



CONNECT

IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

**MAKING A CREDIBLE AND COMPELLING BUSINESS
CASE AS AN INDEPENDENT ARTIST**



WORKSHOP NOTES

These notes are designed to act as a prompt from the workshop you attended or have watched online. They include details of exercises completed in the session, slides from the presentation and suggested further resources to support your learning.

If you have any questions about the content of the session or these notes, or you want to talk to Mortal Fools about further training, please contact kiz@mortalfools.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

This workshop was commissioned by People Dancing and ArtWorks Alliance as part of *Proof of the Pudding*, a comprehensive development toolkit for participatory artists. There is a link to the full toolkit at the end of these notes.

The workshop is part of Mortal Fools' CONNECT programme of training workshops, designed to help participants form better connections with people to achieve their development goals in their different contexts. Our training utilises techniques from actor training, theatre practice, business development theory and the social sciences to provide training that is experiential, highly effective and rooted in wider theoretical knowledge.

This workshop is *Identity and Purpose: Making a credible and compelling business case as an independent artist*.

For independent artists, making a credible and compelling case to collaborators, funders and partners can be challenging. Your artistic practice and skills can be difficult to define and pursuing new work at the same time as delivering work can be very time-consuming and stressful.

There is also a real vulnerability in presenting yourself and your work to others, so in this workshop we also consider ways we can build our confidence for effective self-promotion. It's human nature to retreat from things that make us feel uncomfortable but it's important to remember that confidence is not the absence of fear, it's the ability to work through those feelings and not let them stop you.

This session was designed to give you some methods to consider how you define your practice and communicate about it in a similar way to organisational business planning.

The workshop took you through structures and prompts to support you to do this development work – but cannot give you all the answers you need by the end of the session. For it to be fully effective, you'll need to dedicate some time to doing the personal development work once you've completed the session.

The CONNECT training programme emphasizes learning by *doing* and we encourage you to learn by observing others alongside taking part in the session activities.

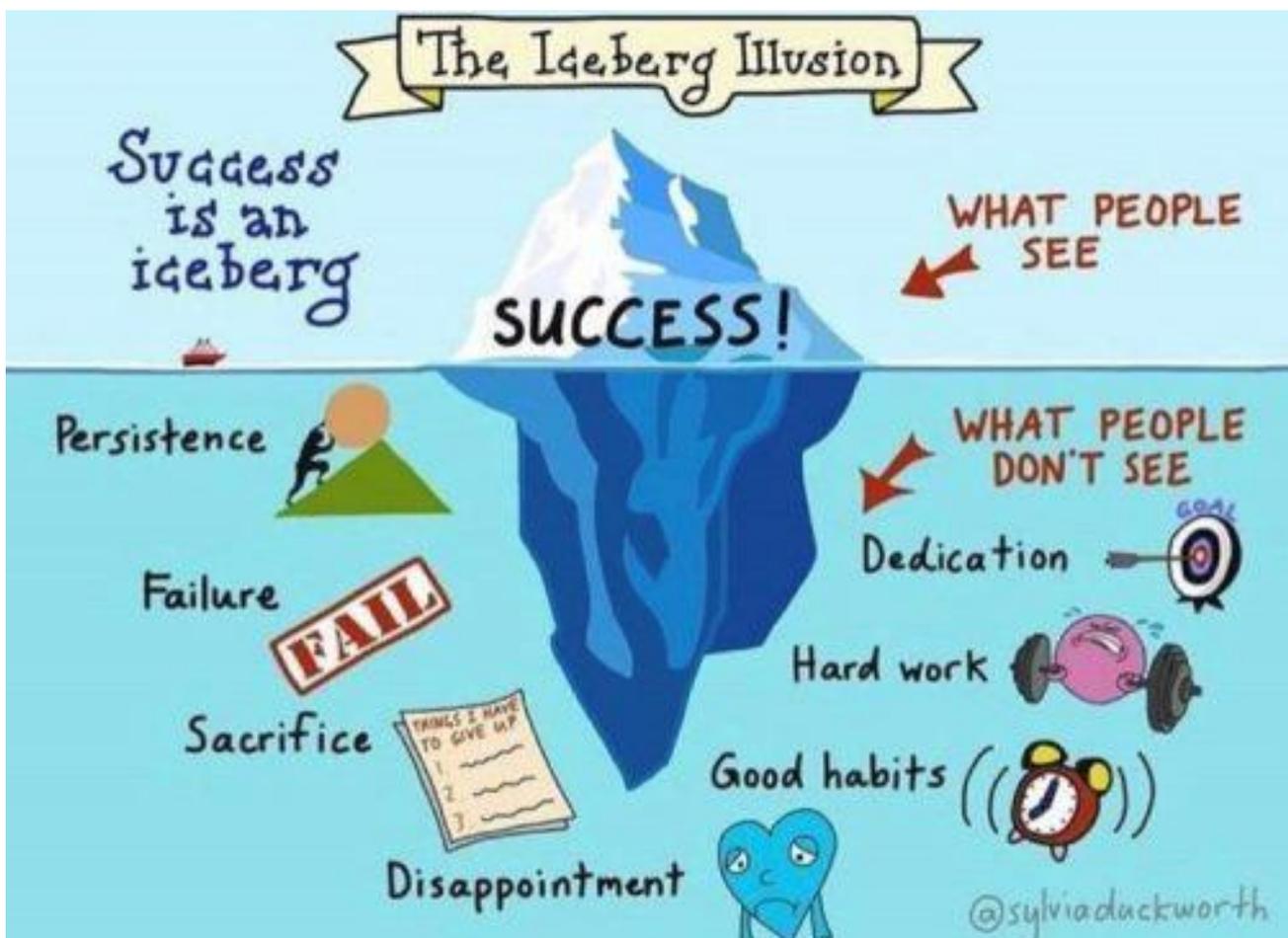
ACTIVITY 1 – ANYONE WHO ICEBREAKER

We used this icebreaker exercise to consider challenges we all face in the development of our work in the cultural sector. The following prompts were collated from freelance artists in our networks to illustrate some common experiences and challenges faced as freelance artists.

What it also demonstrates is that we're all experiencing the same things. There are practical things that we can do to improve how we handle ourselves in managing these challenges.

PROMPTS:

- Sometimes experiences self-doubt
- Has found it difficult to describe their practice to other people
- Has had a conversation with a potential partner, collaborator or funder that then went nowhere
- Feels like it's hard to 'get a foot in the door'
- Finds it hard to set rates and stick to them
- Has experienced imposter syndrome
- Didn't get an agreement in writing and someone took advantage of this
- Has had their practice described by other people in a way that misrepresented you
- Feels that other people sometimes just don't get what you do



ACTIVITY 2 - ELEVATOR SPEECH INTRODUCTIONS

We used this exercise to get to know who we had in the room, and for us all to consider and practice how we introduce ourselves to potential partners, commissioners and collaborators. We approached this through elevator speeches.

An elevator speech is a short persuasive introduction – called that because it needs to be short enough for you to complete it during an elevator ride. It's a concept to help you practice introducing yourself and your work in a way that is clear, concise and interesting.

Take a couple of minutes to consider this as a 30 second introduction, which should include:

- a) Your name
- b) How you describe yourself as an artist / your practice
- c) What types of work you're most interested in / excited by

E.g. *"I'm Rachael Walsh. I'm a writer, director and dramturg. I'm especially interested in work that supports women to take up space on stage, be funny and be allowed to fail and make mistakes."*

"I'm Anna Ryder. I'm a director, dramaturg and creative facilitator. I'm interested in directing narratives that explore our relationship with power, class and gender, and that interrogate the social structures that maintain inequality and violence within our society. I am interested in big stories that offer alternative perspectives on familiar personal experiences, and in small stories that challenge our perceptions of wider social ideas."

"I'm Kiz Crosbie. I am a theatre director, facilitator and coach. I specialise in the co-creation of theatre projects with children, young people and communities. I am really motivated by pioneering new approaches with new types of partners to find new ways for drama and theatre activities to have profound personal and social impact for participants and audiences."

- **REHEARSE** – Once you've planned your introduction, practice saying it out loud to yourself a few times. If the words don't sound quite right as you say them, or you feel clumsy using them, make some adjustments until it feels better, and you can imagine saying them to another person.
- **REFLECT** – Once we'd listened to each person in the workshop, we considered what other people said / did that made an impact on us and why. Notes we made were:
 - Particularly enjoyed references to the North, and Scotland - ownership of where people are from (especially as I'm in London!). Also variety of work people are doing - multi-faceted, multi-skilled.
 - Loved words like 'passionate' 'empowering' and 'I am interested in'. They feel positive and active. When I made my own, I found myself considering the difference needed between a written pitch and a spoken one. I needed to practice saying it out loud to know it was the right tone
 - It was interesting how everyone's differed in terms of the detail they gave. I think it's useful to be specific because it's the detail that peaks people's interest so when your focus and interests are quite broad it might get lost. I think mine was too broad really, it needed some detail to peak interest.

- Interesting to hear the words high quality, professional in some pitches. I'm reticent/scared to use those.. Also interesting to hear the diverse communities people are interested in connecting to - didn't occur to me to mention all - made me wonder if my practice is too diverse.
- Like how Scott linked his passions to the benefit the arts have personally given him - made it really personal and engaging
- Very interesting mix of creative people! In awe of what you are all doing!
- I always find the word "passion" helps to light up a pitch like that and always catches my attention. But the outlining of a specific focus/goal in your work really gives it a unique quality and sparks and interest!!
- I enjoyed peoples' colourful, vivid descriptions of what they do.
- Great elevator speeches - loved how action and passion focused they were- use of the word participatory?! I never say participatory outside of arts context!!
- Great that everyone was concise. Explained well the practices and areas people were working in. You could hear instantly if you could connect and potentially partner with.
- They all contained lots of things I wanted to ask more about.
- Made me want to have a pint with you all!
- Interesting note about how it reads and how to sounds out loud... I appreciate that difference hugely as many younger dance artists I work with struggle with articulacy.

SUMMARY

We never know when an opportunity to introduce ourselves or our work is going to happen, so it's important to be prepared with a clear form of words that you can use to present yourself well.

Remember to avoid jargon (which is rife in the arts and culture sector!) in your elevator speech. If someone finds what you say confusing, you're likely to get dismissed very quickly.

Practice giving your elevator speech to someone who knows nothing about your work.

Connection

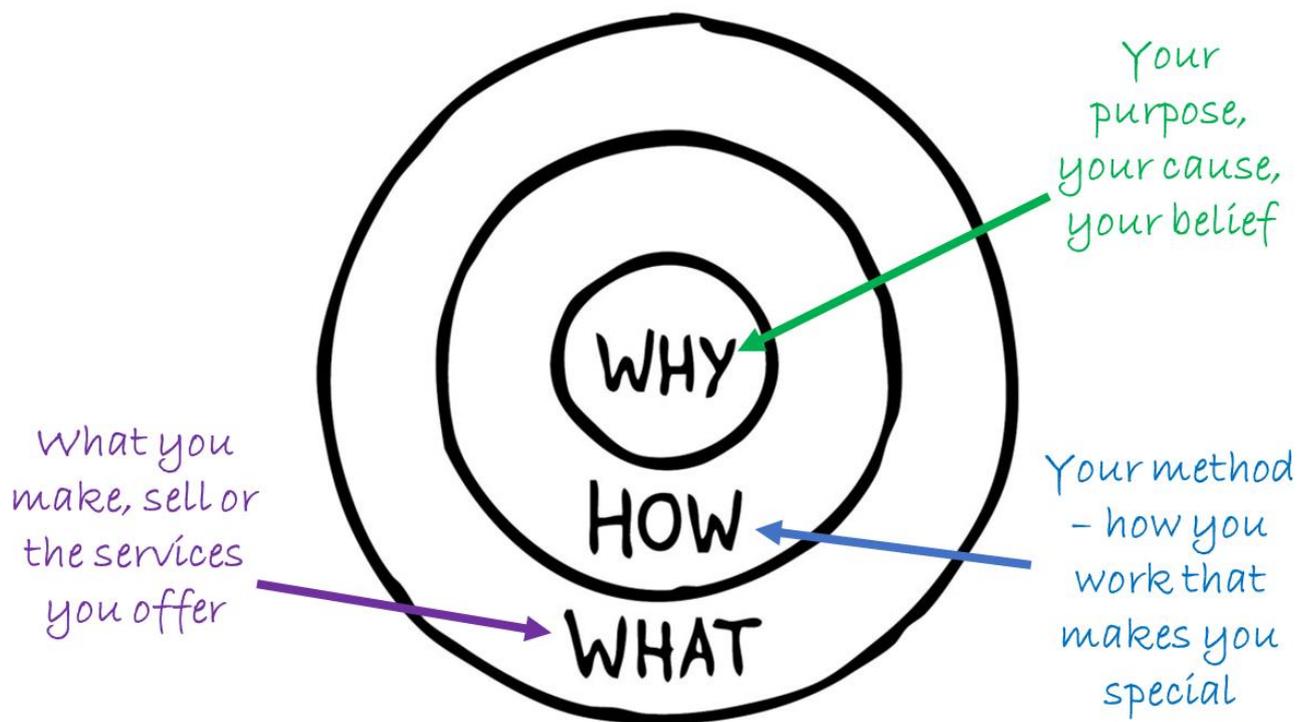
The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

Brené Brown

ACTIVITY 3 – START WITH WHY

This exercise considered how we can communicate about ourselves in a more compelling way using a concept shaped by Simon Sinek (signposts to his books and online talks at the end of these notes).

He uses a very simple model – called *The Golden Circle* – to illustrate why some organisations are so successful and innovative compared to others. His work focuses on organisations, but we can apply the same thinking to the promotion of ourselves as independent artists.



- **WHAT** Every organisation and every artist knows *what* they do – the products they make and sell or the services or activities they offer.

For example, *Mortal Fools* makes theatre productions and delivers training sessions. A writer might write plays or short stories.

- Take 60 seconds to write down examples of your WHAT outputs. These should be very specific e.g. I lead workshops with children in schools

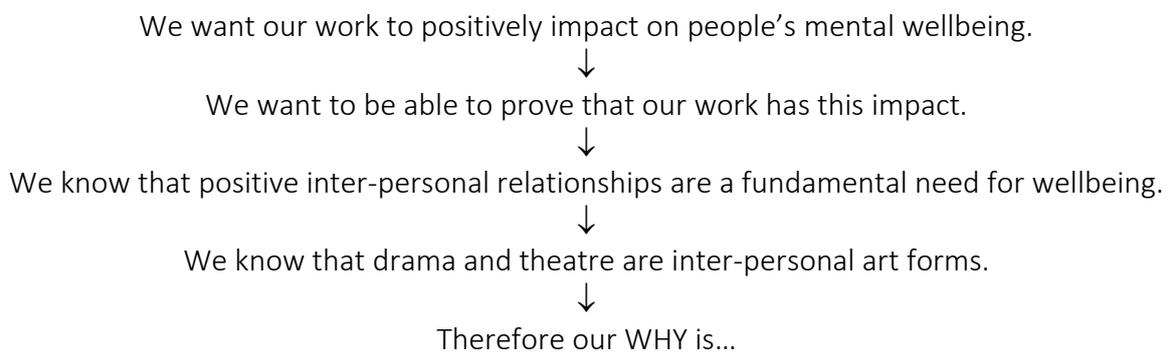
- **HOW** is our methodology (or our Unique Selling Point (USP)). *Some* organisations and artists will be able to describe how they work and what is special about it that sets them apart from their competitors.

For example, *Mortal Fools* might say: *we make theatre through a co-creation process, where children and young people collaborate with professional artists to produce original, relevant and socially-engaged productions.*

We deliver training that is practical, bespoke to participants' needs which focuses on experiential learning. We use unique blend practice from the creative sector and theory, practice and research from the social sciences.

- Take 2-3 minutes now to write down examples of your HOW – what makes you unique?
- **WHY** is your purpose, cause or belief. It is shaped from your personal values. Your WHY is the reason your work matters and the difference that it makes. Most organisations and many artists do not have a clearly articulated WHY. It is arduous and complex work to find a clear and concise definition of your WHY, which is why so many people and organisations haven't done it.

At Mortal Fools, we've done a lot of work on this over the last few years – and we've got a lot better at communicating our WHY. It's not perfect, by any means, but our process of drilling down into the work we do and the changes we wanted to make through the work led us to...



Mortal Fools exists to support people to build more positive inter-personal relationships

What Simon Sinek's research demonstrates is that most people and most organisations communicate about themselves the wrong way – they start with the WHAT (because it's easier to articulate) but the problem with that is:

“People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.”

Simon Sinek

As much as we like to think of ourselves as rational and objective creatures, most of our decisions are driven by our emotions and our personal values. Social science research – for example, *The Science of Persuasion* – demonstrates that we are most compelled to collaborate with or buy from people or organisations whose values mirror our own. And in competitive situations, this is even more important.

The most successful organisations and artists have a clearly articulated WHY and lead with this when they communicate to potential collaborators and customers.

Below we've outlined how articulating yourself or, in this case, an organisation, looks like in practice using extracts from our successful application to Garfield Weston Foundation in March 2020.

“Mortal Fools exists to support people to build more positive inter-personal relationships using theatre and drama-based activities, principally with children and young people.

Positive relationships are a fundamental human need – social science research shows that without them our health suffers, our engagement decreases, our wellbeing falters and we are often unable to fulfil our potential.

A report published in 2017 by the London School of Economics found that the “strongest factor predicting a happy adult life is not children’s qualifications but their emotional health.”

The social restrictions in place because of the pandemic mean we must find new ways to form and maintain relationships with one another – especially for our children and young people who are missing their friends and the usual structures in their lives.”

WHY



“Positive inter-personal relationships are a fundamental need for mental wellbeing and fulfilment.

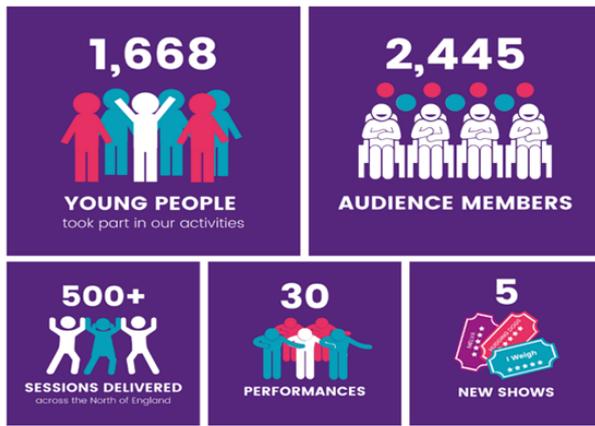
The arts provide a safe context through which to build our understanding of ourselves and others and to develop relational skills and confidence.

We use our practice of co-creating theatre to support children and young people to develop positive relational skills like empathy, team-working, problem-solving and resilience, recording additional increases in confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge.

We collaborate with like-minded partners to bring about small changes which can have long-term and wide-reaching positive impact on individuals and groups.”

HOW





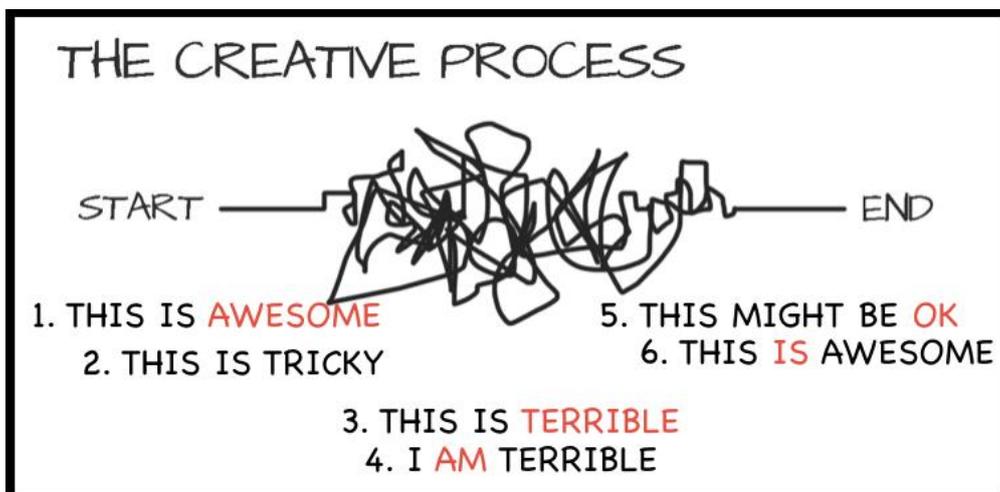
WHAT

“80% of children said they had learned something new about emotional health from the programme in 2019-20.”



- Now spend 10 minutes considering your WHY and making some notes. You might find the following prompts helpful:
 - What makes you pursue specific opportunities?
 - What gets you most excited and motivated in your work?
 - What changes are you trying to make through your work?

Remember, this is not easy, so make some time to work on it and then come back to it again and again to refine it as your thinking develops.



ACTIVITY 4 – PREVENTING OUR INNER CRITIC FROM GETTING IN THE WAY

For our final exercise, we did a piece of reflection about how the inner critic – the voice that most of us have inside our heads – can influence how we present ourselves to others, the opportunities we pursue and when we speak up for ourselves and others and when we don't.

There is a lot of writing in the social science sector about versions of the inner critic.

- Professor Steve Peters wrote a book called 'The Chimp Paradox', where he writes about the 'inner chimp' in all of us, who reacts on instinct and controls its human in stressful situations.
- Dr Brene Brown talks about the inner critic voice as moving between two places:
I'm not good enough vs Who do you think you are?
If we listen to that voice too much, it keeps us small and prevents us achieving our potential.
- And in our production of *Melva*, a play for primary school children about tackling our 'worrits', the writer, Danielle Burn, turned the niggling voice into a character – called Gideon.

- Start by giving your inner critic a name.

- On a piece of paper, write the following sentence starter...

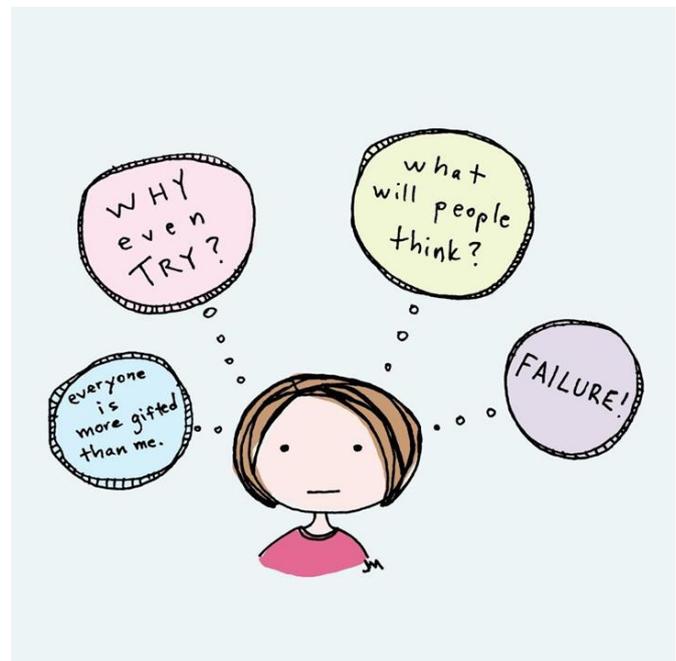
"The things [name of inner critic] says to me to keep me small are..."

- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Following on from your sentence starter, when you start the timer, write continuously for the 5 minutes.

The aim of freewriting is to have a continuous flow of thought onto the page, without stopping to think or edit yourself. If you get stuck that's what you write – *I'm stuck, I don't know what else to say, I'm hungry, blah blah blah* – until you can bring your mind back to the subject you're exploring.

- After you've written for 5 minutes, spend a few minutes reading back through what you've written and highlighting / underlining some of the things that you think are most powerful or important from what you've written.
- Now choose one of those things and imagine you heard a friend say that about / to themselves – write down what you would respond to them.

SUMMARY: Spending some time getting acquainted with our inner critic, consciously noticing the things it says to us and preparing our arguments can significantly help alter its power over us.



SUMMARY

Full details of Mortal Fools' CONNECT programme of workshops and training can be found on our website <https://www.mortalfools.org.uk/connects>

We also offer one-to-one coaching for those who have participated in our training programme, together with a closed Facebook group where people can continue sharing learning with one another. For details of either of these, please email Rachel.horton@mortalfools.org.uk

Thank you for attending this session. We hope you found it useful.

A full list of further resources we recommend can be found on the final page below.

Warm wishes,

Kiz, Rachael and Anna

kiz@mortalfools.org.uk

Income from our CONNECT programme of training directly supports our many projects with children and young people.

To find out more or to stay in touch, visit:
www.mortalfools.org.uk
[@mortalfoolsUK](https://www.instagram.com/mortalfoolsUK)

FURTHER RESOURCES

Reading

- *Proof of the Pudding* participatory artist toolkit [HERE](#)
- Article about [crafting your elevator speech as an artist](#)
- *Presence* by Patsy Rodenburg
- *The Gifts of Imperfection, Daring Greatly, Rising Strong, Braving the Wilderness* by Dr Brené Brown
- *The Right to Speak*, by Patsy Rodenburg
- *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek
- [Say Goodbye to the Inner Critic](#) – a blog from PsychologyToday
- *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy
- *The Chimp Paradox* by Steve Peters
- [The Reality of Imposter Syndrome](#) – a blog from PsychologyToday.
- *Quiet: the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking* by Susan Cain

Watch / Listen

- Dr Brené Brown talk about [Vulnerability](#).
- Simon Sinek [Start with Why](#) Ted talk
- Simple animation of the [Science of Persuasion](#)
- Dr Brené Brown Podcast [Unlocking Us](#)
- Carol Dweck talk about [Growth Mindset](#) and how to cultivate one.
- Julian Treasure's TED talk about using your voice to influence [HERE](#).
- A short film about how the flight, fight, freeze, faint or feign/fidget (5Fs survival response) affects our body and mind, click [HERE](#).
- Robert Winston talk about [How We Learn: Synapses and Neural Pathways](#)
- Susan Cain talk about the unique contribution introverts make in workplaces [HERE](#).
- Mortal Fools' series of short [Advice and Support](#) videos