



# TEACHING ARTIST TOOL KIT

CREATIVE STRATEGIES IN MOTION  
TURNING STORY INTO LASTING IMPACT.







# 01/ CONSISTENCY | TRUST | IMPACT

Ready to bring consistency, trust, and impact to your work?

The Teaching Artist Toolkit was created for practitioners who want clarity, not clutter. It offers practical guidance to help you name your goals, recognize barriers, and build an action plan you can use right away. This is not theory for theory's sake. It is a working resource designed to support real classrooms, real students, and real creative practice.

When your goals are clear, your presence changes. You begin to show up with intention. Lessons feel grounded. Transitions feel steadier. Students sense the difference. The Toolkit supports that shift by helping you align your values, your teaching strategies, and your creative projects in one place.

The result is forward movement you can sustain.

Welcome to Arts + More, where creative strategies move off the page and into practice. Our work centers on clear, usable tools that strengthen instructional design and leadership capacity across learning environments.

These resources are written for educators, administrators, teaching artists, nonprofit leaders, and anyone seeking steady, actionable ideas. Each article reflects a commitment to clarity, collaboration, and real-world use.

Whether you are planning a workshop, guiding a classroom, leading a team, or building community programs, Arts + More offers practical strategies to help you move forward with confidence and purpose.

**"I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions, a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom."**

**~ bell hooks**

# Showing Up with Consistency

*Teaching Artist Toolkit: The Power of Showing Up*

Showing up consistently is one of the simplest but most powerful ways to build trust and influence. It is not about doing something big once, but about small, steady actions that show others they can rely on you. Use these key points to guide your daily practice.

## Key Takeaways

- Success comes from showing up consistently, not just once in a while.
- Small actions, like follow-ups, encouragement, and clear communication, build trust.
- Consistency is a form of branding: it shows others they can rely on you.
- Simplify when necessary so showing up becomes easier to sustain.

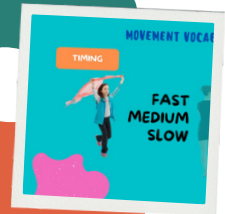


## Reflection Prompts

- How do I want others (students, colleagues, clients) to describe me?
- What small, consistent actions can I take each week to build trust?
- Where am I resisting consistency because it feels like “too much work”?
- How might simplifying my systems (emails, slides, lesson plans) for reliability?

## Practical Actions

- In Meetings: Share one thoughtful idea or question.
- With Students: Be consistent in expectations and encouragement.
- In Your Brand: Use consistent visuals, fonts, and language.
- With Colleagues/Clients: Follow up promptly and clearly.



## For Teaching Artists

- Show up with professionalism, even when schools are unsupportive.
- Use your personal brand to signal reliability: be on time, prepared, and steady.
- Remember, students notice consistency more than perfection.



*Final Reminder:*  
Consistency builds trust, trust builds  
reputation... Which Means....  
Reputation builds opportunities.

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# THE ART ADVANTAGE:

## How Creative Learning Shapes Smarter, Healthier Students



Soft skills like communication, empathy, collaboration, and problem-solving are essential when talking to administrators and leaders because they shape how teams work together and how learning environments feel. These skills help teaching artists build trust, listen deeply, and respond thoughtfully to the needs of students, staff, and families. They also make it easier to manage change, resolve conflicts, and guide teams toward shared goals. When teaching artists model soft skills, they create a culture where creativity, respect, and cooperation thrive. Understanding and valuing these skills can transform schools into places where both people and ideas grow.

### *Teaching Artist Toolkit: Why the Arts Matter*



#### Reduces Stress:

Just 45 minutes of creating art can lower stress hormones by about 25%.



#### Improves Mental Health:

Many people say the arts help them cope with tough emotions and feel happier.



#### Academic Excellence:

Students in strong arts programs often earn higher test scores and stay more engaged in school.



#### Confidence:

Trying new creative projects builds self-belief and resilience.



#### Communication:

Art helps us express ideas, feelings, and understand others better. Group projects, theater, and music teach teamwork and problem-solving.



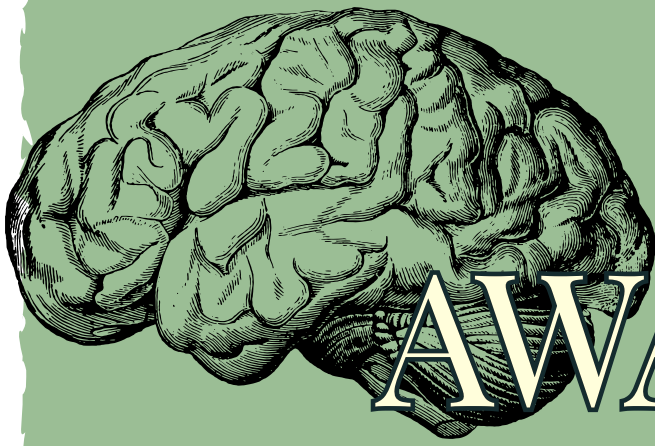
#### Problem Solving & Critical Thinking:

Creating art teaches how to make decisions, evaluate options, and think deeply.

*Final Reminder:*  
*The Arts are essential*

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# SELF AWARENESS

## HOW TO DEVELOP SELF - AWARENESS

*Teaching Artist Toolkit: The Power of Self-Awareness and Recovery*

### I AM A PERSON WHO...

Is inspired by...

Is afraid of...

Wants to...

Loves to...

Hates to...

Believes in...

Is happiest when...

Gets upset when...

*Strengths*

*Weaknesses*

### Constructive feedback can help you to:

- Become better at what you want to achieve.
- Make changes that can have a positive impact on your life.
- Earn the trust and respect of those around you.

*Final Reminder:*  
*It's not your job to like me...*  
*It's mine.*

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## MINDFULNESS: FINDING CALM IN A BUSY WORLD

In a world filled with constant motion, mindfulness offers a quiet space to pause and reconnect with the present moment. Practicing mindfulness doesn't require special equipment or a perfect setting—just intention and attention. It helps reduce stress, improve focus, and strengthen emotional balance. By noticing rather than reacting, we learn to meet life's moments with greater calm and clarity.

*Teaching Artist Toolkit: Mindfulness*

### HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

1. Choose Your Location: Find a comfortable, quiet spot where you can sit or stand without interruptions.
2. Avoid Distractions: Silence your phone and step away from screens or busy spaces.
3. Take Slow Breaths: Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Let your breathing settle into a natural rhythm.
4. Close Your Eyes: Gently close your eyes or soften your gaze to draw attention inward.
5. Focus on Your Breath: Feel each inhale and exhale. Notice how your body moves with each breath.
6. Notice Your Emotions: If thoughts or feelings arise, acknowledge them without judgment, then return to your breathing.
7. Let Breathing Bring You Back: Each breath becomes an anchor, guiding you back to the present moment.

Practiced regularly, mindfulness cultivates patience and presence, helping you meet the day with greater peace and purpose.



# STARS RECOVERY

## ★ I'm SORRY

Let people know right away that you're sorry they're going through the situation.

## ★ THANK you!

Thank the people who bring problems to your attention. They're giving you a chance to fix it.

## ★ ACTIVATE

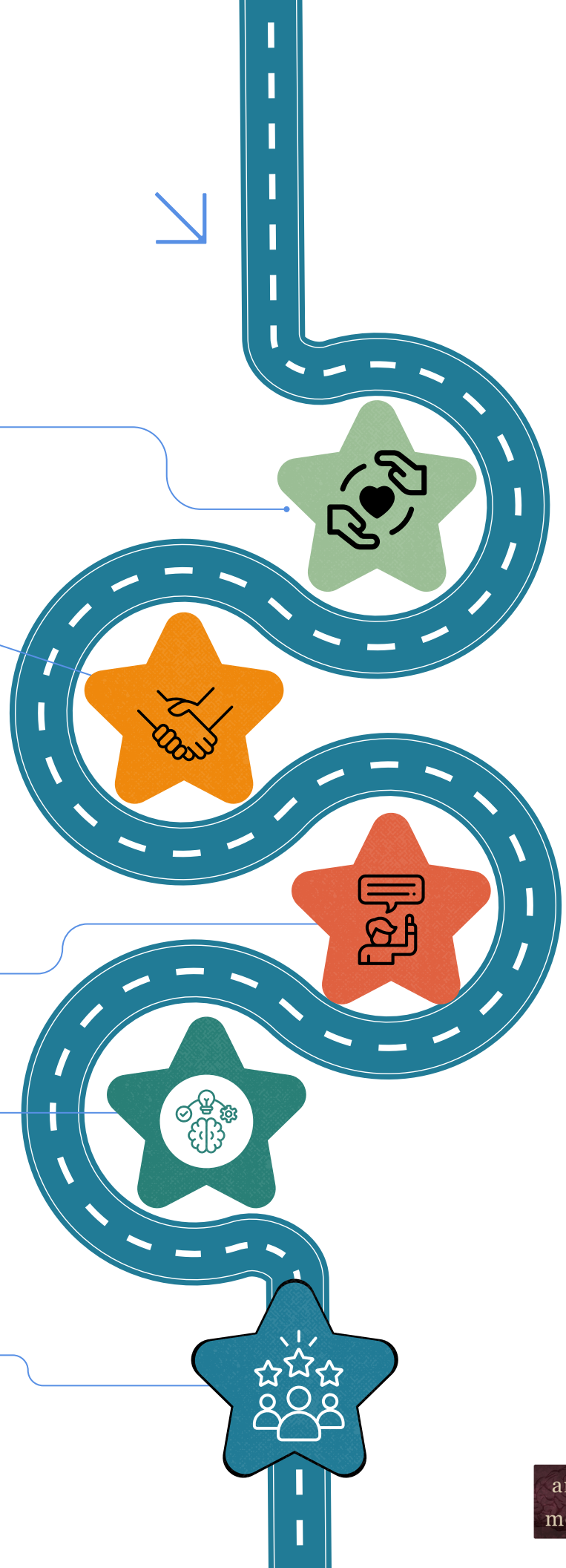
Tell people what ACTION you plan to take to solve the problem.

## ★ RECOVER

Complete the tasks you need to for the recovery of the situation.

## ★ SHARE

Be sure to tell someone about the experience. It's a learning and training opportunity.



# TEACHING ARTIST

## Self Awareness

*Teaching Artist Toolkit: Building Relationships*

### Don't Overestimate yourself

Start by giving yourself permission to be imperfect. Reflect intentionally on how you behaved in a difficult moment or tense interaction.

Ask yourself:

- What was I feeling right then?
- Did my tone match what I intended?
- How might I have contributed to the dynamic?

This is not self-blame. It's honesty. And honesty is what unlocks growth

### Encourage Communication

You don't need dramatic conversations.

You just need regular, respectful check-ins that say, "We're in this together, and we want each other to succeed."

### Ask Yourself Questions

When tension shows up, resist the urge to explain it away. Instead, examine it.

Try these simple but revealing prompts:

- What else was happening that day that might have shaped my reaction?
- Was something said, or left unsaid, that struck a nerve?
- Did I assume something without checking it?
- How might my response have affected the other person?

These questions open a door. They help you move from defensiveness to insight.

### Discuss This

Speaking your goals aloud makes them real.

Name the qualities you want to strengthen: patience, clarity, empathy, confidence, responsiveness; whatever fits your current chapter. Share it with a friend, partner, mentor, or colleague. Let them know you're intentionally working on becoming more self-aware.

*Don't be afraid to take risks and put yourself out there. You have to be an active participant. ~ Halima Aden*

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*What three words  
best describe me?*

*What's the best advice you've  
ever received from me?*

# Just Ask

*What do you wish more  
people knew about me?*

*What is something I do  
that you wish I wouldn't*

*What are my positive  
and negative traits?*

*Trust yourself ~  
Make decisions based on what feels  
right rather than others' expectations.*



# Stories in Motion: Movement, Memory, and Connection



*Teaching Artist Toolkit: Stories in Motion*

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Take a quiet moment. Breathe. Let yourself arrive. What brings you here today? Write a brief intention for this session. It might be emotional, creative, spiritual, or simply practical.

## Core Concepts to Hold During Class

### Meaningful Expression

- Movement is communication.
- Your body carries wisdom; let it speak.

### Safety Through Technique

- Alignment protects your joints, muscles, and breath.
- Use technique as an anchor, not a performance.


### Sacred Presence

- Approach movement as ritual—an act of reverence for your body, story, and spirit.
- Allow stillness, breath, and silence to guide you.

### Neuroplasticity & Well-Being

- Intentional, expressive movement activates the brain.
- You do not need dance experience to benefit.

## NOTES



*"Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts."*  
—Bessel van der Kolk



# Reflections

## Warm-Up

- What changed in your body?
- What changed in your emotional or spiritual state?

## Elements of Dance

[Shape, Direction, Level, View, Energy, Motion]

- Which movements felt natural or nourishing? Why?
- Which movements felt unfamiliar or challenging? Why?
- Did any movements feel “sacred” or meaningful to you?

## Story Improvisation

[Imagery, Metaphor, Emotional Prompts]

- What memory surfaced for you during the exploration?
- If that image had a movement quality, what would it be?

(Circle one or add one of your own)

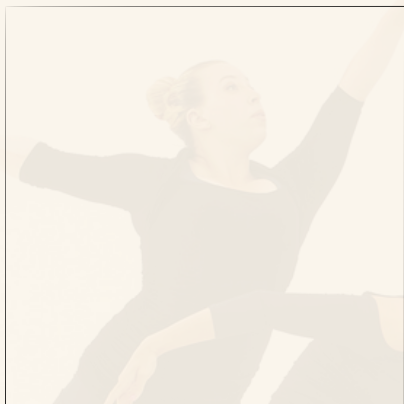
Fluid | Staccato | Expansive | Contracted | Spiraling | Floating | Heavy | Light | Grounded | Searching

## Discovery

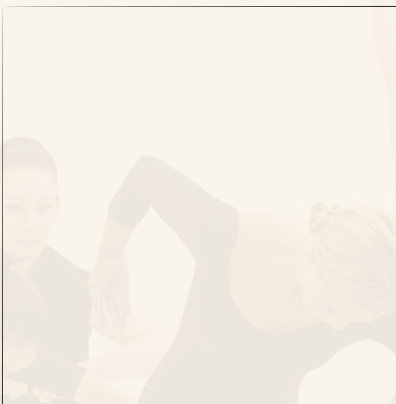
- What is your internal landscape after improvisation?
- What shifted as you moved without structure?
- Did you sense connections?
- What do you want to carry forward from today's experience?

## CHOREOGRAPHY

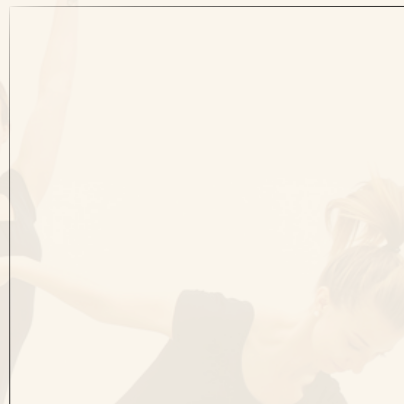
*Dancing from the Inside-Out*



BEGINNING



MIDDLE

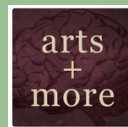


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## REMINDER!

Subscribe to the Teaching Artist Toolkit Newsletter and Keep in Touch at:

[WWW.ARTSMORE.ART](http://WWW.ARTSMORE.ART)



# STORIES IN MOTION NEUROSCIENCE INTEGRATION

**Workshop:** Stories in Motion: Movement, Memory, and Connection

**Focus:** Creative dance, embodied storytelling, neuro-supportive movement practices, and sacred presence.

## What Is BrainDance?

BrainDance (developed by Anne Green Gilbert) is an eight-pattern movement sequence based on fundamental neurological development. These patterns support focus, emotional regulation, coordination, and overall brain integration.



*Teaching Artist Toolkit: Stories in Motion Brain Dance Integration*

## Welcome & Grounding

What happens in the brain:

- Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) activates to support focus, decision-making, and present-moment attention.
- Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) regulates emotional tone and increases intentional awareness.
- Insular Cortex heightens interoception (internal body awareness), improving mind-body connection.
- Parasympathetic Nervous System activation (via the vagus nerve) lowers heart rate and promotes calm.
- Amygdala down-regulation reduces stress reactivity and prepares the brain for learning and creativity.

Effect: Calms and organizes the nervous system, increases presence, and creates a spiritually grounded beginning.

## Physical Warm-Up

What happens in the brain:

- Motor Cortex (primary + supplementary) plans and initiates movement.
- Basal Ganglia refine coordination, rhythm, and motor sequencing.
- Cerebellum enhances balance, timing, and fluidity.
- Parietal Lobe (somatosensory cortex) strengthens proprioception and spatial orientation.
- Vestibular System (inner ear + brainstem pathways) activates equilibrium and orientation in space.
- Corpus Callosum increases interhemispheric communication during coordinated movement.

Effect: Develops safe alignment and mobility while preparing the entire neuromuscular system for expressive and technical work.

## Memory In Motion

What happens in the brain:

- Hippocampus engages in autobiographical memory retrieval and organizes narrative sequences.
- Medial Prefrontal Cortex (mPFC) integrates personal meaning and self-referential thinking.
- Temporal Lobes activate during sensory recall and emotional memory.
- Mirror Neuron System (premotor cortex + inferior parietal lobe) interprets gesture and meaning.
- Default Mode Network (DMN) supports imagination, inner imagery, and memory reconstruction.
- Neuroplasticity increases via synaptic strengthening when memories are paired with movement.

Effect: Amplifies memory recall, deepens expressive communication, and strengthens neural pathways through embodied meaning-making.

## Community Sharing

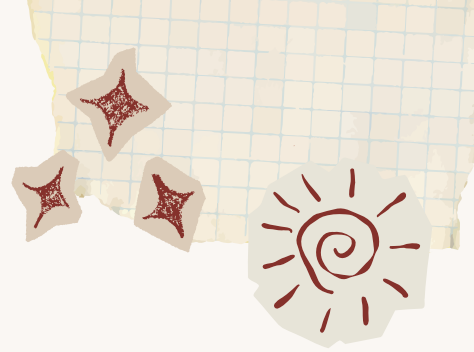
What happens in the brain:

- Mirror Neuron Network (inferior frontal gyrus + parietal cortex) supports empathy, attunement, and intuitive understanding of others' movement.
- Orbitofrontal Cortex (OFC) processes social reward and connection.
- Superior Temporal Sulcus (STS) interprets intention, emotion, and relational cues.
- Oxytocin release strengthens feelings of belonging and trust.
- Ventral Striatum + Dopamine pathways activate through shared creativity and positive social interaction.
- Effect: Builds empathy, belonging, and shared understanding, making the communal experience feel sacred and bonded.



# My Story

*Dancing from the Inside-Out*



What is your story about?

Where does it take place?

Who are your main characters?



What is your problem?

Why did this problem occur?





What is everyone feeling?

What are your main events?  
*What happened at...*

The Beginning?

The Middle?

The End?





# SELF-REGULATION AND LEARNING THEORY

## The Invisible Framework of Effective Teaching Artists

Teaching artists bring a distinct kind of power into educational spaces. Through music, movement, visual art, writing, and performance, they help students make sense of their inner lives and their place in the world. The arts offer comfort, invite empathy, and provide a creative outlet for processing complex emotions. They encourage mindfulness, support cognitive development, and can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. When teaching artists enter a classroom, they are not simply delivering content. They are shaping human experience.

This responsibility requires more than artistic skill. It requires self-regulation. Guest teaching artists step into classrooms filled with variables they cannot control. Schedules shift. Time is shortened by assemblies or testing. Students arrive carrying emotional weight that may be invisible. A non-verbal student may need focused support while others are trying to follow the lesson. In these moments, the teaching artist must respond thoughtfully, often without the benefit of background knowledge or long-term relationships.

Self-regulation is the ability to manage one's emotions, attention, and behavior as a catalyst for a positive outcome. It is the reason professionals show up prepared, even on difficult days. It is the discipline behind pausing before reacting, choosing calm over frustration, and maintaining clarity under pressure. In the classroom, self-regulation is visible. Students observe how adults handle stress, disappointment, and disruption. The teaching artist's response becomes a lesson in emotional intelligence.



When the body and mind are regulated, teaching artists are able to think clearly and act with intention. Self-regulation creates the internal conditions needed for good decision-making, especially in fast-moving classroom environments. Rather than relying on a single teaching method, a regulated teaching artist can adapt in real time, responding to students, space, and circumstance with purpose and clarity.

Learning theories are simply ways to explain how people learn. They help teachers understand what helps students pay attention, remember information, and use what they have learned. No one learns the same way all the time, so teachers often use more than one theory depending on the situation.

*Emotions are like passing storms, and you have to remind yourself that it won't rain forever. ~ Amy Poehler*

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# Learning Theories: How People Learn

Learning theories describe the different ways people take in, process, and apply new information. They help teachers understand what supports focus, memory, and meaningful learning. Because learning changes by person and context, educators often combine multiple approaches to meet different needs.

- **Behaviorism** focuses on what you can see. Learning happens when behavior changes because of rewards or consequences. For example, getting praise, grades, or extra credit can encourage certain behaviors. This approach works well for practice, routines, and clear expectations.
- **Cognitivism** looks inside the brain. It focuses on memory, attention, and thinking. Learning happens when new information connects to what you already know. Study strategies, note-taking, chunking information, and step-by-step explanations come from this theory.
- **Constructivism** says learners build understanding through experience. Instead of being told everything, students explore, ask questions, and solve problems. Group projects, labs, and discussions help students make meaning for themselves.
- **Social Learning Theory** explains that people learn by watching others. You might pick up skills by observing a teacher, classmate, or video. Modeling, imitation, and motivation all play a role.
- **Humanism** focuses on the whole person. It values choice, personal goals, and emotional safety. When students feel respected and supported, they are more motivated to learn.
- **Connectivism** reflects learning today. Knowledge is shared through technology, networks, and relationships. Knowing where to find information is just as important as memorizing it.

Understanding these theories helps explain why teachers use different strategies and why certain approaches work better in different situations.

Teaching artists often move fluidly among these approaches within a single session. That flexibility depends on self-regulation. When calm and grounded, the artist can assess what students need and select strategies that best support learning. When overwhelmed, even well-practiced methods become harder to access. Self-regulation, then, is not separate from pedagogy. It is the foundation that makes responsive, theory-informed teaching possible.

By the time many teaching artists enter schools, they already possess a strong foundation of self-regulation. Their work then becomes an act of generosity. They slow the room down. They acknowledge stress without judgment. They create breathing space for students and often for educators who are tired and stretched thin. Through their presence, they model how to remain steady in uncertain conditions.

This is the quiet framework behind effective teaching artistry. Self-regulation paired with a broad understanding of learning theory creates classrooms where creativity thrives, challenges are met with clarity, and learning feels both structured and humane.





# Resilience and Self-Regulation

## Why This Matters

### *Teaching Artist Toolkit: Resilience*

Teaching artists work in dynamic environments filled with shifting schedules, varied student needs, and limited context. Emotional resilience and self-regulation are essential skills that support effectiveness, clarity, and sustainability in this work. Resilience is not about overcoming every challenge or winning every battle. It is the ability to move through difficult situations with steadiness, adapt as needed, and maintain internal motivation.

Resilient teaching artists view obstacles as temporary rather than defining. Self-regulation helps manage emotional responses so challenges do not derail learning or presence. Together, these skills allow teaching artists to remain grounded, responsive, and reflective, even under pressure.

### Practical Strategies

#### **Practice Assertiveness**

Notice when expectations are unrealistic. Give yourself permission to set boundaries and say no when needed.

#### **Keep Perspective**

Step back and view challenges from a broader lens. Ask yourself how this moment fits into the larger picture.

#### **Choose Positivity**

Actively look for what is working. Small successes help stabilize mindset and energy.

#### **Allow Imperfection**

Accept that mistakes happen and that situations are temporary. Progress matters more than perfection.

### Key Concepts

- **Emotional Resilience:** The ability to recover from stress, adapt behavior, and continue forward without losing purpose.
- **Self-Regulation:** Managing emotions, attention, and reactions in order to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.

### Reflection

What helps you stay regulated during stressful teaching moments?

Which strategy do you want to practice more intentionally?

Resilience and self-regulation are skills that grow with practice. Strengthening them supports not only your teaching, but your well-being.

*Manage your emotions; don't let your emotions manage you.*