



# HOW THE ARTS CAN IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

**Either sitting down watching or taking part on stage, it's a known fact that the arts can help to lift moods and spirits.**

But, in a year like none we've seen before, the population's mental health as a collective has taken a nosedive. With many usual routes of artistic recreation closed, we've looked to alternative means to seek the solace we all once found within theatres.

At Total Insight, we recognised this, and like most organisations, turned our once in-person activities into digital formats, so while our physical doors were shut, our virtual doors were wide open.

Let's understand the correlation of the arts and the impact they can have on mental health, and the steps we're taking to ensure our care for children and young people is unwavering as we navigate through the pandemic and beyond.

## **The Emotional Impact of the Arts**

In 2021, the [Health, Economic and Social impact of the arts \(HEartS\)](#) survey published its findings on arts engagement trends and their impact on mental and social wellbeing. Out of the 5,337 adults surveyed, 97% said they'd engaged with at least one arts activity over a year period.

The higher the arts engagement, the more positive levels of wellbeing and social connectedness were reported, together with lower periods of social loneliness. For those frequently engaging in the arts, there was a reduction in feelings of intense emotional loneliness and lowered feelings of depression.

With the survey being conducted outside of the pandemic, those usual habits may have fallen to the wayside with theatres, cinemas, museums and a whole host of other entertainment venues having their doors closed since early 2020. In a study conducted by [University College London](#), it has been shown that 56% of people aged 18-29 have felt their mental health has worsened over the duration of the pandemic.

This same data has shown that participants who spent 30 minutes or more each day engaging with an arts activity - be that reading, listening to music or watching a show - have lowered their levels of depression and anxiety, as well as improving their life satisfaction overall.

## What The Arts Can Do

There is no one set answer for how involvement in the arts can impact a person. The answer lies within a whole host of positives, from:

- Improving collaborative working skills
- Enhancing problem-solving abilities
- Building confidence, and self-esteem boosting
- Bettering communication and social skills.

The arts are commonly used as a form of creative therapy, aiding individuals through hard life transitions such as illness and navigating end-of-life arrangements. For patients with memory loss, engaging with painting or music is known to trigger forgotten memories.

## What We Did

With an indefinite 'pause' forced upon our in-person performances, workshops and after-school sessions, during 2020 we knew we had to do something to keep up our support for children and young people. And, like most organisations, we found that the answer lay in digitalisation.

Last year, we launched a number of online projects aimed to support children and young people while they process the ongoing impact of COVID-19, while keeping them connected with others of a similar age - and most importantly, safe.

We created a new virtual hub, **In It Together**, designed to provide creative relief and coping mechanisms for participants to process the impact of COVID-19 through regular weekly support sessions:

*"The most amazing experience, I feel so lucky to have been part of a project that has helped me creatively and mentally. A very special opportunity."*

With workshops exploring a range of art forms including writing, spoken word and devising, all the way through to music, improvisation and physical theatre; the free platform gives young people the opportunity to connect with each other and get creative while looking after their mental health and wellbeing.

To date, we have provided 90 hours of In It Together. As we mentioned earlier, just 30 minutes of arts activity participation improves mental health, so we're proud that we've been able to commit this time to children and young people to help support their mental health during a very hard time.

This is just one of many of our digital initiatives running throughout 2020 and beyond - [The Nest](#) has been created to help 18-25 year olds navigate pathways into the arts industry; and [My Mind Matters](#) was a set of short verbatim films spotlighting young people's mental health during lockdown, accompanied by short clips from therapists with tips and advice.


Our commitment continues to be unwavering as we move further into 2021, and look forward to our future plans for digital support, as well as a very welcome return to face-to-face events.

## How You Can Help

We use the arts to transform children and young people's lives - but it's only made possible through **your support and donations**. No matter the environment in the world around us, we always want to ensure our care is unwavering for those who need it the most.

**You can support Total Insight by making a one-off donation [here](#), or if you're able to, a continued pledge to help our vital work continue during the time when it's needed the most.**

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 Total Insight Theatre

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