ability to express themselves artistically.



STUDENT CENTERED SERVICES

HYBRID OPTION: EXAMPLE WITH "PAUSE..."

Exploring the Mental Health of Grief and Loss through Movement Improvisation: A Performance & Arts-Integrated Workshop is a 2-hour event that includes a performance by Grey Box Collective, a dialogue with performers and participants followed by a creative practice workshop, and a debrief of the event.

As a result of this performance and workshop, participants may have a new understanding of how grief and loss impact our minds and bodies, know how creativity and movement can support navigating these complex conditions, and appreciate the agency of developing original dance compositions that represent youth's experiences with mental health, grief, and loss.

Details: The event will begin with a 30 minute performance by Grey Box Collective teaching artists. The performance, PAUSE... is an original, interdisciplinary performance by Grey Box Collective that explores the mental health of grief and loss. Following the performance, there will be a 15 minute dialogue where participants can ask questions that came up for them during the performance. This dialogue will flow into a 45 minute creative practice workshop where students create original movement based on the show's themes. Participants, in collaboration with GBC's teaching artists, will experience a brave and supportive environment to creatively explore their personal and community's social and emotional wellbeing. The final 30 minutes of the event will be used to share the work created by participants, discuss available community mental health resources, and answer any lingering questions.



FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

FROM DANCE FOCUSED RESIDENCY

Below are some comments students submitted as part of the post-residency survey that weave together a narrative of their experiences:

"Dance isn't just technical move after technical move. It's allowing the way your body wants to move."

"I learned to be more confident in my dance."

"I loved how everyone could be listening to the same music and given the same instructions, but you could do whatever you wanted. It didn't matter what anyone else was doing, how you looked, or doing any special moves."

"I took away that the creative process can be explored by any age and that teachers are also just as much inspired by students as they are by us."

"I took away a better feeling for letting your body feel the music."

"I really valued to inclusiveness of the group and the feeling of connection and safety in the atmosphere."

"The experience definitely put me out of my comfort zone, but in a good way."

"It was a very interesting experience, and I feel lucky that I was able to be apart of it!"



ARTS & HEALTHY MENTAL HEALTH

CONNECTING 5-STEPS TO HEALTHY MENTAL HEALTH WITH CREATIVITY AS THE CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION

5 Steps to Healthy Mental Health

1. Connect with Other People
2. Be Physically Active
3. Learn New Skills
4. Give to Others
5. Pay Attention to the Present Moment



CREATING SPACES FOR HEALTHY MENTAL HEALTH WITH THE ARTS

GBC'S VALUES IN ACTION

Focal Points of Creative Practices as a Catalyst for Transformation

1. Reciprocity through Brave & Supportive Spaces
2. Emphasis on Being While Doing: Living in the Grey
3. Simultaneous Learning & Unlearning to Build Capacity
4. Equal Attention to both the Body and the Mind
5. Plugging in to All-Levels of Agency & Choice-Making



more on GBC's
values in action



SEASON 7 OVERVIEW

2022-2023



LET'S STAY CONNECTED!

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Podcasts:

Any Other Anythings?

Trauma-Informed Creative Practices

coming soon: traumainformedcreativepractices.com!

