



GROUP OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES

Groups are facilitated by Mahlie Jewell (M.AThR, MACA), a clinically qualified Art Psychotherapist who is also a trained peer worker with lived experience. It is conducted within a trauma and diversity informed framework and purposefully celebrates queer, First Nations and disabled/neurodiverse people as a social justice action.

FAQ

HOW WILL WE GET SENT THE LINK TO OUR GROUP SESSION?

- It is emailed to you 20 minutes before the session begins via Eventbrite.
- The link does not change week to week but only those who have registered and paid will be able to join the zoom.

LOGGING IN

- Log-in at least 3 mins before we start, I will start on time
- Zoom can be annoying, if you can't get in, check your details carefully. If it still won't work, email me.

CAN I ACCESS THE GROUP FROM ANYWHERE?

- You have to be able to maintain the privacy of your fellow group members. This means you should not be zooming from a public place or with other people around you (except your immediate family) who could breach the privacy of your group mates.
- **You should not be zooming from within a mental health facility** – this would be against the policy and procedure that all facing mental health professionals have to agree to. When a person is engaging with more than one therapeutic program, this should be openly communicated with each MHP.
- You can use a laptop, desktop or iPad within the zoom platform. Phones are highly challenging in this environment. Do not use a proxy program, server or device. These have faults in encryption. They leave us all open to cyber-attack.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC SITUATION WITH BEING “VISIBLE”?

- Your camera must be active at all times. This is a legal requirement when providing a therapy service via telehealth.
- You have two choices – focus the camera on yourself or art-making space.
- You can leave the room/space and not take your camera with you, but you must return when we discuss our experience with the activity.
- You are free to move around as you need – take a break, stretch, get some fresh air – just as long as you return.
- You can let the group know if you need to leave early or take a longer break
- If you switch off your camera for an extended period of time, I will ask you to switch it on.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M LATE

- If you think you might be late, let me know BEFORE THE GROUP. **Email me.**
- **If you're unsure if you're “too late”, always come anyway. There is no ‘locking out’ in the group.**
- If you come into the room late, then do so quietly if someone is speaking. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. Most likely, I will catch you up when this is appropriate.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO LEAVE EARLY?

- Preferably, let me know beforehand. This way I can inform you when is the best time to go and/or I can provide you with any follow up information you may need.
- You don't need to provide a reason, but keep in mind your commitment to the space and your respect for other group members.
- Try not to make it a regular thing.

WHAT MATERIALS ARE NEEDED FOR EACH GROUP?

- Whatever you have you can use. It does not need to simply be visual art supplies. Writing, craft, knitting and all forms of expressive creativity are welcome.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR THE GROUP?

- The process is not set in stone and is flexible depending on the suggestions of the group.
- Any process we do is optional, the space can also be used for those wanting to work on their own process or project or as a space to regulate emotions or experience collective art making. **This is a therapy space, however, and people are processing challenges and emotions in this space.**
- As a social justice act to reduce the power/control mechanism found in 'therapy' spaces and to practice Peer ways of working, Mahlie makes art totally visible alongside the group and engages in all processes equally.
- At the moment, the group land in the space with an open 10 min art making check-in where they simply see what comes forward and what needs to be put on the page.
- This is followed by a 5 min prompt for participants to write in a free "conscious stream" about their artwork and see what emerges.
- Participants are then invited to share around this artwork and gain some feedback as wanted.
- A longer art making session is then available in which participants are invited to continue working on the thoughts/feelings/understandings/curiosities that have arisen through the check-in session.
- The last half hour of the group is used again for sharing by participants as wanted.

WHAT DOES 'SHARING' MEAN?

- Non-verbal participation in groups is respected, understood and will not be punished.
- You can share your artwork physically, by simply holding it up to the camera for the group to see.
- You can use the chat function to upload a digital image of your work and I will share it on my screen to the entire group
- You can speak specifically about your work.
- You can speak generally about how comfortable/uncomfortable the activity was for you.
- You can ask others about their work or respond to a comment from someone else.
- As a general rule, you can practice the "full stop" technique. This is where you make a statement about your work and say "full stop" if you do not wish to discuss it anymore or have others comment or inquire about it further. EVERYONE (including me) must respect the "full stop".
- You can email your work to me – I LOVE that 😊
- You can post your artwork in the closed FB group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DBTartkids>

WHAT CAN I SHARE/BRING INTO THE SPACE?

- This is a therapy group and art psychotherapy is primarily a processing therapy. This means that people do sit with complex emotions and challenging events.
- We use the "community view of safety" model (see below) and are mindful about how we share details of traumatic events. This is done with care and concern for others whilst also respecting our own right to the stories of our lives.
- All emotions and mental states are welcome in our space as long as people are remaining respectful and not actively self-harming in our space. People do cry, sit with emotions like sadness, anger, loneliness, grief, confusion, happiness and joy.
- Use of language: Our identity is fact, not choice or preference and is honoured here. Abusive or offensive language, including racism, sexism, and homo/queer/trans-phobia, will not be tolerated. This includes intentional misgendering and deadnaming. These are human rights violations, not political opinions.
- We ask that people do not bring alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) into our space or enter the space under the influence of any substance that is not prescribed for a health concern by a doctor. Many people in our space (including Mahlie) are in recovery from substance misuse.

HOW DOES THE CHAT FUNCTION WORK?

- You can use the chat to speak to the entire group or to specifically message me privately.
- I prefer to keep private messages at a minimum and cannot actively respond when I am facilitating.
- The chat function is not an avenue for crisis intervention or 1:1 therapy support. If you wish to speak to me privately you can do this via email or in person (at request) before or after the session begins/ends and we can schedule an individual session.

CAN I RECORD (AUDIO OR VIDEO) OR TAKE PHOTOS OF THE GROUP INFO OR MEMBERS?

- Absolutely not.
- This is a breach of Federal and State privacy and confidentiality laws as well as a breach of copyright.
- *This content of the groups, including the members and artworks should **IN NO WAY** be shared or viewed outside of this space.*

DO I HAVE TO COME TO MORE THAN ONE SESSION?

- No, it's up to you if you come back or not. The space is open to anyone who would like to join us.
- A note that signing up for one session will include you on my mailing list and you will need to ask to be taken off if you wish.

ARE WE ALLOWED TO BE FRIENDS WITH EACH OTHER?

- Yes. You are adults. Refer back to the group rules on the last page.
- We have a super supportive community on Facebook that has a lot of people who have worked alongside me in many different ways. It is a safe monitored sharing space: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DBTartkids>

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD THE GROUP?

- The NDIS will cover this program entirely. The NDIS sets the rate for individual art psychotherapy at \$193.99 and hour based on the qualifications and clinical practice experience that art psychotherapists have. The group rate is currently \$70.64 an hour. If you are accessing the NDIS, please contact me before you purchase a ticket to discuss invoicing and line coding.
- My fees are the lowest I've seen for an art therapy group, but poverty is real. If you would like to speak to me about this, please email me and let's chat about it.
- There is a donation function for those who would like to buy a ticket for someone else in the community.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT YOU (MAHLIE)?

- Email. Always. I will aim to respond within 24 hours.
- Email me at mahlie@livingartstherapy.com

THINGS WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND & ACCEPT:

- **Safe spaces aren't always achievable.** I aim at all times for the groups to be as "safe as possible", using the community view of safety model, but this is not simple. This space is created in a way that reflects my own value systems. This means that I practice from my own values of inclusion, non-judgement, social justice, equity and the belief that all people have the right to safe and expert health care.
- **We must be respectful and kind at all times.** There will be no second chances when it comes to things like racism, queerphobia, xenophobia, classism, ableism, ageism, invalidation, misogyny, misandry, medicalisation, stigmatising or discrimination surrounding political views, religion or culture. Verbal violence, such as body shaming, gaslighting and bullying will not be tolerated.
- **A political view is different from a human rights breach.** Matters of gender, sexuality, religion, race, culture and equity access are NOT POLITICAL VIEWS. They are human rights. A political view is about how much tax you pay, your nations leader being an idiot, whether parking fines are too expensive or if the roads should be tolled. Breaches of the UN Convention of Human Rights are not "political views". Pronouns and names will be respected and decided by the individual. Any behaviour that can seriously invalidate or threaten the life of another person will result in a report to the relevant state-based hate-crime organisation.
- **We see and celebrate colour and culture.** This is a safe space to be who and how you are. We come into this space seeing your colour, race and culture and celebrating and honouring how that shapes and enhances your lived experience.
- **We see and celebrate lived experience.** The program is facilitated from a place of 'knowing' using my experiences with mental health systems from age 7 – now. The voice of lived experience is expert, safe, respected and celebrated here.
- **This aims to be an accessible and inclusive space.** Activities are written into the chat and made visible at all times during artmaking for those who have diverse hearing levels. Activities will always be explained verbally for those who have diverse sight range. Any other adjustments can be made where possible and requested. For those with sensory diversity, warnings will be given before loud noises/music.
- **We will run out of time.** It's likely you might not "finish" your artwork. This is common and annoying, I know. I will give you a time frame before we start each task. Try not to let it frustrate you. If possible, schedule some time outside the group to finish your work.
- **We will need to wait for others.** There will be times when you might finish before everyone else. That is fine. There is no need to keep working on something when you are done. Be done. You can start working on something else, go and get a drink, have a stretch, etc and wait for the majority of your group to be ready to share.
- **Decisions are made by majority rule.** Think of it like the supreme court, but cooler 😊 and sadly without the majesty of Ruth Bader Ginsberg.
- **The process is more important than the product.** Frustration over not being able to create on paper what is in our mind is common. Keep in mind that although the end product matters, what we are trying to capture is how you feel and think whilst making art, let that be your focus.

- **Praise for art skill and technique is not encouraged.** This is not an art class. You won't ever hear me comment on your art skill. That's not because I'm a jerk. It's simply not why we are here. And also, I already think you're all remarkably talented. There is no such thing as "good" or "bad" art. Art is subjective and personal.
- **Do NOT compare your art skill and technique to others or make judgemental comments about yourself or others.** This is simply self-invalidation and it's exactly what we are trying to learn not to do. You are you. You draw how you draw; you paint how you paint. That is just the facts. You can of course make art about this self-judgement and discuss how you notice these judgemental thoughts.
- **You can comment on the artwork of others and this is encouraged.** You *can* make comments about the colours used or the images created, you can complement the work, just do it in a way that brings in the actual aim of the activity. *Good example – "I love the way you used the ocean as a metaphor here, and that teal colour is wonderful". Bad example – "You draw so well. I could never draw like that. I wish I had the talent you have."*
- **You can ask questions about art materials or technique.** This is fine. In a normal group you would be watching each other create and would learn by osmosis, just make sure it doesn't dominant the conversation.
- **Different personalities and ways of being might cause discomfort.** This is normal in groups and is to be expected. Not everyone will be "our people". It's important to stay respectful and kind at all times. Learning to stay calm and kind in these situations is part of the skills we are building.
- **This is a space to critically reflect, question and be curious.** Ask me why, how come and who said. This is not a perfect program. By discussing what works and what doesn't respectfully we all learn.
- **All people are seen, heard, celebrated, welcomed and loved in this space.**

WE WORK FROM A COMMUNITY VIEW OF 'SAFETY'

- If it's not safe for everyone, then it's not safe.
- We are open to being reminded of safe sharing practices by other group members.
- We are supportive of group members who need to speak up if they feel unsafe.
- We understand we have shared experiences that may not need to be detailed in this space.
- Sharing safely means we don't describe traumatic events as these stories are precious and best had with your private mental health professionals, but we talk about the feelings connected to them.
- This is for both verbal and visual sharing. It might mean we choose to practice community safety and don't share the actual imagery, but describe its meaning.

A quick self-check-in can help. Ask yourself:

1. Does this help me?
2. Does this help someone else?
3. If I was hearing this from someone else how would this make me feel?
4. How can I explain myself without describing or detailing events - what emotions can I share instead?

PROSPECTIVE GUIDELINES AND BOUNDARIES FOR GROUPS

- ‘What is discussed in the room, stays in the room’: Maintain confidentiality, therefore what is discussed in group should not be repeated or shared with others beyond the group.
- Talk about yourself and your experiences. Share feelings and experiences. Sharing is encouraged, it is not compulsory.
- Arrive on time and try to attend for the duration of the session and program. Show respect for all your group
- Tell the facilitator if you need to leave the group early: If feeling distressed and wanting to leave, check in and debrief with a facilitator via the chat during “making” time.
- Discussing trauma can be distressing for others: keep important trauma stories to share with your individual therapist.
- Being heard and hearing others is supportive and shows respect and compassion towards others: Listen carefully to everyone as we can learn from each other.
- Avoid interrupting others: One person speaks at a time and avoid other (chat) conversations whilst participants are talking.
- Everyone is welcome and valued here: We encourage diversity and respect the unique experiences and opinions of everyone if they do not breach the rights of others. This is an open and inclusive, non-judgmental space where we are free to be who and how we are without fear.
- Use of language: Our identity is fact, not choice or preference and is honoured here. Abusive or offensive language, including racism, sexism, and homo/queer/trans-phobia, will not be tolerated. This includes intentional misgendering and deadnaming. These are human rights violations, not political opinions.
- Turn mobile phones to silent and do not have them in your immediate area during group.
- Participants should have their microphone switched off when others are sharing to avoid background noise interference
- Participants can signal wanting to share verbally or by using the “raise hand” feature on zoom.
- Participants can offer support to other participants as long as this is mutually agreed to and feels safe for everyone
- Advise facilitator of any intimate relationships you have with another participant: This includes siblings, family members (including chosen family), partners, and sexual relationships. These will not cause exclusion automatically.
- We are aware of judgements (including self-judgement) around perceived art making “skills” or “ability” and work mindfully to avoid making statements that praise one form of expression over another. All forms of creativity are powerful, important and welcome here.