



New Note Dance

Evaluation Report

September 2023

Introduction

[New Note Dance](#) (NND) is a new community group from New Note Projects, co-funded by [Create Recovery](#), which aims to support those affected by addiction, trauma, or other adverse life challenges to become stronger and more resilient. It piloted between March and July 2023 over 18 weekly sessions, and culminated in a public performance at South East Dance studios in Brighton on 7th July 2023. The sessions were run by certified Tamalpa® practitioner Lauren Dowse, who uses creative tools consisting of movement, writing, and drawing, to explore themes around the 12-step programme of recovery.

The evaluation of the project was designed to test NND's Theory of Change (see Appendix A) and gain deeper insights into what worked well and what could be improved upon. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were used consisting of:

- 8 online responses to a participation survey
- Course feedback statements
- 9 questionnaires
- 2 in-depth interviews
- An attendance register

22 people attended at least one of the 18 sessions (146 attendances in total), 6 people attended at least half of all sessions, and 7 people took part in the final performance.

All quotes used throughout the report are used with the permission of the participants.

Contents

Introduction	2
Qualitative: Interviews and Feedback Forms	4
1. Increasing physical health	5
2. Improving mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.	6
3. Reducing self-destructive behaviours and wanting to get well	8
4. People develop a better understanding of themselves to use their intuition to make healthier choices.....	9
5. Removing barriers to participating in culture and creativity.....	11
Facilitation Feedback	12
Quantitative: Participation Survey.....	13
1. Health and Wellbeing	13
2. Recovery and Resilience	14
3. Community and Relationships	15
4. Arts and Culture	15
5. Course and Facilitator Feedback.....	16
Conclusions	18
Appendix A: Theory of Change	19
Appendix B: Outcome Framework.....	20

Qualitative: Interviews and Feedback Forms



Qualitative feedback was categorised into the five long-term outcomes that NND had identified on their Theory of Change model (Appendix A). The model also proposes short-term outcomes that facilitate the longer change objectives. However, analysis of the qualitative data revealed a further layer of common experiences which enabled participants to achieve the short-term outcomes. This report has attempted to capture that learning into an outcome framework (Appendix B) so that future courses can ensure these ‘enablers’ are consciously fostered.

A summary analysis of comments for each outcome is shown in the table below. Outcomes 2-4 were mentioned most frequently, with outcome 2 being the most frequent.

Outcome	Short Description	No. of comments	% of comments
1	Physical Health	13	8%
2	Mental Wellbeing	56	33%
3	Self-destructive Behaviours	43	25%
4	Understanding Self	48	28%
5	Culture and Creativity	10	6%
Grand Total		170	100%

1. Increasing physical health

People said that they felt physically fitter, they stretch more than they used to, and that they started doing more physical exercise outside of the dance sessions. People observed a noticeable easing of long-held tension in the body, one person said they had moved from smoking cigarettes to vaping, and one said they had noticed a reduction in pain from an existing condition.

“I...have a physical disability and coming to this group helps me to feel fitter and more able than I usually feel in a domestic setting”



“Physical and mental recovery both work together. As I get more physically fit, I get more mentally fit. As I get more emotionally well, I’m more motivated to go and do stuff so the whole thing is a virtuous cycle.”

2. Improving mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Most people mentioned an improvement in mental wellbeing and levels of confidence. People spoke of feeling 'more alive' and 'grounded' and described the positive feelings of being able to express themselves in a 'safe space'. There were several references to being resistant at first but then 'finding courage' and 'compassion for myself' to overcome personal barriers, and the sense of achievement that gave them.



“I realised that I need to accept myself and my problems, but not compare myself to others constantly and try and let my self-consciousness go”

Participants said that being 'seen and heard' by other people was 'powerful' and 'profound' and helped them 'learn to accept themselves and not compare themselves to other people'.



“there’s a bonding experience you get when you’re dancing together and you’re witnessing each other that goes really deep without having to say much. It’s quite profound really”

The project was specifically designed to be a 'safe space' and container for exploring difficult emotions. There were seven references to the uncomfortable process of uncovering deeply buried emotions, with people using words such as 'painful', 'overwhelming', and even 'excruciating'. However, one person commented that they had discussed their surprise with the other participants that they were never 'triggered' by the process (defined by Merriam-Webster as “an intense and unpleasant emotional reaction that may overtake one’s consciousness”), despite having prior concerns about this.

“it was helpful to talk about what’s going on with you now and your feelings rather than the specifics of the past. It felt like such a safe environment.”

3. Reducing self-destructive behaviours and wanting to get well

People used many different words to describe experiences that could be summarised as acquiring 'recovery capital', the internal and external resources that can help sustain one's recovery. People said they had gained a 'sense of purpose', they spoke of feeling 'beauty', 'freedom', and 'hope', and said they felt 'grateful', 'empowered', 'inspired', 'nourished', and 'blessed'. There was also evidence that NND strengthened the effectiveness of their existing recovery support, one person said they now had a deeper understanding of the 12 steps and how elements of it had changed for them. Others said the course had 'reinforced their commitment to recovery', and that they felt a 'stronger commitment' to attending NND sessions than they did to attending recovery meetings.

“[NND] has given a new dimension to my creative recovery. Discovering who I am and who I might be without addiction”



There were twelve comments relating to a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded individuals. People said this made them feel less isolated and alone, that they now had 'a community to go to'. There were also two references to improved relationships with friends and family.

“It has saved me in so many ways, it has been therapeutic and positive. I felt I belonged”

4. People develop a better understanding of themselves to use their intuition to make healthier choices.

After improvements in mental wellbeing, comments relating to a better understanding of self were the second most common. People spoke about 'exposing' or 'getting in touch' with feelings that had been hidden, and 'reconnecting' to parts of themselves that they were unaware of. Four people said they were now ready to seek support for these newly uncovered feelings.



“I think that getting in touch with my feelings through the drawing and the dance really helped me to figure out what was going on for me emotionally and to just get in touch with myself in a different way.”

Aside from psychological discoveries, there were eight comments describing newly discovered aspects of their personalities. Examples include discovering that they were funny, friendly, enjoyed performing, that they were kind, and one person expressed surprise at discovering that they had talents which they hadn't used before.

People also spoke about reconnecting to their physical selves and having a better relationship with their 'higher power' (variably expressed as God, a spiritual guide, or an internal voice or intuition). People said it was 'liberating' and 'cathartic' to 'dismantle resistance', to 'just let go', and to 'reconnect with the body'. People spoke of the benefits of the non-verbal and physical expression of self. One person said that the non-verbal expression 'means we can't use the usual tactics to cover pain', another said it 'brings out our positivity and talents'.

“there are things that have happened through my recovery that I just can't express in words, it's more visceral than that. Somehow, expressing those emotions through movement I found really helpful.”



5. Removing barriers to participating in culture and creativity.

There was not a specific question about cultural engagement during the interviews and in the feedback forms, but there were still ten comments relating to increased levels of creativity. Not all comments related to dance, with some wanting to expand on their creative writing. NND's final performance at South East Dance attracted positive feedback from the audience, and the qualitative feedback from participants indicate that although the thought of performing in front of an audience was daunting to some, it provided a sense of achievement.



Facilitation Feedback

There were a lot of positive feelings expressed when talking about the facilitator, the word 'loving' occurred most frequently, with related terms such as 'kindness', 'grace', 'supportive', and 'thoughtful' also being used. Again, many people mentioned feeling like they were in a 'safe space' despite being in an environment that was new to them or felt 'unusual', and that the facilitation was 'gentle' and 'not controlling'.

Three people mentioned that the use of multiple art forms (dance, writing, painting/drawing) appealed to them and enabled their self-expression. One person liked the fact that conversations were not specifically about recovery, but about 'honesty and courage', and there was another comment about gaining a deeper understanding of the 12-step programme of recovery through the sessions. One person liked that the fact that people weren't expected to 'tell their story'.

“So grateful the charity has allowed this amazing facilitator to do these wonderful workshops. They are like a beacon in the dark”

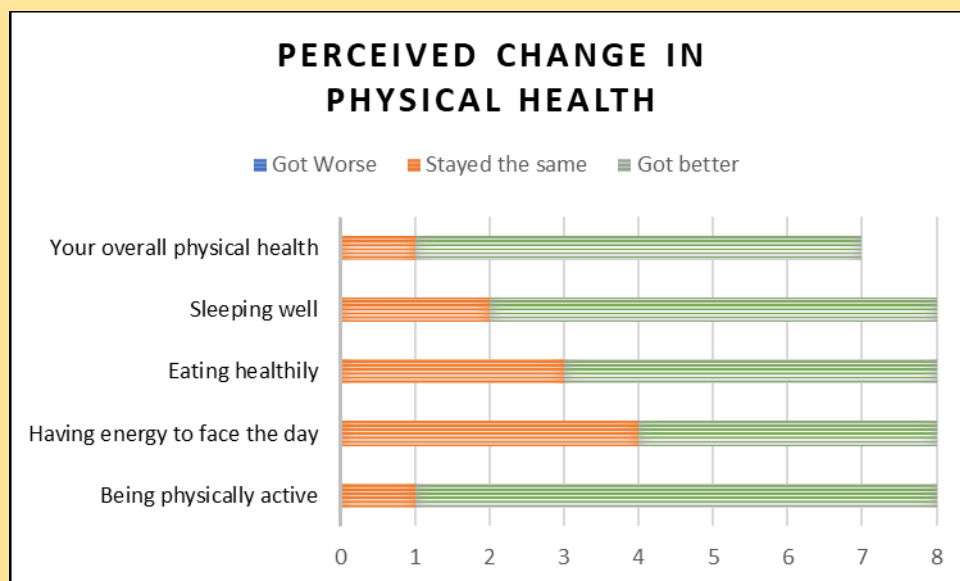


Quantitative: Participation Survey

1. Health and Wellbeing

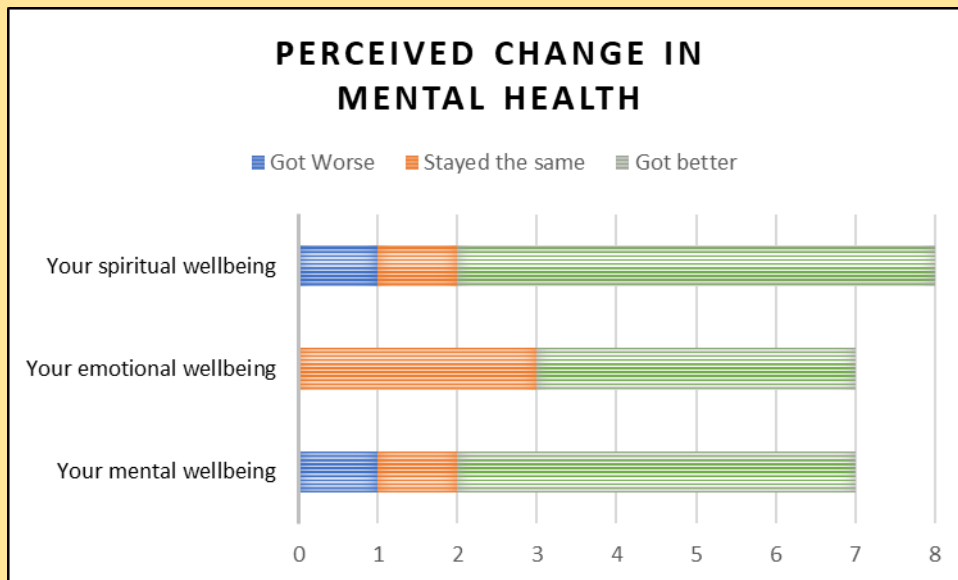
Physical Health

The survey responses show that most people felt an improvement in physical health: sleeping better, eating better, and being more physically active. Half of respondents felt that they had more energy.



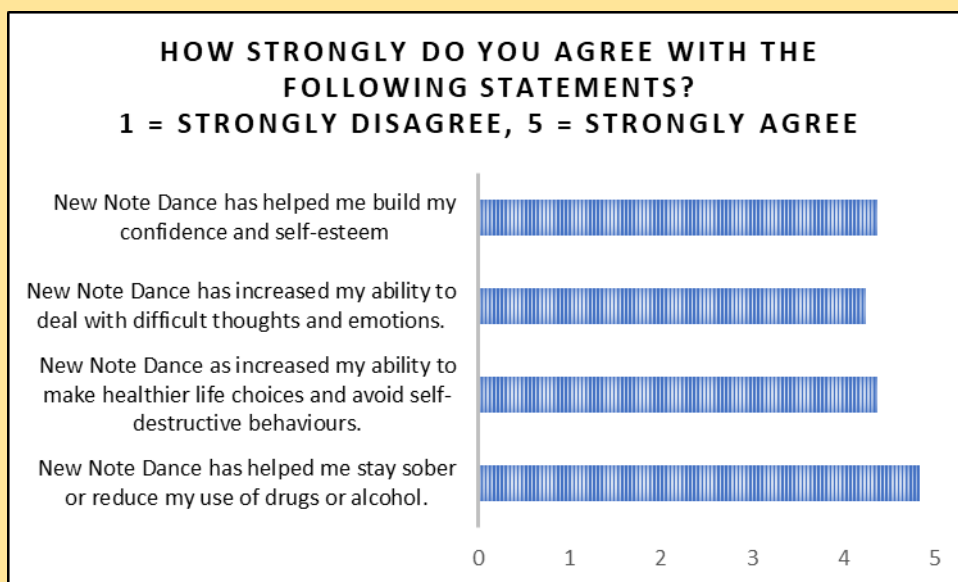
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing

Most people felt an improvement in mental and spiritual wellbeing (defined in the question as having a sense of purpose and connection to self and one's environment), and half of respondents felt an improvement in their emotional wellbeing. One person felt that their spiritual and mental wellbeing had declined after completion of the course, although survey responses were anonymous, and there was no reference to this change in the qualitative feedback, so it's impossible to know if their wellbeing was impacted by an element of the NND process, such as exploring difficult emotions, or some external factor.



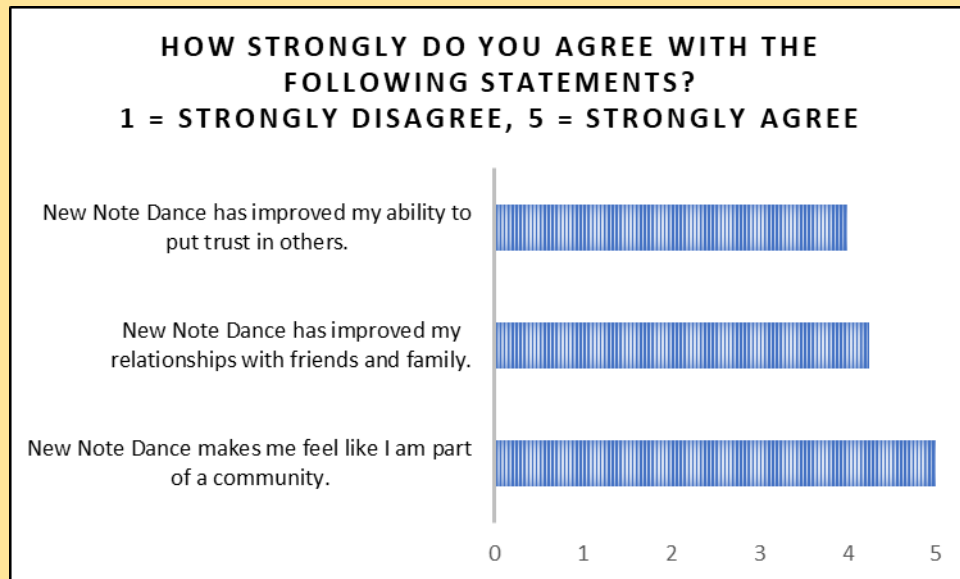
2. Recovery and Resilience

There was a strong agreement with statements around recovery and resilience with all question scores averaging above 4 points and maximum 5 out of 5 for NND's part in helping people stay sober.



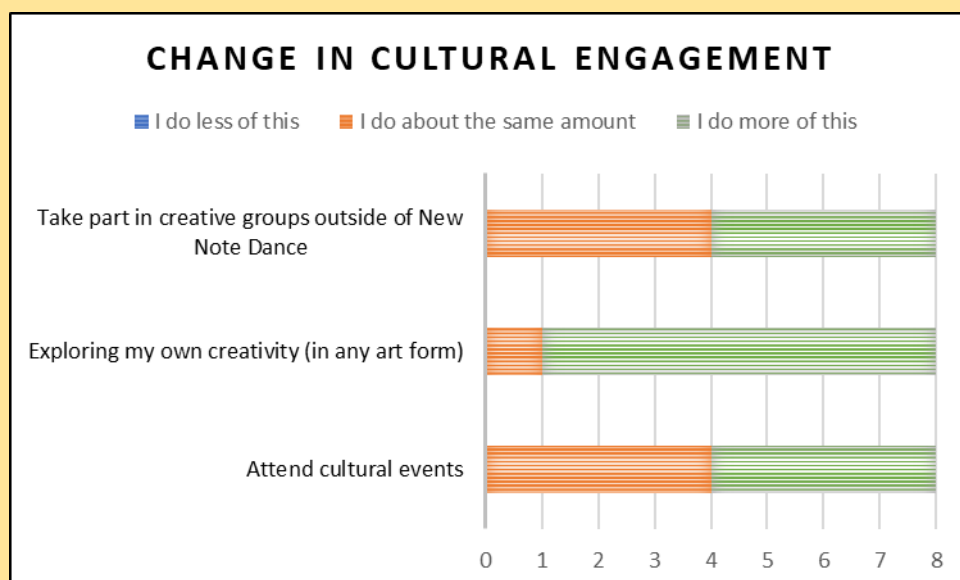
3. Community and Relationships

Results show that people felt that NND has improved their relationships with others, 100% of respondents strongly agreed that they felt part of a community.



4. Arts and Culture

50% of respondents said that their engagement with cultural events, either as a participant or as an audience member, had increased following the course. 7 out of 8 responses indicated an increase in their own creative exploration.

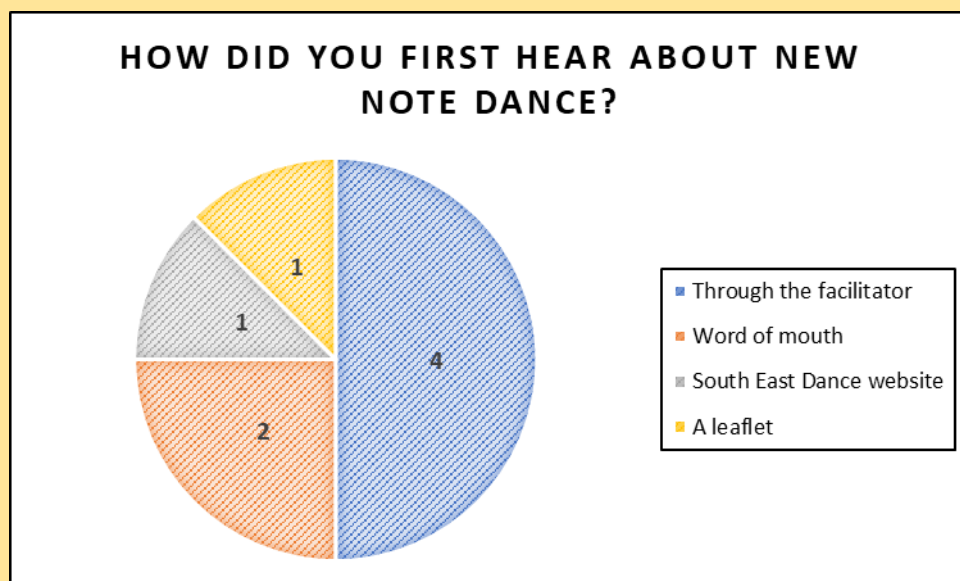


5. Course and Facilitator Feedback

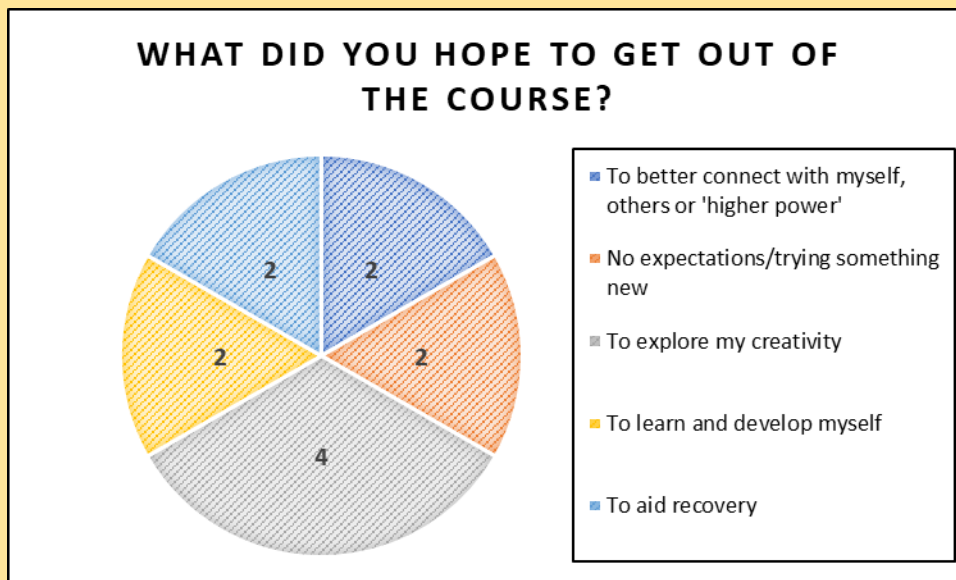
The final section of the survey was designed to capture feedback on the operational aspects of the sessions, and if it met the expectations of the participants. Again, there was a strongly positive response to these questions, people enjoyed the sessions, and they felt supported, understood, and able to be themselves.



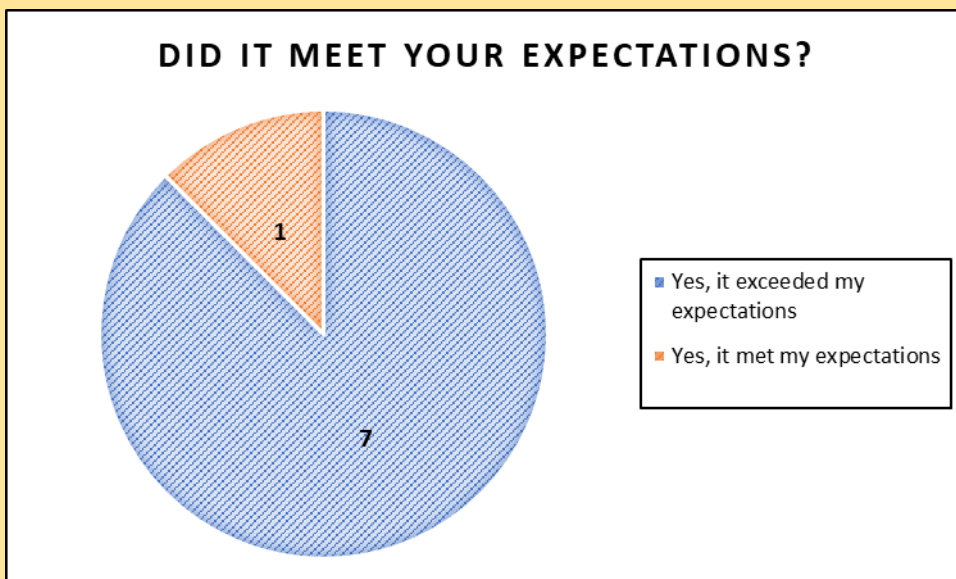
Most people first heard about NND verbally, either from the facilitator who promoted the course at local cultural events and recovery meetings, or from people in their local network. The remaining two people saw the course advertised via written materials.



A free-text question was asked to capture expectations of the course. Results were categorised into themes, some people had more than one expectation of the course. Most people primarily wanted to explore their creativity through the sessions, which was alternatively described as a 'release' or an 'expression' of creativity. Two people said they signed up to the course without specific expectations, 'an open mind' to 'trying something new'. Other responses had specific expectations, as indicated in the chart below, which related to personal growth, learning, and recovery.



100% of people said the course met their expectations, with 7 out of 8 saying it exceeded them.



Participants were finally asked to rate their overall experience of New Note Dance. 100% of respondents rated the course 10 out of 10.

Conclusions

Although the facilitator of the workshops has a wealth of experience in the techniques used in the sessions, this was the first time collaborating with delivery partners, and so this report set out to understand the effectiveness of that partnership and formalise the understanding of how the techniques bring about change. The report also set out to test the assumptions made in NND's first Theory of Change.

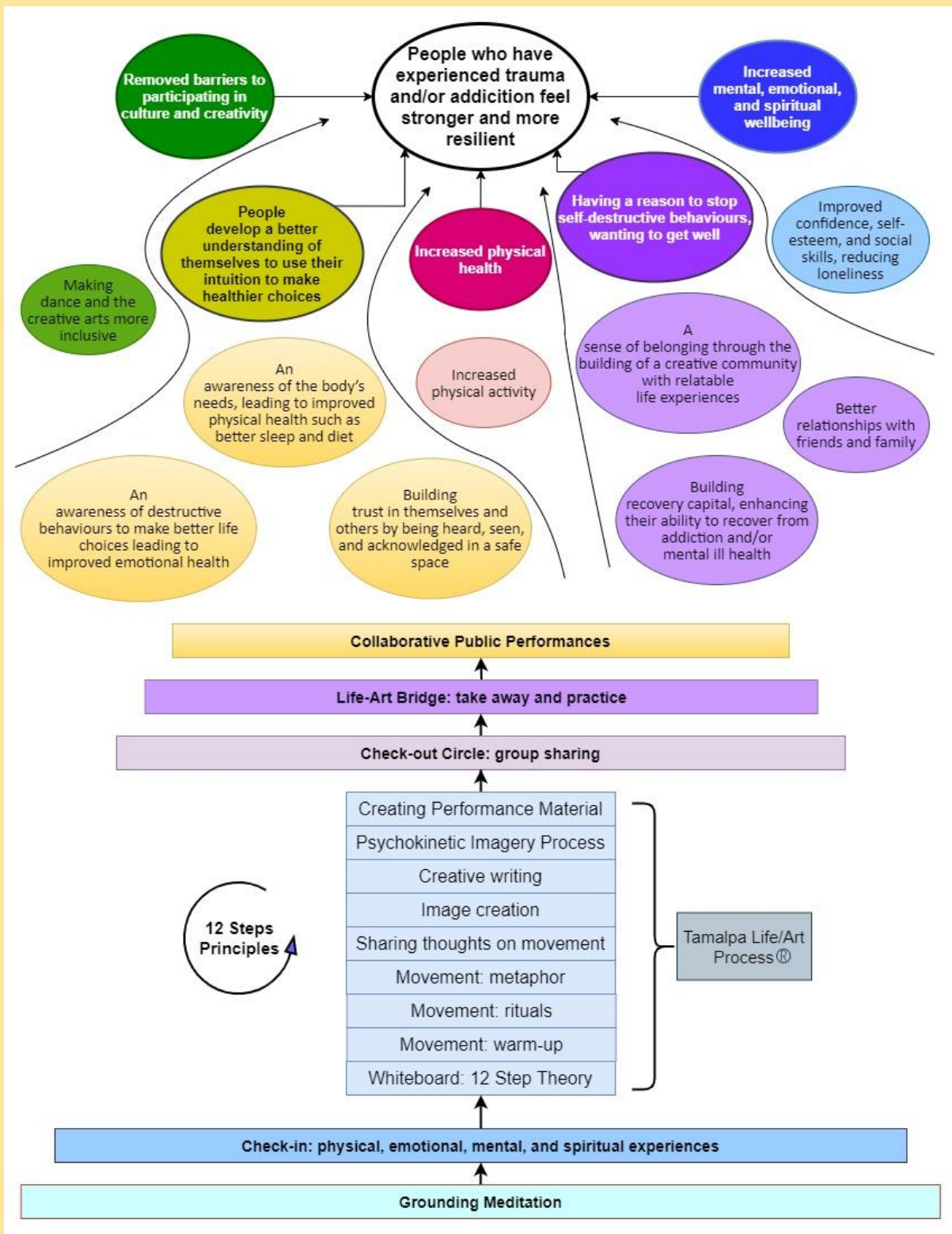
It is clear that this was a hugely rewarding, if sometimes difficult process for participants, with universally positive comments from all those that contributed to the evaluation. It should be noted that only around 40% of people that attended at least one session contributed to the evaluation, and so it would be useful to explore any anecdotal feedback from the participants that didn't commit to the entire course.

The evaluation supports the logic of NND's first Theory of Change, being particularly effective at improving mental wellbeing, building 'recovery capital', and allowing people to gain a better understanding of themselves so that they may practice using newly found strengths, and begin to address entrenched patterns of thought and behaviours. The evaluation also uncovered a third layer of 'enablers' which is captured in a new outcomes framework, but equally could be incorporated into a revised Theory of Change.

Most participants heard about NND via word of mouth, and so future workshops would need a strategy for reaching a new cohort, considering learning around participant retention.

“For me, it was life-changing and a fantastic experience, I really loved it”

Appendix A: Theory of Change



Appendix B: Outcome Framework

Impact		People who have experienced trauma and/or addiction feel stronger and more resilient.	
Long Term Outcomes	Short Term Outcomes	Enablers	
1. Increased Physical Health	1.1 Increased Physical Activity		
2. Improving mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.	2.1 Improved confidence, self-esteem, and social skills, reducing loneliness.	2.11 A container for working through difficult emotions. 2.12 Being your true self in front of an audience, being witnessed, being seen. 2.13 A safe space, no judgement 2.14 Acknowledging that the process can be difficult. 2.15 Built on a therapeutic model and evidence of art supporting wellbeing	
3. Reducing self-destructive behaviours and wanting to get well.	3.1 Building recovery capital, enhancing their ability to recover from addiction and/or mental ill health. 3.2 Better relationships with friends and family. 3.3 A sense of belonging through the building of a creative community with relatable life experiences.	3.11 Experienced staff with lived experience of recovery.	
4. People develop a better understanding of themselves to use their intuition to make healthier choices.	4.1 Building trust in themselves and others by being heard, seen, and acknowledged in a safe space. 4.2 An awareness of destructive behaviours to make better life choices leading to improved emotional health. 4.3 An awareness of the body's needs, leading to improved physical health such as better sleep and diet.	4.11 Seeing their own expression from a different angle, offering new perspectives and insights about their lives. 4.31 Language beyond the thinking mind, connecting to an inner awareness, allowing that to speak to them. 4.32 Creative practice unlocks expression without thinking or speaking.	
5. Removed barriers to participating in culture and creativity.	5.1 Making dance and the creative arts more inclusive.	5.11 Creativity and self-expression are celebrated, not criticised. 5.12 A supportive partner organisation (SE Dance). 5.13 A mix of creative mediums, everyone can find something that works for them.	

Report commissioned by New Note Projects, ©2023

Analysis and report completed by James Evans, Data Consultancy Services