The Space Between Global CIC

The Humans Making the Art Are Cultural Infrastructure

An evidence-led case for wider, whole-human support for artists and creatives.

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• MENTAL HEALTH AFFECTS PHYSICAL HEALTH •
• PHYSICAL HEALTH AFFECTS EMOTIONAL HEALTH •
• EMOTIONAL HEALTH AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH •

Mental health does not live in the brain alone.
It is inseparable from the body, our emotional experience and the systems that connect them.

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EFT (TAPPING)

What it is: Emotional Freedom Technique combines focused attention on a thought, feeling, memory or physical sensation with fingertip tapping on acupressure points. Clinical EFT brings together psychological and body-based techniques and can also be learned for continued self-use.

Evidence: A 2022 systematic review brought together 56 randomised controlled trials involving 2,013 participants and eight meta-analyses, with benefits reported across psychological and physical outcomes including anxiety, depression, PTSD, pain, sleep, performance and biological markers of stress.

A 2023 review of six controlled trials involving PTSD found large improvements when EFT was compared with usual care, a waiting list or no treatment. When it was compared directly with established therapies including CBT, EMDR and Narrative Exposure Therapy, the results were similar.

A 2025 systematic review of EFT for anxiety included seven randomised controlled trials and 506 participants. All six studies comparing EFT with no intervention found significant reductions in anxiety. In studies using another active approach for comparison, EFT performed similarly to or better than breathing exercises and progressive muscle relaxation, with no significant difference between EFT and CBT.

A 2026 systematic review and analysis of 17 randomised controlled trials found that Clinical EFT significantly reduced both psychological stress and measurable physical signs of stress. Across 14 studies involving 1,051 people, EFT produced a large reduction in reported psychological stress compared with control groups. Across six studies involving 399 people, it also produced a significant reduction in physiological stress measures. The analysis also found EFT's effect on psychological stress to be comparable with CBT.

Sources: Church et al. (2022) | Stapleton et al. (2023) | Choi et al. (2025) | Stapleton & van Elst (2026)

NUTRITIONAL THERAPY

What it is: Personalised nutritional assessment and support that considers diet, nutrient intake, symptoms, digestion, energy, lifestyle, sleep, health history and relevant laboratory findings rather than applying a single generic eating plan.

Evidence: Mental health is not generated by the brain in isolation. The microbiota–gut–brain axis is a bidirectional biological communication system linking the gut and central nervous system through neural and vagal signalling, immune and inflammatory pathways, endocrine and HPA-axis activity, microbial metabolites and other metabolic processes. Nutrition can influence the microbiome, inflammation, blood-glucose regulation, nutrient availability, energy, sleep and cognition, while nutrient deficiencies or under-fuelling can contribute to symptoms relevant to mental health.

Clinical intervention evidence supports the relevance of nutrition to mental health. The SMILES randomised controlled trial found significantly greater improvement in major depression with dietitian-led dietary support than with social support. The CALM randomised trial of 182 adults found remotely delivered lifestyle therapy targeting nutrition and physical activity was non-inferior to CBT-based psychotherapy for depressive symptoms at the primary eight-week endpoint. A 2026 systematic review and network meta-analysis of 38 randomised controlled trials involving 2,338 adults with major depressive disorder also found significant reductions in depressive symptoms across several gut-microbiota-targeted interventions, adding further clinical evidence for the relevance of the gut–brain axis to mental health.

Sources: Jacka et al. (2017) – SMILES | O'Neil et al. (2024) – CALM | Dong & Mayer (2024) – brain–gut–microbiome interactions | Jin et al. (2026)

TRANSFORMATIONAL BREATH®

What it is: Transformational Breath® is a specific facilitated conscious connected breathwork method using a continuous breathing pattern within a structured system of practitioner-led sessions.

Evidence: The wider breathwork literature includes randomised-trial evidence reporting small-to-medium reductions in stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms. Importantly, Transformational Breath® itself has direct artist-relevant research. A 2025 *PLOS Mental Health* pilot study randomly allocated 24 professional voice users with mild-to-moderate social anxiety to three Transformational Breath sessions or a waitlist control. The pattern of findings suggested an acute reduction in music performance anxiety, although no pairwise difference was found on the GAD-7.

A 2026 randomised controlled trial of 107 adults found that six weeks of online conscious connected breathwork produced significantly greater reductions in anxiety than a waitlist control, providing additional evidence for the approach and for remote delivery.

Sources: Wheble & Elcin (2025) | Fincham et al. (2023) | Blake (2026)

MINDFUL MEDITATION

What it is: Mindful meditation involves deliberately bringing attention to the present moment, often by focusing on the breath, body or physical sensations, while noticing thoughts and feelings without automatically reacting to them. It can be practised independently or with guidance and is widely used to support stress management and emotional well-being.

Evidence: A major 2021 review brought together 136 randomised controlled trials involving 11,605 adults across 29 countries. Mindfulness-based programmes were associated with improvements in anxiety, depression, psychological distress and well-being compared with receiving no intervention. Importantly for preventive well-being support, these studies involved people in non-clinical settings rather than only people receiving psychiatric treatment.

A 2023 randomised clinical trial involving 276 adults with anxiety disorders found that an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction programme produced improvements in anxiety comparable with escitalopram, a commonly prescribed medication for anxiety.

Most recently, a 2026 systematic review of 17 randomised controlled trials involving 1,641 adults found significant reductions in perceived stress. The studies included participants across North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Oceania and found benefits across both guided and digital delivery.

A 2026 meta-analysis of 32 studies involving 1,983 participants found mindfulness- and acceptance-based interventions were associated with a moderate-to-large reduction in music performance anxiety.

Sources: Galante et al. (2021) | Hoge et al. (2023) | Rajan et al. (2026) | Zhang et al. (2026)

CREATIVE ARTS PSYCHOTHERAPY

What it is: Creative Arts Psychotherapy uses creative media such as visual art, movement, drama, story, writing, image and metaphor within a therapeutic relationship, allowing psychological and emotional material to be explored through routes other than conversation alone.

Evidence: Creative arts therapies have a growing research base across different modalities. A 2024 *JAMA Network Open* systematic review of active visual art therapy included 69 studies, with 50 studies and 2,766 participants contributing to the meta-analyses. The meta-analyses found an overall benefit associated with active visual art therapy, particularly in mental-health outcomes, although overall study quality was low and the evidence was markedly heterogeneous. A separate 2025 meta-analysis of seven controlled comparative studies involving 665 adults found a significant pooled reduction in PTSD symptoms following creative arts therapy; heterogeneity between studies was very high.

A 2026 updated systematic review and meta-analysis of art therapy included 29 studies involving 2,077 participants and found significant improvements in psychological well-being, depression, anxiety and cognitive function. A separate 2026 meta-analysis of 19 randomised controlled trials involving 1,375 participants found that dance/movement therapy and other structured dance-based interventions significantly reduced depressive symptoms.

Sources: Joschko et al. (2024) | Wang et al. (2025) | Dang et al. (2026) | Xing (2026)

REIKI

What it is: Reiki is a non-invasive complementary practice, traditionally described as energy-based, usually delivered with light touch or the practitioner's hands held close to the body. It can also be delivered remotely as distant Reiki.

Evidence: A 2024 meta-analysis of 13 controlled studies involving 824 participants found a statistically significant reduction in anxiety associated with Reiki. A 2025 meta-analysis of 11 randomised controlled trials involving 661 participants also reported significant improvement in quality of life, with included studies examining outcomes such as stress and fatigue. A 2026 systematic review and meta-analysis of 15 randomised controlled trials involving 1,208 surgical patients also found significant reductions in perioperative anxiety and postoperative pain, alongside improvements in some physiological stress measures.

Remote delivery has also been studied directly: a randomised controlled trial comparing hands-on Reiki, distant Reiki and distant placebo found significant reductions in psychological distress in both active Reiki groups compared with placebo, with effects maintained at one-year follow-up. A further randomised controlled study of distant Reiki reported reduced fatigue and increased energy in nurses working in COVID-19 clinics.

Sources: Guo et al. (2024) | Liu et al. (2025) | Shore (2004) – hands-on and distant Reiki | Akpınar et al. (2024) – distant Reiki | Wang et al. (2026)

SOUND HEALING / THERAPEUTIC SOUND AND VIBRATION

What it is: Therapeutic sound practices use audible sound and vibration, including instruments such as singing bowls, gongs and voice, to create structured sensory experiences intended to support relaxation, regulation and well-being.

Evidence: A 2025 systematic review identified 19 clinical studies from eight countries, including nine RCTs, examining singing-bowl interventions. Research focused heavily on mental-health-related outcomes and reported potential benefits for anxiety, depression, sleep, cognition and physiological measures. A second 2025 systematic review identified 14 quantitative studies of Tibetan Singing Bowl interventions examining psychological outcomes including anxiety and depressive symptoms alongside physiological measures such as heart-rate variability and brain activity.

A 2026 randomised controlled trial involving 100 adults compared structured sound-based meditation using singing bowls, gongs, bells and other acoustic instruments with a music-control condition. The sound intervention produced significantly greater reductions in anxiety and depression, together with reductions in salivary cortisol and systolic blood pressure.

Wider scientific context: Modern medicine already uses precisely delivered acoustic, magnetic and electrical fields to produce clinically useful biological effects. The FDA-approved AccelStim device delivers a high-frequency ultrasound signal to stimulate bone tissue and aid fracture healing. Transcranial magnetic stimulation uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells; the FDA permitted marketing of TMS as a treatment for major depression in 2008 and permitted marketing of a TMS system for OCD in 2018. In 2026, the FDA approved Optune Pax, which delivers alternating electrical tumour-treating fields for locally advanced pancreatic cancer. The pivotal study added the fields to standard-of-care chemotherapy. These technologies are not evidence that sound-healing practices share the same mechanisms or clinical effects; they establish the broader scientific principle that physical energy, delivered at defined parameters, can interact with human biology.

Sources: Cai et al. (2025) | Lin et al. (2025) | FDA – AccelStim | FDA – Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation | FDA – Optune Pax | Ravikumar & Sathyanarayanan (2026)

EMBODIED THERAPY USING TAI CHI & QI GONG

What it is: Tai Chi and Qi Gong combine gentle movement, posture, breathing and focused attention. They work with both physical and emotional regulation and can be adapted to different levels of mobility and fitness.

Evidence: A 2025 review and network analysis examined 82 randomised controlled trials involving 4,501 adults with anxiety or depression. The studies included traditional Chinese movement practices including Tai Chi and Qi Gong. Tai Chi ranked among the strongest approaches studied for both anxiety and depression, while Qi Gong also showed benefits.

A separate 2025 review looked specifically at Tai Chi and Qi Gong in adults living with mood disorders or schizophrenia. Across 19 randomised studies involving 1,243 people, the practices significantly improved psychiatric symptoms as well as physical functioning.

Further research in other populations has found similar results. A 2025 review of 31 studies involving 2,501 older adults found significant improvements in both anxiety and depression, while a 2024 review of adults affected by cancer found small-to-moderate reductions in both.

Sources: Yang et al. (2025) – 82 RCT network meta-analysis | Park et al. (2025) | Dong et al. (2025) | Sun et al. (2024)

SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT: BLOOD TESTING & INTERPRETATION

What it is: Blood testing and interpretation looks at relevant health markers alongside symptoms, diet and lifestyle to identify physical factors that may be affecting mental and emotional well-being.

Evidence: Mental and emotional health is influenced by interconnected systems throughout the body, including nutrition, hormone function, inflammation and the gut–brain axis. Blood testing can help identify physical contributors to symptoms such as low mood, anxiety, fatigue, poor concentration and brain fog. NICE recommends considering thyroid testing in people with depression or unexplained anxiety and recognises links between B12 deficiency and depression, anxiety and cognitive difficulties. Research also shows that iron deficiency can affect anxiety, fatigue and cognitive well-being even before anaemia develops.

A 2026 systematic review and meta-analysis of 46 studies involving 69,902 people examining vitamin D and B12 across psychiatric outcomes supported targeted assessment of deficiency rather than routine supplementation. A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis of 18 studies involving 1,408 people found that iron supplementation in non-anaemic populations improved anxiety, fatigue, physical well-being and some cognitive outcomes, particularly where iron deficiency was present.

Sources: NICE – Thyroid Disease | NICE – Vitamin B12 Deficiency | Gut–Brain Axis, Nutrition, Depression & Anxiety Review (2024) | Iron Deficiency & Mental Well-being Review (2025) | Moroianu et al. (2026)