

Resilient

Artists

**Enhancing mental resilience in
the arts through evidence-based
psycho-education.**

Royal Conservatoire
Antwerp

 AP HOGESCHOOL
ANTWERPEN

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Foreword

Strengthen the mental resilience of your students with the Resilient Artists Prevention Program!

A four-year research collaboration between the Applied Psychology program and the Royal Conservatoire of AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts has led to the development of an evidence-based, multidisciplinary prevention program designed to enhance the psychological resilience of performing artists.

The program integrates insights from psychology, the arts, medicine, and health sciences, addressing the unique physical, psychological, and socio-artistic challenges that students in the performing arts face. At the same time, it offers practical tools for effectively managing stress and supporting long-term wellbeing.

Since 2022, the Resilient Artists prevention program has been an integral part of the curriculum for all first-year students in Dance, Drama, and Music at the Conservatoire.

This innovative program not only supports students in coping with performance pressure, stress,

and career-related risk factors, but also fosters the development of self-awareness, adaptive coping strategies, and a healthier relationship with perfectionism and personal growth. These competencies are essential for sustainable artistic careers and lifelong professional development. Student wellbeing deserves more focused attention than ever. Arts education is becoming increasingly intensive and competitive, while students face growing academic, economic, and societal pressures. By integrating resilience-building practices early in the curriculum, educational institutions can proactively support mental health, reduce stigma, and create a learning environment in which students can thrive both artistically and personally.

Piet Menu
Head School of Arts,
Royal Conservatoire Antwerp,
AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts

Research

Resilient Artists is part of the broader prevention and support policy of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp and AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Because a student can only truly experience success when they also feel mentally and physically well.

An informed and well-trained student develops greater resilience towards the challenges of an arts education and a future professional career. For this reason, the Conservatoire has been investing in physical prevention within all performing arts programs since the early 2000s. Body Awareness, Yoga, Alexander Technique, Pilates, anatomy courses, nutritional guidance, and physiotherapeutic support teach students that the body is their first instrument. Learning to understand it, respect it, and keep it healthy is essential for a sustainable career in the performing arts.

At the same time, the body cannot be viewed separately from mental and emotional functioning. Based on that understanding, in 2019 the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, in collaboration with AP's Department of

Health & Science, launched a four-year practice-based scientific research project.

This research examined the mental challenges faced by performing artists during their education and future careers, the coping mechanisms they use, and to what extent these challenges are discipline-specific or cross-disciplinary. Based on these insights, the researchers developed a primary, preventive educational package consisting of twelve hours of psychoeducation, which was tested over the course of one academic year.

Beginning in the 2022–2023 academic year, this educational package has been offered to all first-year bachelor students in Music, Dance, and Drama at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp.

Research

Researchers:

Bart Michiels holds a PhD in Psychology (KU Leuven) and a Master's degree in Music: Classical Composition. His doctoral research focused on the use of single-case experimental designs in the statistical evaluation of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) treatments for chronic pain. As a psychological researcher within the Applied Psychology program at AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Bart led the Resilient Artists research project.

Tessa Weyns holds a PhD in Psychology (KU Leuven). Her doctoral work examined the role of social relationships in the school context, in the development of children in the general student population as well as cognitively gifted learners. As a psychological researcher within the Applied Psychology program at AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Tessa co-developed the Resilient Artists curriculum together with Bart. Tessa currently works at Multifunctional Centre Nido in Anderlecht.

The Research Report

Read the full research report [here](#).

Want to Know More?

Would you like to learn more about how this program can be integrated into your curriculum? Please contact us!

w: www.ap-arts.be/en/resilient-artist

e: weerbarekunstenaars@ap.be

Lesson package

Implementation

Since 2022, the curriculum has been implemented in all first-year Bachelor programs in the performing arts at the Conservatoire. All instructors teaching the Resilient Artists courses are active professionals in the artistic field and also hold a degree in psychology. Each year, the courses are evaluated by students and teachers and adapted to specific needs and new insights.

This curriculum is intended for educators. To deliver the content effectively, it is essential that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills. A solid theoretical foundation in psychoeducation and thorough familiarity with the concepts used are indispensable.

The order of the classes can be adjusted according to practical teaching constraints. The core of the program consists of:

- Basic psychoeducation
- The most common mental challenges faced by performing artists
- The Resilient Artists model: the 7 components
- Concrete reflection and discussion exercises on the various themes, including the sharing of personal experiences (within a safe environment)
- The personalized Mental Resilience Plan

Suggestions or additions to this curriculum are welcome. Contact us at weerbarekunstenaars@ap.be.

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Lesson 1

Intro

- What is the goal of these lessons?
- Introduction round (name, study, artistic discipline, expectations)
- Disclaimer: do's and don't's
- Personal topics
- Confidentiality
- No right or wrong answers
- Only share what you feel comfortable with
- Prevention – curation
- What if these lessons do not suffice?

Exercise

- What are the 5 biggest challenges for a performing artist?
- Discuss this with your neighbour

Quotes from performing arts students and professionals

“ In many cases you **can't afford to make any mistakes**. Everything must be as perfect as possible. People are very **quick to judge**... there are so many people in the audience, everyone with their own opinions. I quickly get a **sense of guilt** when I make a mistake, as if I messed things up completely.”

“ Part of the problem is that, when there's a vacancy for one position in an orchestra, there are over 150 applicants from all over Europe, creating **an enormous competition** for that one spot... are constantly asking themselves **if they are good enough.**”

“ As a child, I've always said I wanted to be on stage, and I have persevered with this dream. My career has always been **my top priority at the cost of everything else**. However, with getting older, I now realize that family relationships are getting increasingly important... not everyone understands that as an artists you often must work weekends and at night. People sometimes hold it against you that it's difficult for you to attend social events.”

**“Talking about mental health
is a taboo as an artist.”**

Do you agree or not, and why?

Psychological resilience can be defined as the ability of an individual to cope with or recover from challenges and stressors that pose a threat to that individual's functioning or wellbeing.

Masten, A. S. (2014, paperback ed. 2015). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. New York: Guilford Press.

Ann S. Masten is an internationally recognised expert in the field of psychological resilience, with over four decades of research experience.

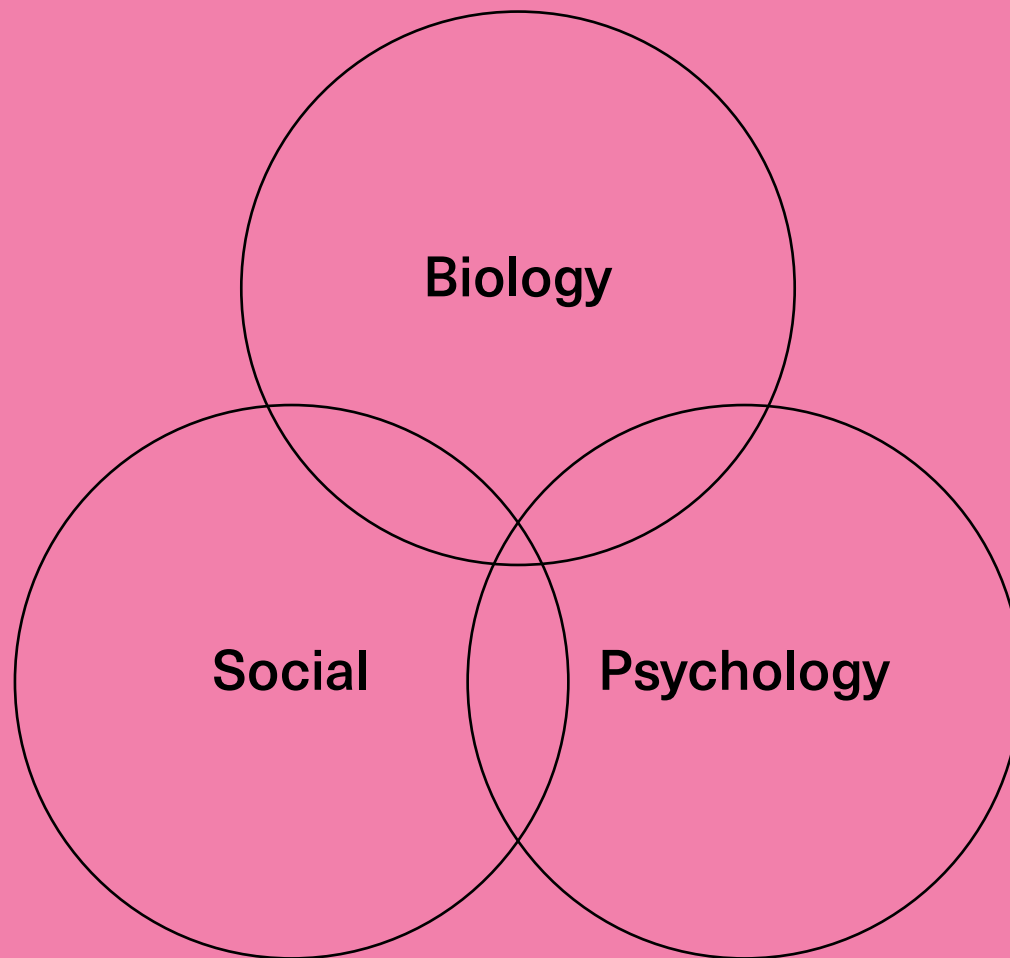
Mental health

- These 6 lessons will focus on increasing **resilience**
- The goal is **prevention**
- **Prevention versus curation**
 - ↳ For curation → external psychological help may be needed

Clarifying some relevant concepts

Exploring what we will be talking about...

Bio-Psycho-Social model



Mental health: exercise

**Write down for yourself:
do you take specific measures for your
mental health?**

Mental health

- Often talked about
- What is it?

A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mental health

- **Positive concept**
- **More than just the absence of mental disorders**
- **Fundamental for good quality of life**

Stress: exercise in pairs

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “stress”?
 - ↳ What creates stress for you?
 - ↳ How do you deal with stress?

Stress

Stress = biopsychological reaction to your environment

Source: Valencia-Florez KB, Sánchez-Castillo H, Vázquez P, Zarate P, Paz DB.
Stress, a Brief Update. Int J Psychol Res (Medellin). 2023 Oct 10;16(2):105-121. doi:
10.21500/20112084.5815. PMID: 38106958; PMCID: PMC10723744.

Stress



Stress

- Reaction to threat
- Depends on individual differences in
 - ↳ temperament
 - ↳ personality
 - ↳ behavioral inhibition
 - ↳ etc.

Stress

Normal reaction

- ↳ Acute elevations in cortisol levels are beneficial
- ↳ Can save your life

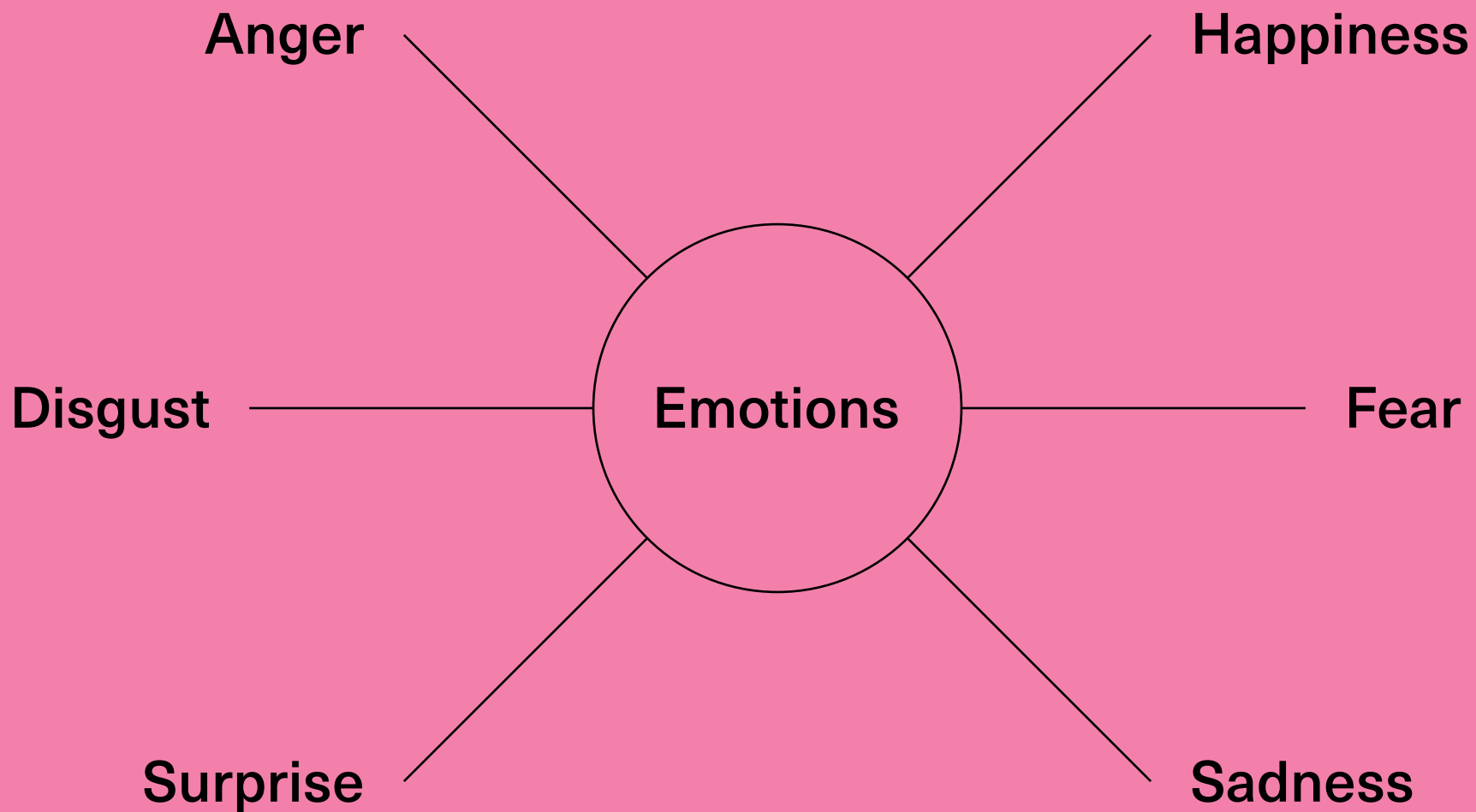
Stress

- **Chronic exposure to stress**
 - ↳ **Not beneficial!**
- **Long-term cortisol exposure becoming maladaptive**
- **Can lead to a broad range of problems including:**
 - ↳ **mental health disorders**
 - ↳ **cancer**
 - ↳ **cardiovascular disease**
 - ↳ **increased susceptibility to infections**

Emotions: individual exercise

- How do you cope with sadness?
- How do you cope with anger?

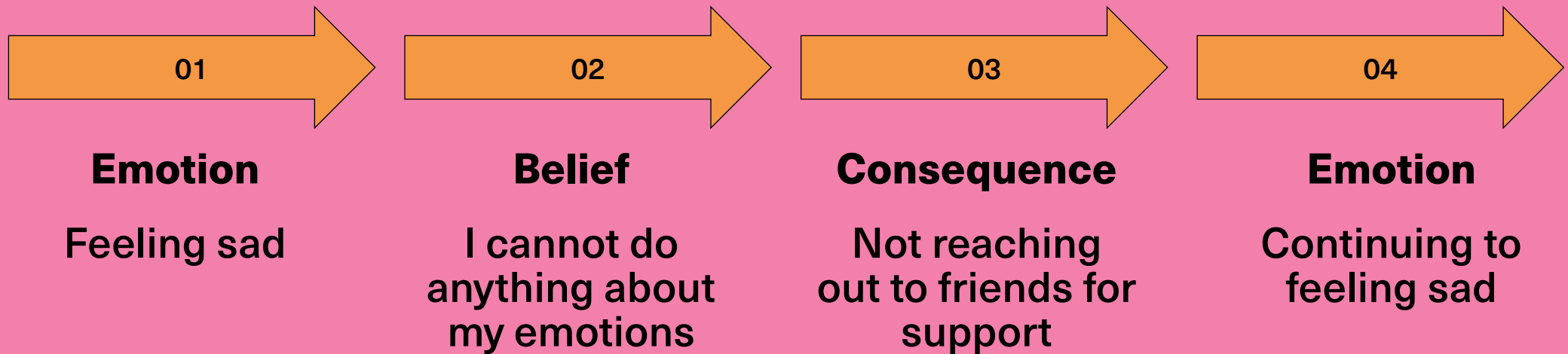
Emotions



Emotions

- **We reflect on our experiences, including emotions**
- **Over time, we develop beliefs about these emotions**
- **These beliefs have consequences**
 - ↳ **They guide how we respond to emotions and how we feel consequently**

Example



One fundamental belief: the **controllability of emotions**

- ↳ Believing emotions are uncontrollable reduces the likelihood of trying to control emotional experiences using effective regulation strategies
- ↳ This could negatively affect psychological health

Skills relevant for adaptive responses towards emotions:

- ↳ Be aware of emotions.
- ↳ Identify and label emotions.
- ↳ Understand what has caused a certain emotion.
- ↳ Accept and tolerate undesired emotions.
- ↳ Confront situations likely to cue negative emotions.
- ↳ Provide effective self-support when working to cope with challenging emotions.

**“Mental health is something you
can completely control”**

Do you agree or not, and why?

Holistic view

- **Body and mind are strongly connected. A holistic perspective means looking at the whole, taking into account all aspects of a person or system and their interrelationships.**
- **In these lessons we focus on mental health from a psychological perspective**

Resilience

- “The ability of an individual to cope with or recover from challenges and stressors that pose a threat to that individual’s functioning or wellbeing”
- Not a stable trait
- You can train and increase your resilience
→ **Goal of these lessons**

Source: Vella, Shae-Leigh Cynthia & Pai, Nagesh. (2019). A theoretical review of psychological resilience: Defining resilience and resilience research over the decades. Archives of Medicine and Health Sciences. 7. 233. 10.4103/amhs.amhs_119_19.

Lessons

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

Key message

- Increasing **awareness**
 - Increasing **insight**
 - Increasing your **grip on your own mental health**
- Next lesson → **applied** to performing artists

Source references

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- [ERIC - EJ1225648 - The Nature and Nurture of Resilience: Exploring the Impact of Nature Preschools on Young Children's Protective Factors, International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education, 2019](#)
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- [A broader view of trauma: A biopsychosocial-evolutionary view of the role of the traumatic stress response in the emergence of pathology and/or growth – ScienceDirect](#)

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Lesson 2

Lessons

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

Challenges for the performing artist: exercise in pairs

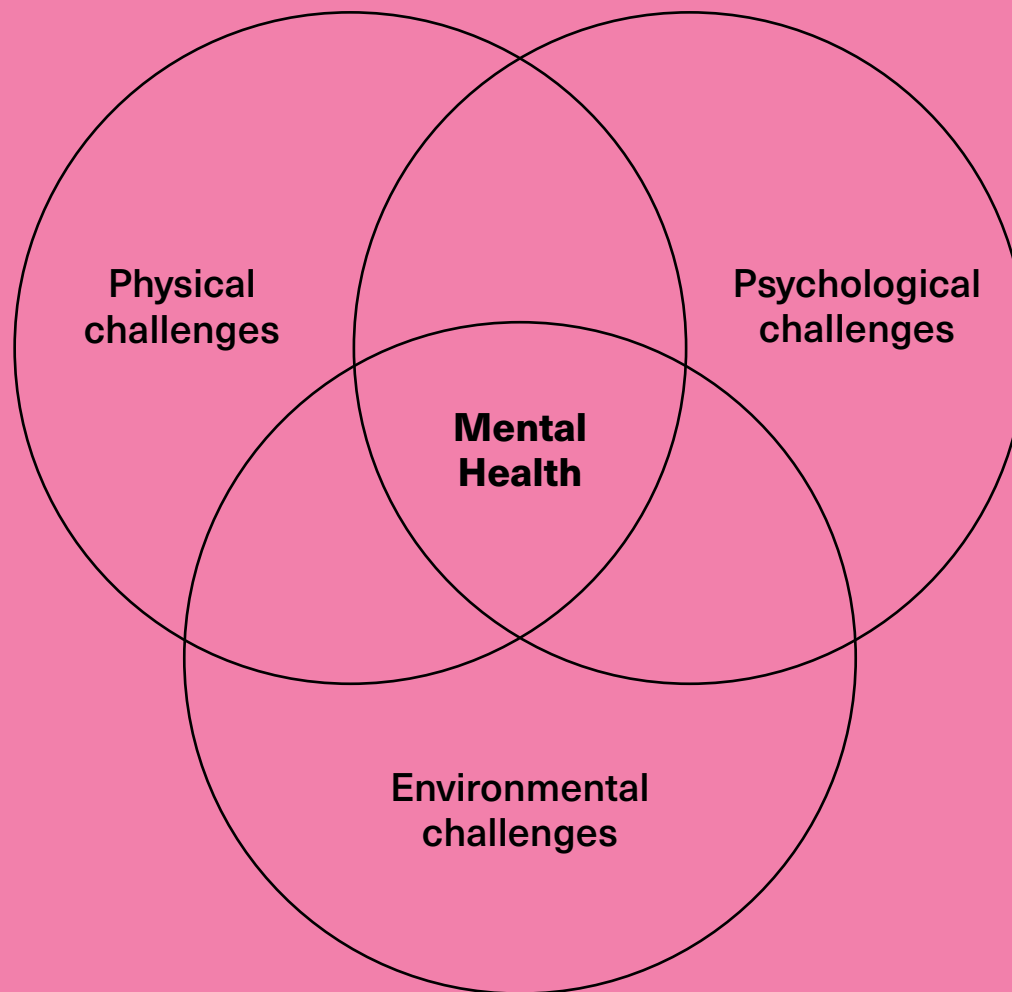
What are the most significant challenges in the life of a performing artist?

General discussion:

- ↳ **What are the main challenges that come up?**
- ↳ **Similarities and differences between music, dance and drama?**
- ↳ **Can these challenges be grouped in overarching categories?**

Challenges for the performing artist

- Injuries and pain
- Long working hours
- Physical strain
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle



- Perfectionism
- Fear of failure (incl. performance anxiety)
- Artistic vulnerability
- Intertwinement of artistic and personal identity
- Dealing with feedback

- Few job opportunities
- Financial strain
- Combining multiple jobs
- Short-lived careers

- Competition
- Social comparison
- Relationships with teachers
- Power relationships
- Mental health taboo
- Auditioning
- Boundary violation

Challenges we will focus on

1. Perfectionism
2. Fear of failure / performance anxiety
3. Mental health taboo
4. Social relationships with peers, teachers and supervisors
5. Intertwinement of personal and artistic identity
6. Financial- and job insecurity / combining multiple jobs
7. Physical challenges

Other mental health challenges

Scope of this course: mental health challenges specific for performing artists.

However, there are other, more general mental health challenges that can affect you: relationship problems, loss of loved ones, loneliness, physical illness, etc.

There is also an **interaction between general and artist-specific challenges:** e.g., loss of study motivation due to relationship problems.

Dealing with these general mental health challenges is not the focus of this course.

If you are struggling with such issues, we recommend that you seek help for psychological support.

Perfectionism

Quote from a Professional Actor

“ If you’re performing for a live audience, I believe you should always give it a 100%. Your artistic product is never finished, it can always be improved which is sometimes very frustrating. Even when you’re already on tour with the production you are obliged to try and improve yourself every day.”

Exercise in pairs: discuss this quote. Is it recognizable to you? How do you deal with perfectionism?

Perfectionism

The tendency to demand of others or of oneself an extremely high or even flawless level of performance, in excess of what is required by the situation.

Associated with performance anxiety, depression, general anxiety and other mental health problems

(APA, 2022)

Source: Stoeber, J. (2018). The psychology of perfectionism: An introduction. In J. Stoeber (Ed.), *The psychology of perfectionism: Theory, research, applications* (pp. 3–16). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Perfectionism

- Research shows that perfectionism is widespread among musicians, dancers and actors
- Multiple contributing factors:
 - ↳ Genetics and personality traits
 - ↳ 'Perfectionism culture' in the arts
 - ↳ High level of competition and few job opportunities
- Two categories:
 1. **Perfectionistic striving:** reaching for high goals and working hard to achieve them
 - ↳ Usually associated with **positive outcomes**
 2. **Perfectionistic concerns:** personal critique and rumination (e.g. after a 'bad' performance)
 - ↳ Usually associated with **negative outcomes**
 - ↳ E.g., low self-esteem, depression, performance anxiety...

How can we reduce perfectionistic concerns?

Perfectionism: individual exercise

Write down:

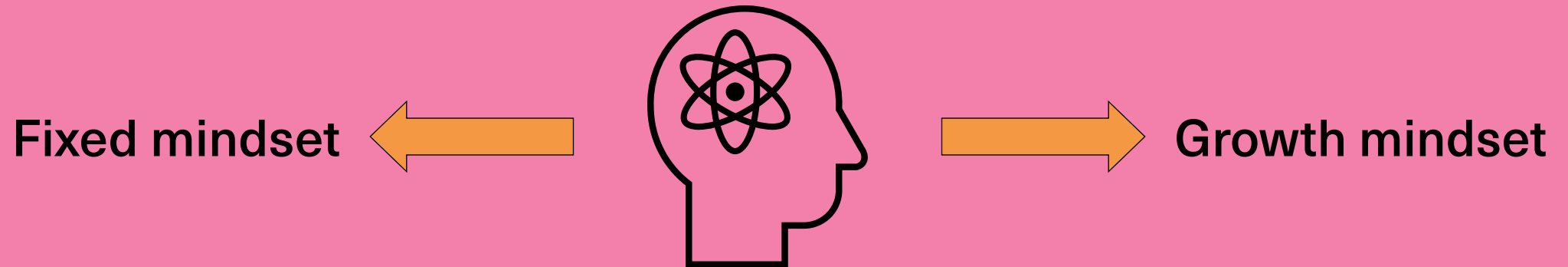
- ↳ Do you have perfectionistic tendencies?
- ↳ Can you break them down into perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns?
- ↳ Do you have strategies to deal with perfectionistic concerns?
- ↳ What would be helpful?

General discussion:

- ↳ What is a 'perfect performance' in dance, drama and music?
- ↳ Is perfectionism a desirable or necessary mindset as an artist?
- ↳ How can you strive for perfectionism without having perfectionistic concerns?

Dealing with perfectionism: fixed vs. growth mindset

— Carol Dweck, 2006



Source: Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.

Fixed mindset

**Fear for flaws
and mistakes**

**Feeling ashamed
about 'failure'**

**'Fixed mindset':
skill and talent
cannot improve**

**Feelings of
powerlessness**

**No trust in your
own abilities**

Growth mindset

Embracing flaws and mistakes as opportunities for growth

Accepting setbacks as part of the learning process

**'Growth mindset':
skill and talent can
grow over time**

Feeling empowered to reach goals

Trust in ability to improve gradually over time

Fixed vs. growth mindset

Fixed mindset:

- Shy away from challenges
- Become easily frustrated
- Seek praise rather than advice
- Perceive errors as personal failures
- Employ minimal learning strategies
- Give up after being disappointed
- Feel diminished by others' successes

Growth mindset:

- Enjoy challenges
- Are not afraid of setbacks
- Seek advice and criticism
- Regard errors as instructive
- Employ diverse learning strategies
- Bounce back from disappointments
- Draw inspiration from the successes of others

Fixed vs. growth mindset: exercise

Individual exercise:

- Write down 3 personal behaviors or thought patterns that you would classify as 'fixed mindset' and 3 personal behaviors or thought patterns you would classify as 'growth mindset'.

General discussion:

- Anyone wants to share?

Tips for promoting growth mindset

- Set small, incremental goals
- Focus on analyzing and defining problems standing in the way of growth
- Normalize struggle...
- Value challenges
- Embrace the word “yet” ...
- **Counteract negative self-talk**

Negative self-talk

Negative self-talk = any inner dialogue you have with yourself that may be limiting your ability to believe in yourself and your own abilities, and to reach your potential. It refers to thoughts that diminish confidence in your abilities to reach your goals.

Research shows that negative self-talk is linked to **perfectionism, decreased motivation, feelings of helplessness** and **depression**.

Negative self-talk can not only be stressful, but it can stunt your success by creating a self- fulfilling prophecy.

People with strong negative self-talk create an alternate reality for themselves where they don't have the ability to reach the goals they've set for themselves.

Negative self-talk: exercise

Individual exercise:

- Write down the two most recent occasions where you had negative self-talk.
- Analyze those occasions:
 - ↳ When? What situation? Other people involved?
 - ↳ How did you react to this negative self-talk?

General discussion:

- Anyone wants to share?

How to minimize negative self-talk

Thoughts vs. reality

Realize your thoughts about yourself are not necessarily accurate (cf. negativity bias).

Catch your critic

Learn to notice moments of inner self-criticism. Paying attention to the circumstances under which it arises can help you to stop doing it.

Give your inner critic a name

Think of your inner critic as an external force by giving it a name. That way, it becomes less threatening.

Identify erroneous thought patterns

People are prone to cognitive distortions such as personalizing, filtering, catastrophizing or polarizing. When you realize this it becomes easier to put negative self-talk into perspective.

Challenge your critic

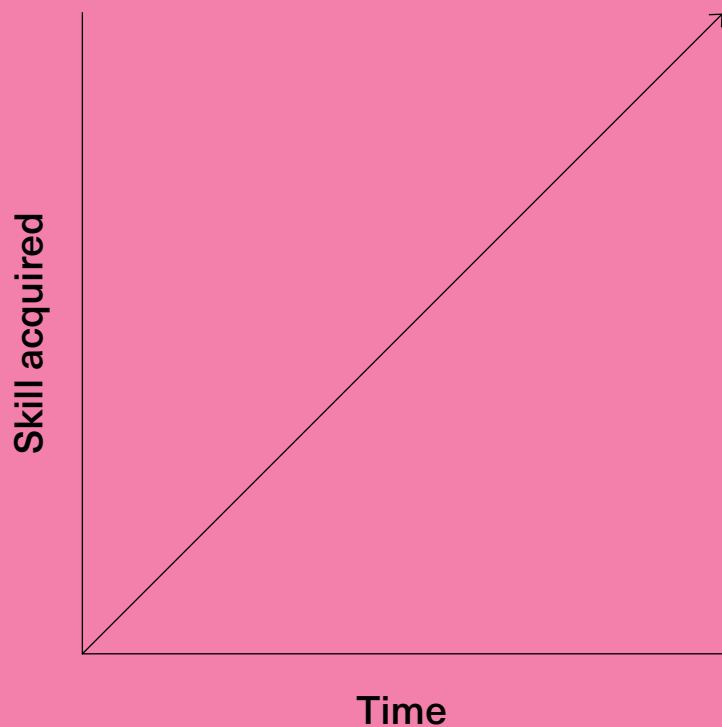
Is there evidence that my inner critic is right or wrong? Or is it jumping to conclusions?

Talk to yourself as you would to a friend

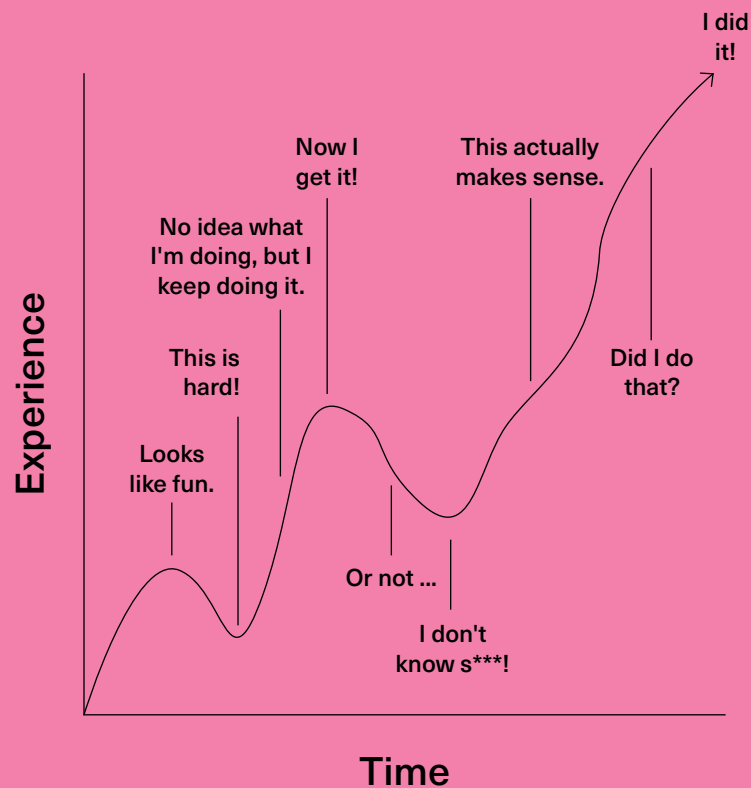
Speak kindly to yourself in the same way as you would be supportive for a friend.

Coda: learning a new skill

Expectation



Reality



Fear of failure

Quote from a professional musician

“ Oftentimes I’m so convinced that I’ll never be able to reach my goals that it paralyzes me in doing my practicing and my rehearsals. Whenever there’s the possibility of making the slightest mistake in front of an audience, I try to back out of it and tell myself that I don’t have what it takes to be a good performer. Ironically, this fear that I’m dealing with can ultimately work as a selffulfilling prophecy in the sense that I walk away from any challenge or goal that scares me.”

What is it?

- Fear of failure is an irrational and persistent fear of failing.
- Often times fear might manifest itself in response to a specific situation such as an upcoming performance or exam.
- Research shows that fear of failure is correlated with being perfectionistic.
 - ↳ The reason for this is that perfectionists have such high expectations for themselves that they also experience a fear of not living up to these very high standards.

Characteristics

Fear of failure produces typical emotional and behavioral symptoms including:

- Anxiety
- Avoidance of feared situation
- Feelings of helplessness

In addition, people with fear of failure also experience physical symptoms such as:

- Sweating
- Increased heart rate
- Trembling
- Dizziness and feeling lightheaded
- Stomach problems

Fear of failure and performance anxiety

Performance anxiety or stagefright is a specific form of fear of failure

Performance anxiety is defined as:

The experience of marked and persistent anxious apprehension related to stage performance which is manifested through specific emotional, physical and behavioral symptoms.

Quote from a professional musician

“It’s a feeling I remember very well from my conservatory years. Before every performance I used to get physical symptoms: I started feeling sick, started to sweat like crazy, etc. It got to a point where I asked myself: why am I doing this? This has got to stop because it’s not fun anymore.”

Fear of failure and performance anxiety

Performers who have performance anxiety are self-critical before, during and after their performance which leads to:

- reduced concentration
- physical symptom
- a performance quality that is below the ability of the performer.

Research showed that susceptibility to performance anxiety is determined by:

- Innate personality traits
- Type of performance situation (e.g., informal performance vs. final exam)
- Negative early performance experiences

Fear of failure: exercise

Discuss with your neighbour:

- Do you have fear of failure / performance anxiety?
- Do you have strategies to deal with it?
- What would be helpful?

General discussion

- Who wants to share their experiences?

Dealing with fear of failure – CBT

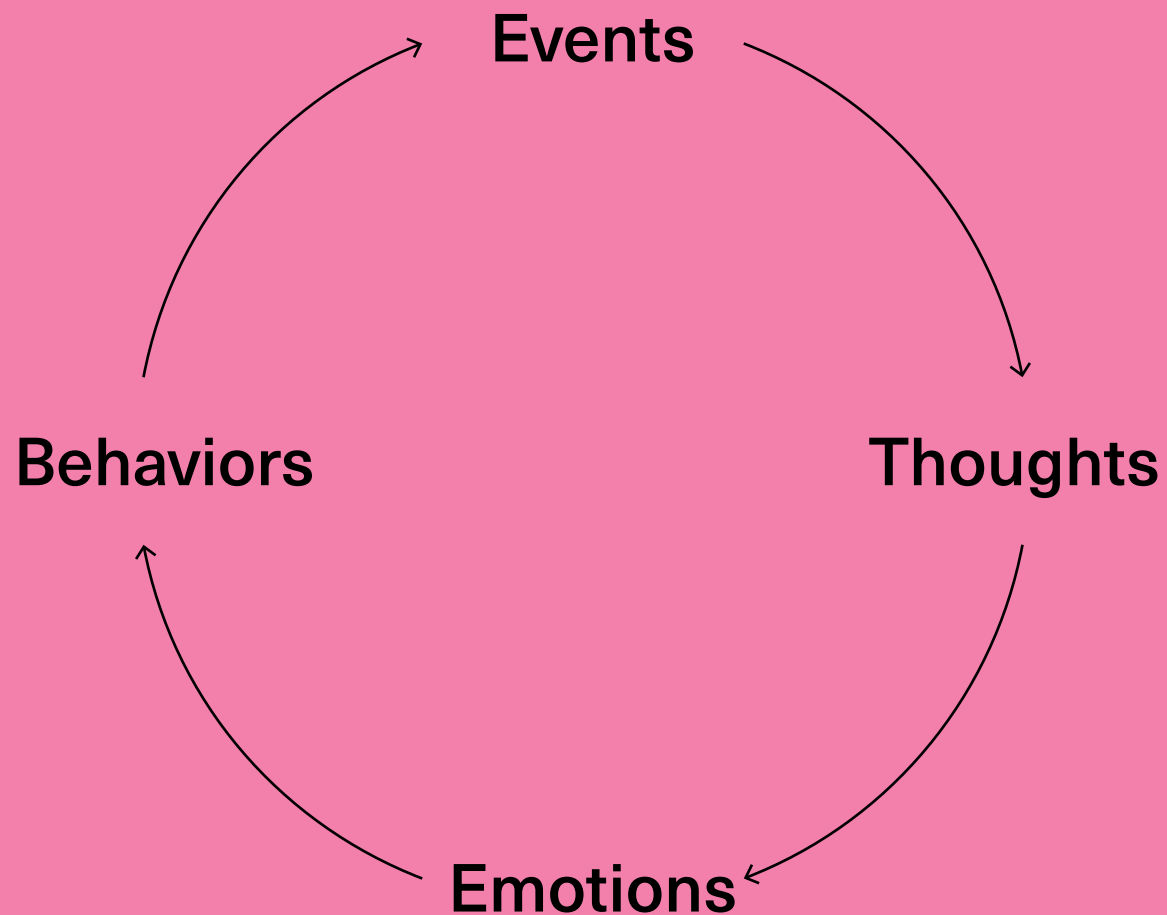
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a modern psycho-therapeutic method focused on challenging and eventually changing dysfunctional thought patterns, beliefs and cognitive distortions.

More specifically, CBT explores the **links between thoughts, emotions and behavior**.

CBT has been shown to be an effective treatment for general fear and anxiety disorders and is a widely researched and empirically supported method.

Dealing with fear of failure – CBT



Dealing with fear of failure – CBT



Dealing with fear of failure – CBT



Dealing with fear of failure - CBT

Key message

- You often cannot change events, but you can change the way you deal with them.
 - By changing your thoughts, you can change your behavior.
 - Not easy, requires specific exercises and maintenance throughout lifespan.
 - Works best in a tailored approach. If you suffer from high levels of fear of failure, individual counseling may be needed.
- Prevention is advisable, don't wait for the problem to become 'too big'.

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Lesson 3

Lessons

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

Mental health taboo

Quote from a professional musician

“ I get the impression that a lot of artists don't talk about their problems. I'm not sure if it's really a taboo but everyone seems to deal with their issues privately and just do what is expected from them without complaining too much. The thing is, if you're afraid to talk about your problems, things often get worse, it depends somewhat on the individual.”

Mental health taboo

- Taboo ~ stigma
- **Mental health stigma:** the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have about mental health issues.
- Stigma often originates from a **lack of understanding or fear**. Inaccurate or misleading media representations of mental illness contribute to both those factors.
- **Potential harmful effects of stigma and discrimination**
 - ↳ Worsening of symptoms, reduced likelihood of seeking treatment, lower self-esteem, difficulties with social relationships, ...
 - ↳ Stigma causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control. Worst of all, stigma prevents people from seeking the help they need.

Researchers identify different types of stigma:

- **Public stigma** involves the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have about mental illness.
 - ↳ Example: you overhear some people talking negatively about a person who is struggling with depression.
- **Self-stigma** refers to the negative attitudes, including internalized shame, that people with mental illness have about their own condition.
 - ↳ Example: a person who is afraid to tell friends about his or her depression out of fear of being stigmatized
- **Institutional stigma**, is more systemic, involving policies of government and private organizations that intentionally or unintentionally limit opportunities for people with mental illness.
 - ↳ Example: a musician, dancer or actor who had to cancel a production because of mental health issues and is not invited again by the same organization because of that

Findings from the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the Resilient Artists study:

- Interview participants indicated that they **still experience a taboo** on talking about mental health in many conservatories and artistic organizations.
- More specifically, a lot of artists are afraid to openly talk about mental health issues out of **fear of being evaluated negatively** by their teachers and others.
 - ↳ “It’s a problem that some students tend to hide their mental issues in order not to look weak towards their teachers”
- Some participants indicated that **internal competition between peers** makes it difficult to be open about mental health to each other.
 - ↳ “The thing is: even though we’re all friends and hanging out with each other, we still all want that one perfect job. There’s a lot of camaraderie but in the end we’re all fending for ourselves and in that respect it’s very difficult to be vulnerable and talk openly about mental health.”
- In general, participants made frequent references to an **implicit social convention** within the performing arts to keep up appearances, not show weakness and deal with personal problems privately.

Breaking the taboo

- Mental health stigma is a complex issue that occurs on **multiple levels** in society (cf. public stigma, self-stigma and institutional stigma).
- More specifically, public stigma and institutional stigma are **wider societal problems**.
- Here we will focus on reducing **self-stigma**:
Tips to reduce self-stigma
 - ↳ Realize that self-stigma is the result of a wider societal problem. It's not you.
 - ↳ Tell people you trust about any mental health issues you might have.
 - ↳ Don't be hesitant to seek treatment and be honest about it to others
 - ↳ Do not isolate yourself but seek out people who are supportive and understanding.
 - ↳ Educate yourself and others about mental health issues.

Mental health taboo: exercise in pairs

- Do you experience a taboo on mental health in your environment?
- Do you have strategies to deal with it?
- What would be helpful?

Social relationships with peers, teachers & supervisors

Social relationships with peers, teachers & supervisors

Social relationships form an essential part of the life as a performing artist. However, sometimes social relationships can also present certain challenges.

We will discuss the following social challenges:

1. **Competition and social comparison among peers**
2. **Building a professional network**
3. **Relationships with teachers & supervisors**
4. **Receiving feedback**

Social relationships with peers, teachers & supervisors

Findings from the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the Resilient Artists study:

Both musicians, dancers and actors frequently referred to their perception that a career in the performing arts is **very competitive** and entails a lot of internal competition among peers. The difficult economic circumstances and the scarcity of paid jobs were cited as the main causes of **internal competition**.

↳ *“Part of the problem is that, when there’s a vacancy for one position in an orchestra, there are over 150 applicants from all over Europe, creating an enormous competition for that one spot.”*

Participants indicated that this sense of competition typically already starts in the first year of conservatory educations as students realize that everyone in their class is as skilled and talented as they are.

↳ *“A lot of acting students feel a strong pressure to compete with one another in their first year. This sense of competitiveness subsides a bit in later years but the pressure to perform remains high as students are constantly asking themselves if they are good enough.”*

Participants also mentioned the **negative effect of social media** on social comparison and competition among peers.

↳ *“If you are struggling in your career and then you see on Facebook or other social media that your peers are doing very well in their careers, it makes you feel even worse.”*

Building a professional network

Social relationships with peers, teachers and other artists are very important in **building a professional network**.

Our research has shown that many performing artists consider building a solid professional network a major challenge throughout their careers.

- ↳ *“Networking is perhaps the most important thing. You can be a great performer or choose unprecedented music and make it performance-ready, but the network brings together the right people who can perform it and the right people who can program it and eventually record it as a CD.”*
- ↳ *“There has to be a professional and personal network, that’s a very important thing. Those who have graduated from a formal education are already doing so during their conservatory years. Artists who are self-taught have to try and create their network in a different way and have to spend a lot of time looking for contacts. A lot of artists underestimate the time it takes to build a good network, which can take up to 10 years.”*

Relationships with teachers & supervisors

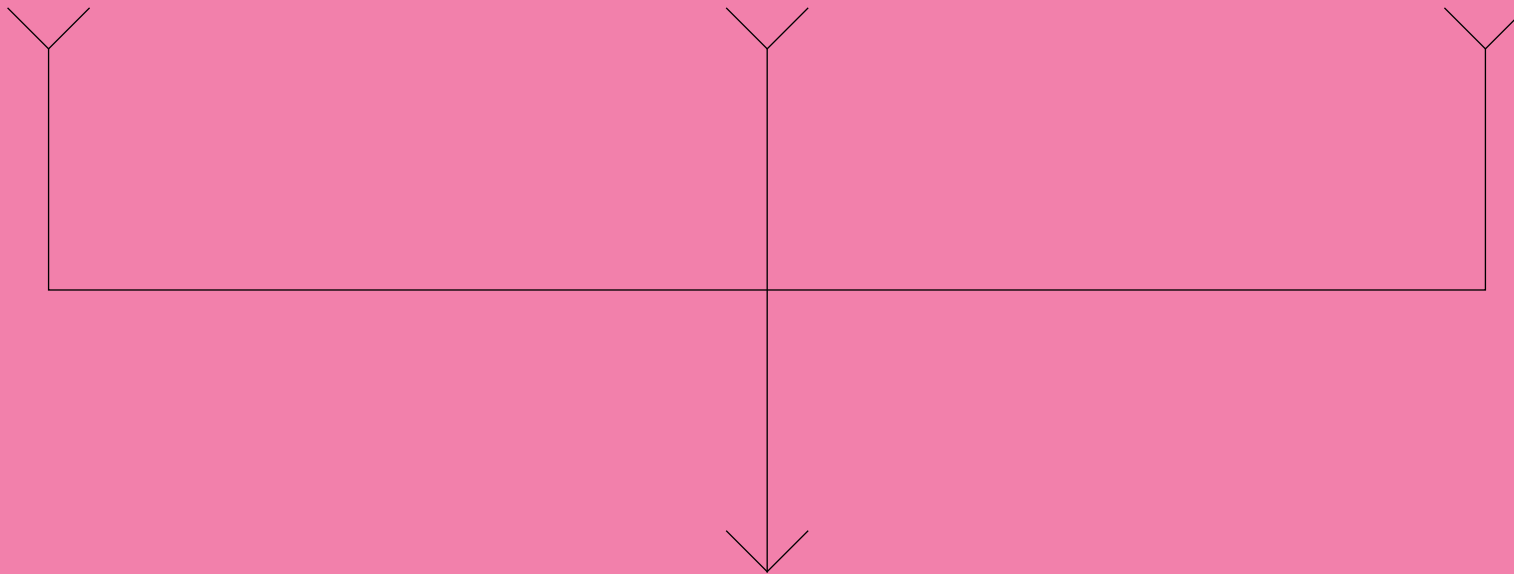
- In the performing arts, the student-teacher relationship is a special one.
 - ↳ Students are often seeking **advice** and **support**
 - ↳ They might want to share their **insecurities** and **emotions**
 - ↳ Students are often **vulnerable** towards teachers in this sense
- Good teachers are aware of this and treat their students with a high level of **emotional intelligence** and **respect**.
- When teachers exercise **too much control or power** over students, the relationship may become **unbalanced**.
- A good teacher should meet a student's basic psychological needs: **autonomy, competence, and relatedness**.

Self-determination theory

Competence:
feeling skilled at your
artistic discipline

Autonomy:
being able to make
your own choices

Relatedness:
feeling connected to
your teacher



**Motivation and
engagement of
performing artist**

Receiving negative feedback

All performing artists have to deal with negative feedback throughout their careers. Potential sources of negative feedback are:

- **Teachers**

↳ *“I know a lot of stories about students who lost all of their study-motivation due to constant negative feedback from their teachers. With some teachers you have to be very sure of yourself in order not to be discouraged.”*

- **Auditions**

↳ *“It’s normal to do a lot of auditions where you will fail far more often than you will succeed. Nevertheless, receiving negative feedback at auditions is quite difficult as it can start weighing on your self- confidence.”*

- **Critics**

↳ *“The thing is: positive reviews are nice to read but you forget about them two days after. However, negative reviews can keep lingering on in your head forever.”*

Dealing with negative feedback

Tips:

- Realize that making art is a **subjective experience**
- Be **critical about your criticaster**: is this person qualified? Objective feedback? Or forcing personal taste?
- Is critique **concrete** and **constructive** or vague and destructive?
- Think of negative feedback as an **opportunity for learning**
- Always validate negative feedback by getting **2nd opinions**
- Realize that **you can't please everybody**

Social relationships with peers, teachers & supervisors: exercise

General discussion:

Which of these social challenges are the most relevant for you?

1. Competition and social comparison among peers
2. Building a professional network
3. Relationships with teachers
4. Receiving negative feedback

Intertwinement of artistic and personal identity

Quote from a professional musician

“ For as long as I can remember all I wanted to do is music. It’s what I’m doing all day and every day. It has become a part of who I am as a person. However, a career in this business is so very demanding, both mentally and physically. I’ve thought about exiting the business multiple times but I cannot bring myself to do it. I just have to keep doing music. Otherwise I would lose a part of myself.”

Intertwinement of personal and artistic identity

Findings from our interviews*:

- Performing artists display a very high level of identification with their profession
- They don't make a big distinction between their personal identity and their artistic identity

Upsides:

- High motivation
- Feeling of belonging

Downsides:

- Feeling unable to exit profession
- Problems in artistic life trickle over in personal life

* Resilient Artists Study

Financial- and job insecurity

Quote from a professional musician

“As a performer, you can be hired to do a certain production, but if the subsidies are not approved, the production will be cancelled. You’ve then cleared your schedule to do the production only to be out of work for an entire month. As an artist, you’re often not protected against such scenario’s. Some artistic organizations even cease to exist because of budget cuts in subsidies. A friend of mine lost her job for exactly this reason.”

Financial- and job insecurity

- This challenge falls outside of course scope.
- **Main goal** here is: create **awareness** of the problem.
 - ↳ It's something to think about when pursuing a career in the performing arts.
- Economic circumstances in the performing arts can create **stress & anxiety**.
 - ↳ In the practical lessons we will focus on how to deal with challenges such as stress and anxiety.

Physical challenges

Physical challenges

Injuries

- The type of injury differs between musicians, dancers and actors.
- Musicians mostly tend to deal with overuse injuries of the arms, hands, mouth and neck.
 - ↳ *“As a pianist I had an overuse injury of my thumb due to repeating the same movement over and over again. Stress is also a part of it, the more stress you have, the easier it is to develop such an injury.”*
 - ↳ *“I know a lot of orchestra players with really bad tension in their shoulders and neck because of long rehearsals and concerts.”*
 - ↳ *“A good friend of mine who is a horn soloist had an overuse injury of the lips. The flexibility of the mouth muscles is very delicate and has to be maintained really well in order not to develop problems.”*

Physical challenges

Dancers and actors tend to deal with a **wider range of injuries involving the whole body** including **physical exhaustion**.

- ↳ *"At one point I was dancing in three different companies at the same time. Eventually I got so exhausted that my body couldn't handle it anymore and started to break down. I had no energy and no connection with my body whatsoever. In the end, I had to seek medical attention over an extended period of time in order to get well again."*
- ↳ *"Acting is such a physically demanding career. With almost every production I did, I eventually got some type of physical injury I had to recover from. That's why it's very important to take good care of your body."*

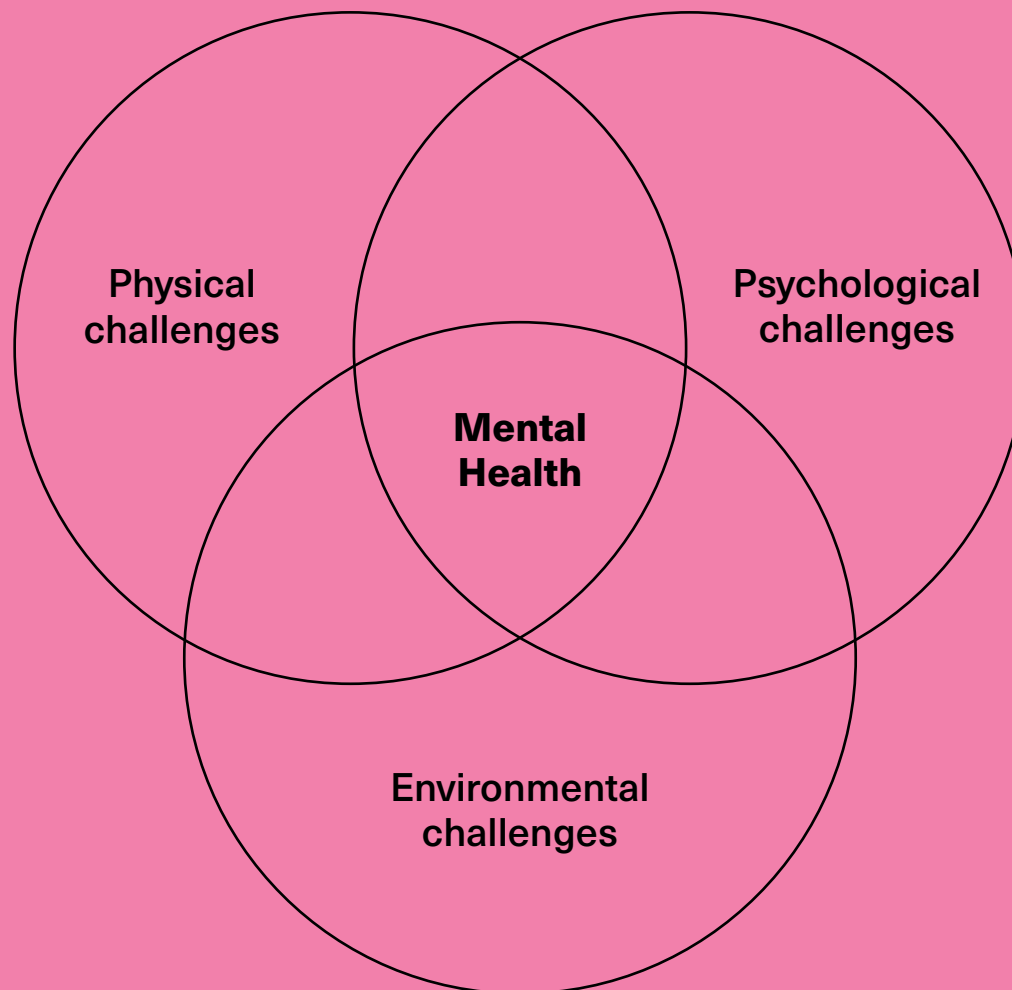
Physical challenges

Musicians as well as dancers and actors also indicated they often **feel pressured** by their environment **to play or perform through the pain** out of fear of not being considered professional.

- ↳ *"A lot of musicians wait far too long to seek help for their physical issues. They just think it'll disappear by itself. It's also because they want to be as professional as possible: they don't want to report in sick and not participate in the project because they are having some physical issues."*
- ↳ *"I had to undergo surgery where they put a steel plate and bolts in my arm. I had to rehabilitate for a year but in the meantime, I was still involved in productions that had to keep going. So, 14 days after the surgery I was already back on the stage."*

Recap: challenges for the performing artist

- Injuries and pain
- Long working hours
- Physical strain
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle



- Perfectionism
- Fear of failure (incl. performance anxiety)
- Artistic vulnerability
- Intertwinement of artistic and personal identity
- Dealing with feedback

- Few job opportunities
- Financial strain
- Combining multiple jobs
- Short-lived careers

- Competition
- Social comparison
- Relationships with teachers
- Power relationships
- Mental health taboo
- Auditioning
- Boundary violation

Key message

- Performing artists are faced with a **multitude of challenges** in the psychological, environmental and physical domain.
- However, **not all challenges apply to every individual** performing artist.
- A lot of these challenges are not for you to solve as an individual! They are part of a bigger system.
- However, a first step towards coping with these challenges is to **become aware** of them.
- The next lessons will focus on **practical exercises** that can help you cope with these challenges.

Resilient

Artists

Lesson 4

Lessons

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

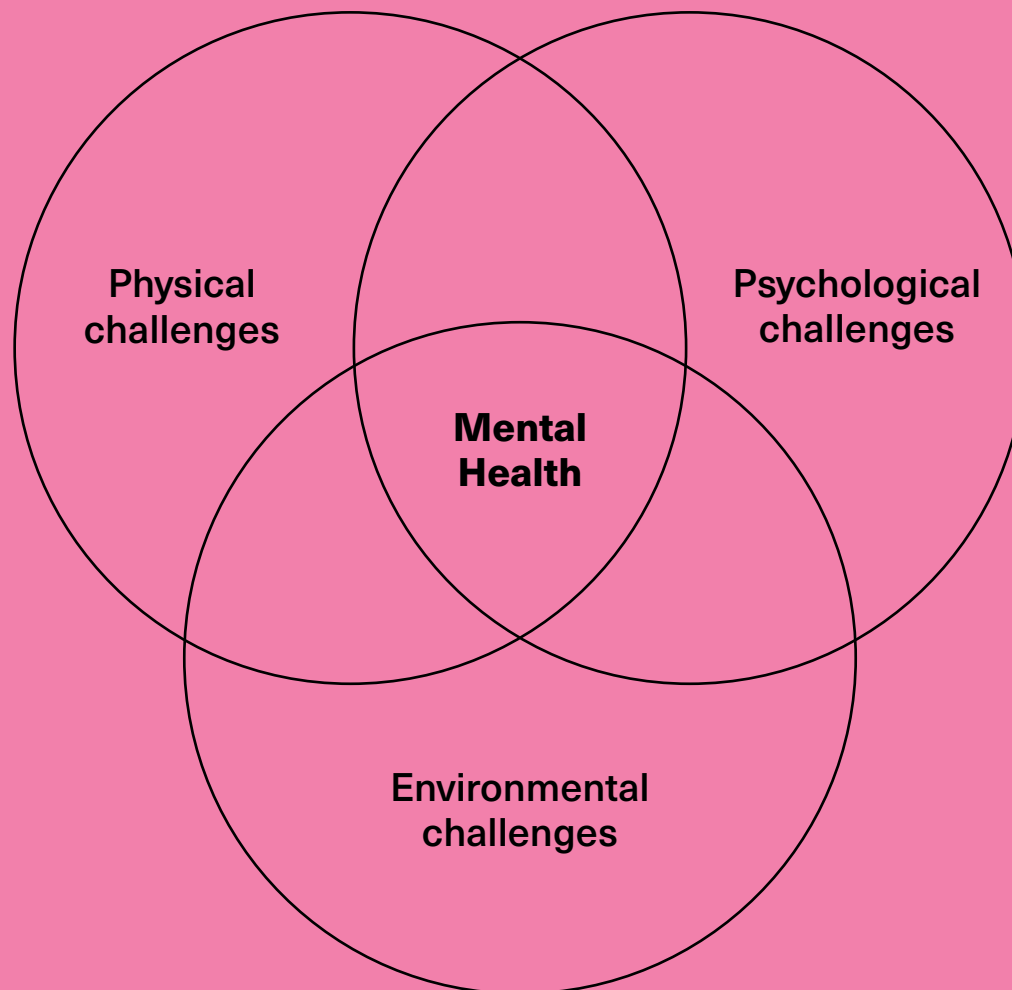
- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

Recap: challenges for the performing artist

- Injuries and pain
- Long working hours
- Physical strain
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle



- Perfectionism
- Fear of failure (incl. performance anxiety)
- Artistic vulnerability
- Intertwinement of artistic and personal identity
- Dealing with feedback

- Few job opportunities
- Financial strain
- Combining multiple jobs
- Short-lived careers

- Competition
- Social comparison
- Relationships with teachers
- Power relationships
- Mental health taboo
- Auditioning
- Boundary violation

Psychological resilience can be defined as the ability of an individual to cope with or recover from challenges and stressors that pose a threat to that individual's functioning or wellbeing.

Masten, A. S. (2014, paperback ed. 2015). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. New York: Guilford Press.

Ann S. Masten is an internationally recognised expert in the field of psychological resilience, with over four decades of research experience.

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



1. Who am I as an artist?

- Increasing self-knowledge
- Learning to reflect about one-self
- What are your strengths and pitfalls?

1. Who am I as an artist?

Reflecting

- ↳ Using own experiences
- ↳ Creating self-awareness
- ↳ Looking back – looking forward
- ↳ Tool – not a goal on its own

“ Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

Source: Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals JJ:167 (1843)*, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, Søren Kierkegaard Research Center, Copenhagen, 1997--, volume 18, page 306



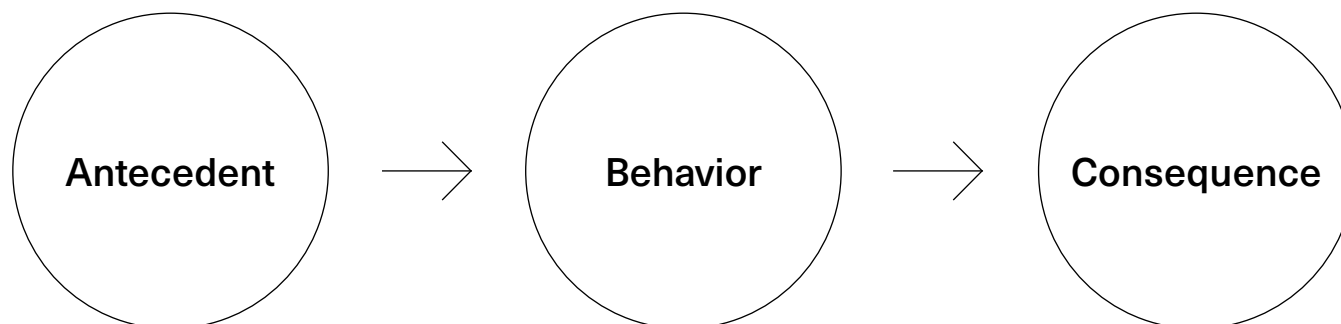
Source: Ellis, A., & Ellis, D. J. (2014). Rational emotive behavior therapy. In G. R. VandenBos, E. Meidenbauer, & J. Frank-McNeil (Eds.), *Psychotherapy theories and techniques: A reader* (pp. 289–298). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14295-031>

Think back at a recent event concerning your studies

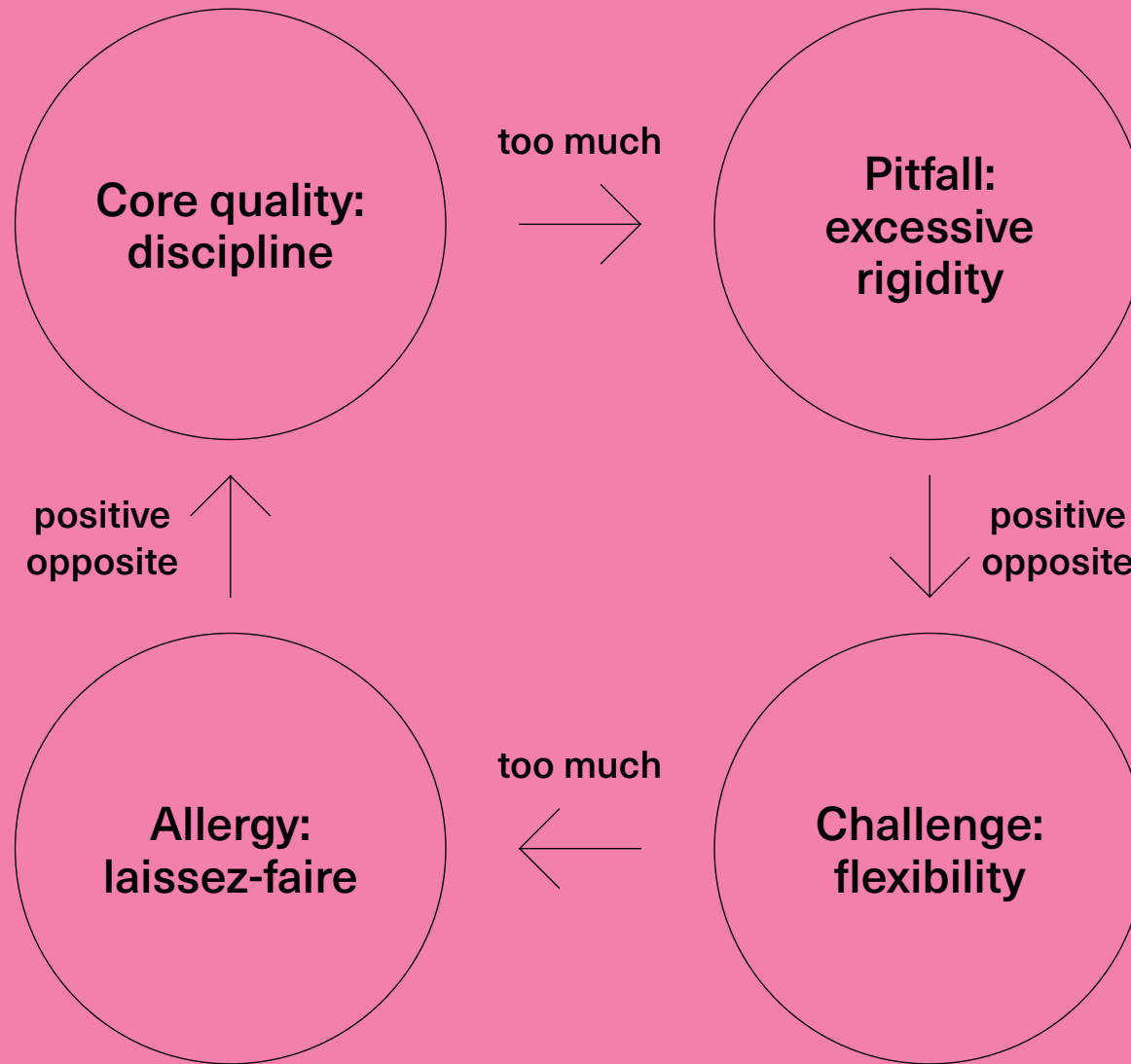
↳ For example, a conflict

Write down for yourself

- ↳ What was gave rise to the event?
- ↳ What did I think? What did I do? What did I feel?
- ↳ What were the consequences?



Core quadrant – Ofman



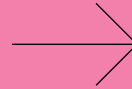
Source: Ofman, D. (2001).
Core qualities. A gateway
to Human Resources.
Scriptum.

Core quadrant: example

- What I find obvious in myself
- What I expect in others
- What others appreciate in me



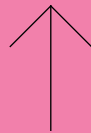
too much



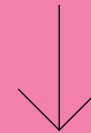
Pitfall:
excessive
rigidity

- What other people blame me for
- What I try to justify in myself
- What I tend to overlook in others

positive
opposite



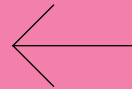
positive
opposite



- What I would hate about myself
- What I despise in others



too much



Challenge:
flexibility

- What I lack
- What I admire in others
- What others would wish me

Core quadrant: exercise

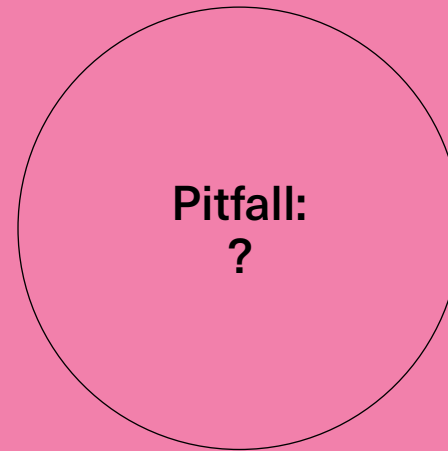
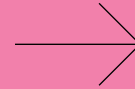
- Think about a core quality of yourself as an artist
- Fill out the core quadrant on the following slide

Core quadrant: exercise

- What I find obvious in myself
- What I expect in others
- What others appreciate in me

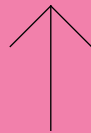


too much

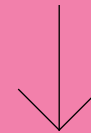


- What other people blame me for
- What I try to justify in myself
- What I tend to overlook in others

positive
opposite



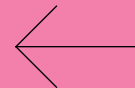
positive
opposite



- What I would hate about myself
- What I despise in others



too much



- What I lack
- What I admire in others
- What others would wish me

1. Who am I as an artist?

- Make room in your artistic activities for **things you do only for yourself** and not for teachers, exams or auditions.
- Reconnect with the things that ignited your passion for the performing arts.
- Focus on creating your own **unique artist identity**.

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



2. What are my goals?

What is success?

↳ **Subjective**

↳ **What it means to you personally**

2. What are my goals?

- **Wat is your goal as an artist?**
- **What do you want to achieve?**
- **Cost-benefit analysis**

Individual exercise

- **Write down for yourself:**
 - ↳ A long-term goal (e.g., what do you want to achieve this year?)
 - ↳ A short-term goal (e.g., what do you want to achieve in your next practice?)
- **Which one was the easiest for you?**
- **What made it difficult/easy?**

SMARTER goals

- **Setting goals is important for motivation**
- **Both long-term and short-term**
- **How do you define your goals?**
- **One method can be: SMARTER goals**

SMARTER goals

S

M

A

R

T

E

R

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time bound

Evaluated

Reviewed

Source: Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*, 70(11), 35–36.

SMARTER goals

S: Specific
M: Measurable
A: Achievable
R: Relevant
T: Time bound
E: Evaluated
R: Reviewed

- *“I want to play better”*

versus

- *“I want to improve my execution of Beethoven – 'Moonlight' Sonata by the end of the week. I want to practice 3 hours. I will know that I succeeded if I make less than 3 mistakes while playing the piece on Friday.”*

Exercise

S: Specific
M: Measurable
A: Achievable
R: Relevant
T: Time bound
E: Evaluated
R: Reviewed

Write down a long- or short-term goal and use the SMARTER-principle.

Exercise

- How did it go?
- **Setting goals is a skill → try practicing it often**

Mental resilience plan

- End goal last 3 lessons → personal mental resilience plan
- ‘Homework’:
 - ↳ Write down for yourself: how do you practice selfcare as an artist?

Resilient

Artists

Lesson 5

Lessons

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model

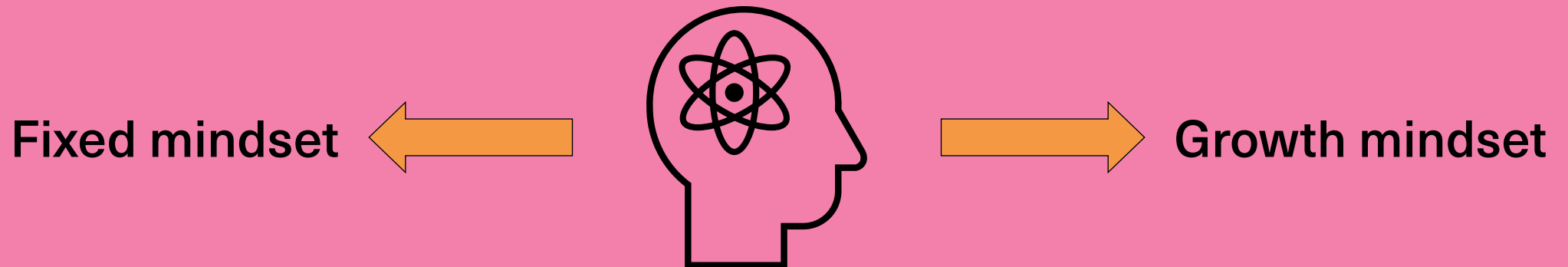


3. Mindset

Remember Lesson 2 ...

Fixed vs. growth mindset

— Carol Dweck, 2006



Source: Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.

Fixed mindset

**Fear for flaws
and mistakes**

**Feeling ashamed
about 'failure'**

**'Fixed mindset':
skill and talent
cannot improve**

**Feelings of
powerlessness**

**No trust in your
own abilities**

Growth mindset

Embracing flaws and mistakes as opportunities for growth

Accepting setbacks as part of the learning process

**'Growth mindset':
skill and talent can
grow over time**

Feeling empowered to reach goals

Trust in ability to improve gradually over time

Tips for promoting growth mindset

- Set small, incremental goals
- Focus on analyzing and defining problems standing in the way of growth
- Normalize struggle ...
- Value challenges
- Embrace the word “yet” ...
- **Counteract negative self-talk**

Mindset exercise: dealing with negative thoughts

Step 1: Identify your negative thoughts

- ↳ Think of a negative thought you have about yourself.
- ↳ Write down this thought exactly as it is.
- ↳ Examples: “They must think I'm weird.” “I can't play the violin at all.” “Being on stage makes me feel even more insecure.”
- ↳ The more precisely you formulate the thought, the easier it is to get a grip on it and make changes.

Step 2: Examine the truthfulness

- ↳ Gather evidence for and against the thought.
- ↳ Challenge your thoughts (putting the thoughts on trial).
- ↳ Determine whether the thought needs adjustment, based on facts and possible errors in thinking.

Step 3: Formulate a realistic, helpful thought

- ↳ End result: a thought that is honest, supportive and realistic.

Negative thoughts

“People will think I am ridiculous if I blush heavenly when performing.”

- Has anyone ever said this?
- Do people laugh when you blush?
- And if they do laugh, is it because of the blushing?
 - ↳ Perhaps the performance itself is funny?
 - ↳ Maybe something else in the room happens to be funny?
 - ↳ Maybe people are laughing because of something unrelated, like a funny memory?

Negative thoughts

Thinking mistakes:

- Negative bias
- Black-and-white thinking
- Overgeneralisation
- Mind-reading (thinking in someone else's place)
- Catastrophising
- Exaggerating the problem
- Personalisation (attribution theory)
- “Should” thinking (the “must/should” trap)

Example: putting the thoughts on trial

Negative self-talk thought:

↳ *“If I blush during my performance the jury will think I am a useless actor”*

Example: putting the thoughts on trial

- **Arguments pro:**

- ↳ *“The jury is watching me.”*
- ↳ *“I once heard a jury member saying I looked nervous.”*

- **Arguments contra:**

- ↳ *“I can't read minds; I don't know what the jury is thinking.”*
- ↳ *“Even though the jury is looking at me, that doesn't mean they are focusing on my blush. And even if they do, that doesn't mean they think I am a useless actor.”*
- ↳ *“If it was true that I am a useless actor, I wouldn't have performed “before.”*
- ↳ *“I have received positive feedback about my acting in the past.”*
- ↳ *“If I blush, it could be a sign of tension or stress, but tension doesn't mean my acting is useless.”*
- ↳ *“I have seen other actors blush before.”*

Example: putting the thoughts on trial

The realistic helping thought:

↳ *“The fact that I blush could indicate that I feel tension, it isn't pleasant, but I can't read the jury's mind and it doesn't imply that my acting is useless.”*

Negative thoughts

- If you are confronted with negative self-talk thoughts, you can formulate a realistic helping thought and write it down.
 - Reading it often, can help to remember this helping thought.
 - When you are confronted with the negative self-talk, you can remind yourself and repeat the helping thought.
- Thought are only thoughts, not reality.
- You can use your own helping thoughts.

Exercise

Thinking mistakes:

- Negative bias
- Black-and-white thinking
- Overgeneralisation
- Mind-reading (thinking in someone else's place)
- Catastrophising
- Exaggerating the problem
- Personalisation (attribution theory)
- "Should" thinking (the "must/should" trap)

- **Negative thought: "..."**
- **Arguments pro this thought**
 - ↳ (...)
 - ↳ (...)
- **Arguments against this thought (think about which thinking mistakes you could be making)**
 - ↳ (...)
 - ↳ (...)
 - ↳ (...)
- **Realistic helping thought: "..."**

Locus of control = belief about what determines what happens and how much influence we have on it.

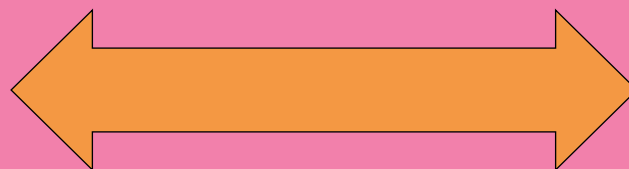
- **Internal locus of control:** We influence what happens through our own actions and skills.
- **External locus of control:** What happens is mainly determined by external factors, such as fate, chance or others.

Source: Zimbardo, P.G., (1985) Locus of control, depression, and anxiety in young and old adults : A comparison study. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 20, 41-52.

Locus of control

External

Individual believes that his/her behavior is guided by fate, luck, or other external circumstances.



Internal

Individual believes that his/her behavior is guided by his/her personal decisions and efforts.

Locus of control

- **Broadly speaking, the literature generally associates positive outcomes with internal locus of control, whereas detrimental outcomes tend to be linked with external locus of control.**
- **Studies link internal locus of control to numerous outcomes that are relevant to the workplace.**
 - ↳ e.g., general satisfaction, organizational commitment, and task performance

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



4. Selfcare

- **General concept, difficult to define.**
- **Important for resilient artists.**
- **Personal interpretation varies from person to person.**

“ Personal self-care is a process of purposeful engagement in practices that promote holistic health and well-being of the self.”

Source: Lee, J. J., & Miller, S. E. (2013). A self-care framework for social workers: Building a strong foundation for practice. *Families in Society*, 94(2), 96–103.
<https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.4289>

4. Selfcare: domains

Self-care is multidimensional:

- **Physical:** exercise, sleep, nutrition
- **Social:** contact with friends, seeking support
- **Emotional:** mindfulness, meditation, reflection
- **Spiritual:** meaning, values, purpose

4. Selfcare: key aspects

- **Self-awareness:** knowing what you need
- **Self-compassion:** being kind to yourself
- **Using strategies:** combining different areas of self-care
- **Personal interpretation:** what is helpful and achievable for you?
- **Examples of activities:** yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, mindfulness, sport, listening to music, cooking, meeting up with friends

4. Selfcare: routines

- Maintain **healthy routines**
- Create a **healthy lifestyle** that suits you
- Find other **relaxing activities** that suit you and your life

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



5. Social resilience

People around you can be source of resilience

- ↳ **Positive talks**
- ↳ **Talking about issues you are dealing with**
- ↳ **Providing meaningful bonds**
- ↳ **Doing fun activities**

5. Social resilience

- **People around you can also cause stress**
 - ↳ Negative feedback
 - ↳ Competition
 - ↳ Comparing yourself to others
- **Risk: self-fulfilling prophecy**
 - ↳ Expectations influence how you experience situations and people.
 - ↳ Example: competitive thinking from the start of the programme.
- **Reflection question:**
 - ↳ Do you see your fellow students primarily as a source of support or as a source of stress and competition?

5. Social resilience: exercise

- Think for yourself how you can improve your own social resilience. Which areas of social resilience can you invest in?
- Possible options:
try thinking of
 - ↳ a positive thing you like to share with your friends the next time you see them
 - ↳ something personal you like to share with a friend
 - ↳ an activity that you could do with a friend, that you will both enjoy
 - ↳ a way to tell a friend what they mean to you

Resilient

Artists

Lesson 6

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



6. Dealing with stress and anxiety

Stress & Anxiety

- What causes them? **A lack of perceived control** over certain life events.
- **Self-efficacy**: the belief about your ability to have an impact on your own life
↳ Cf. last lesson: locus of control

Source: Valencia-Florez KB, Sánchez-Castillo H, Vázquez P, Zarate P, Paz DB. Stress, a Brief Update. Int J Psychol Res (Medellin). 2023 Oct 10;16(2):105-121. doi: 10.21500/20112084.5815. PMID: 38106958; PMCID: PMC10723744.

6. Dealing with stress and anxiety

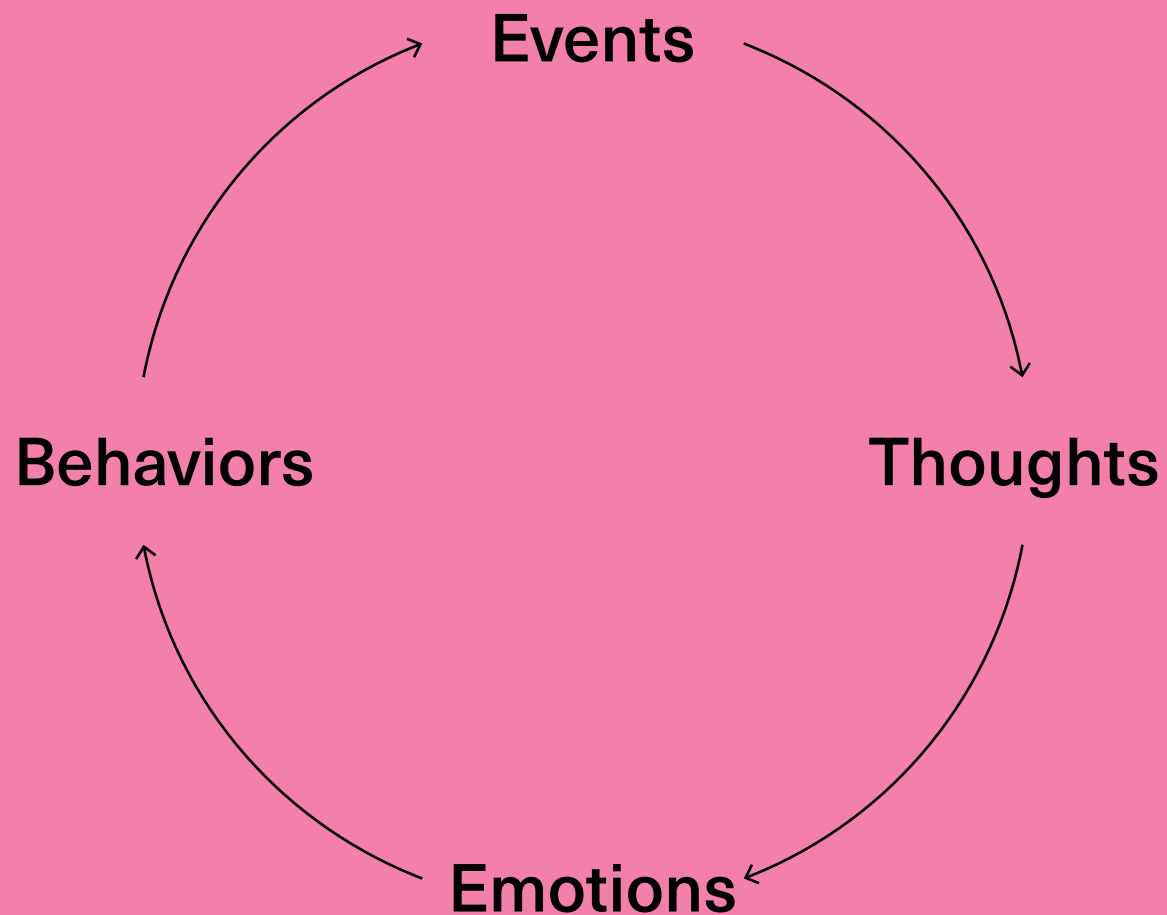
Dealing with stress and anxiety then means:

- 1. Increasing our ability to change things we can control.**
- 2. Learning to accept and deal with things we cannot control.**

6. Dealing with stress and anxiety

- ***‘Challenge your thoughts’*** (CBT – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)
↳ Remember Lessons 2 & 5
- CBT examines the links between **events, thoughts, emotions and behaviors**
- Focusses on **changing the way you think** about certain stressful events.
- By changing your thoughts, you can change your behavior

Dealing with stress and anxiety – CBT



Dealing with stress and anxiety – CBT



Dealing with stress and anxiety – CBT



Dealing with stress and anxiety – CBT: individual exercise (step 1)

- Analyze the most recent occasion where you had stress and/or (performance) anxiety using this CBT model
- Break down the occasion in 4 stages:
 1. Describe the event that took place
 2. What thoughts did the event elicit?
 3. How did these thoughts make you feel?
 4. To what behaviors did these emotions lead to?
- Would anyone like to share?

Dealing with stress and anxiety – CBT: individual exercise (step 2)

- Think of an upcoming performance/ exam for which you already feel anxiety or stress.
- Again, use the 4 stage CBT model but this time use the steps to describe how you will cope with the anxiety effectively:
 1. Describe the event that will take place
 2. Describe a thought process where you can manage your level of anxiety
 3. What are the resultant emotions?
 4. What are the resultant behaviors?

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



7. Dealing with setbacks

All performing artists are faced with setbacks from time to time.

- **Your career plan isn't going as planned.**
- **An audition that failed.**
- **An injury occurs.**
- **Depression hits.**
- **Loss of study motivation.**
- **Etc.**

7. Dealing with setbacks

How will you deal with these setbacks and bounce back from them?

Quote from a professional actor

“ One thing you have to learn as an artist is that everything you think about yourself is not necessarily true. A lot of artists believe they have to do something exceptional in their careers and let their self-worth depend upon their success. If you think like that, it often goes wrong. You have to be able to deal with failures and criticism and if you let it diminish your self-worth, you’re only giving yourself more stress.”

Core message: try and separate your successes and failures from your self-worth as an artist

Quote from a professional actor

“ To be a resilient artist you have to be able to accept criticism but convert it to something that you can work on. Whenever I get criticism from someone, I ask myself: what can I do with this information, how can I use it to improve myself. For me this is a very powerful strategy.”

Core message: view criticism or setbacks as learning opportunities

7. Dealing with setbacks

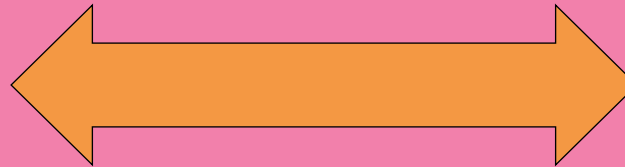
- **Try and separate your successes and failures from your self-worth as an artist**
 - ↳ 1. Who am I as an artist?
- **Create your own definition of success**
 - ↳ 2. What are my goals?
- **View criticism or setbacks as learning opportunities**
 - ↳ 3. Mindset
- **Define yourself as more than just an artist**
 - ↳ 2. What are my goals?
- **Apply effective coping strategies**
 - ↳ 4. Selfcare
 - ↳ 5. Social resilience
 - ↳ 6. Dealing with stress and anxiety

Locus of control (cf. Lesson 5)

Realize that not everything
is under your control

External

Individual believes that his/her behavior is guided by fate, luck, or other external circumstances.



Internal

Individual believes that his/her behavior is guided by his/her personal decisions and efforts.

Attribution theory

How do you look at the cause of setbacks?

	Internal	External
Controllable		
Non-controllable		

2 factors:

- **Locus:** is the cause internal or external?
- **Controllability:** can you control this or not?

Source: Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, 92(4), 548–573.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.92.4.548>

Attribution theory – examples

- **Example 1: external, uncontrollable**

↳ “My audition went badly because I fell ill a few days earlier and didn't have enough time to recover. This could happen again and I have no control over it.”

- **Example 2: internal, controllabler**

↳ “I failed my exams because I underestimated how much I had to study.”

Attribution theory

Exercise: think of a recent setback and place it in the correct spot in the quadrant based on the two dimensions.

	Internal	External
Controllable		
Non-controllable		

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



Mental

Resilience

Plan

Intro

In this worksheet you will create your own mental resilience plan based on what you have learned in the course.

The goal is to think about the aspects of mental resilience that are most relevant to you personally and how you can try to improve them.

You will start with one aspect. Later you can repeat the process with other aspects.

7 aspects of the Resilient Artist Model



Steps

To create your own mental resilience plan you can follow these steps:

1. Identify the aspect you would like to focus on.
2. Deep dive into this aspect.
3. Make a concrete plan: a list a of actions you will undertake in the near future to increase your resilience.
4. Evaluate your plan.
5. Adapt if necessary or choose a new aspect to focus on (i.e., start with Step 1 again).

Each step includes questions for **inspiration** to help you shape your answer.

Step 1: Identify the aspect you would like to focus on

- Which aspect could you improve the most?
- Which aspect has the most impact on your life?
- Which aspect resonates the most with you and your interests/life?

(write here)

Step 2: Deep dive into this aspect

- Take some time to think about the circumstances in which this aspect impacts your life.
- How often are you confronted with it? (e.g., do you think about it often, do you notice problems related to this aspect, etc.)
- What is your current relation with this aspect? (e.g., do you already take actions, how do you feel about this aspect, etc.)
- Is it linked to specific (groups of) people?
- Is it linked to specific events, times, etc.?

(write here)

Step 3: Make a concrete plan

- Make a list of things you want to do and the times you will do them at.
- Set small and achievable targets.
- Think about people you can ask for help.
- When will you evaluate your plan?
- When will it be a 'success'?

(write here)

Step 4: Evaluate your plan

- How did creating this plan go for you?
- Are you satisfied with the result?

(write here)

Global Recap

Lesson 1

- Introduction
- Mental health
- Stress
- Emotions
- Resilience

Lesson 2

- Framework challenges (C)
- C1: perfectionism
- C2: fear of failure

Lesson 3

- C3: mental health taboo
- C4: peers
- C5: intertwinement identities
- C6: job insecurity
- C7: physical challenges

Lesson 4

- Introduction
- 7 aspects (A)
- A1: who am I as an artist?
- A2: what are my goals?

Lesson 5

- A3: mindset
- A4: selfcare
- A5: social resilience

Lesson 6

- A6: dealing with stress and anxiety
- A7: dealing with setbacks
- Mental resilience plan

Concluding remarks

These lessons were about **increasing psychological resilience** and **prevention** of mental health issues. Curation requires an individual approach.

We focused on mental health from a **psychological perspective**, but it can also be helpful to try a purely artistic perspective.

The course focussed on mental health but be aware that **physical health** is also very important.

These lessons were not about right or wrong, good or bad but about helping you increase your **insight** and awareness in order to **increase your grip on your own mental health**.

We tried to do this by:

- Offering **psycho-education** (Lesson 1);
- Discussing **common challenges** performing artists face (Lessons 2 & 3);
- Offering a **framework** on how to approach resilience as a performing artists (Lessons 4,5 & 6);
- Offering **practical exercises** you can try-out further at home.

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