

LTA Connect:

Compassion Play: supporting mental wellbeing via compassionate, contemplative and playful pedagogies

Julia Reeve SFHEA

National Teaching Fellow 2021

Teacher Fellow

De Montfort University, Leicester

jreeve@dmu.ac.uk

[@juliareeve](https://www.linkedin.com/in/juliareevedmu/)

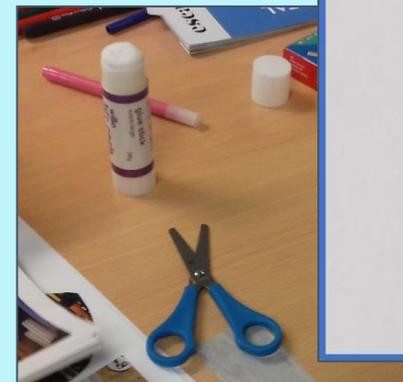
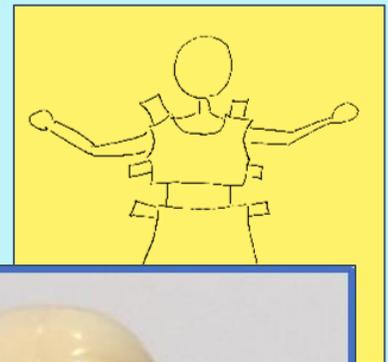
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/juliareevedmu/>

<https://www.juliareeve.co.uk/>



About me

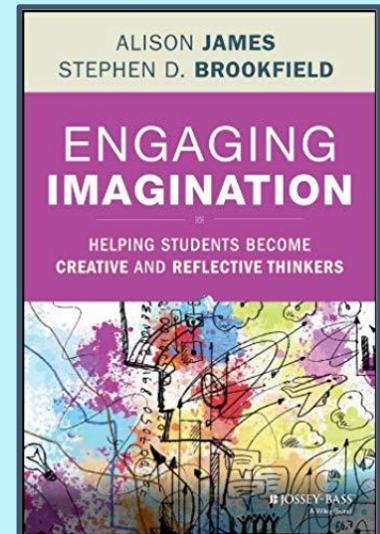
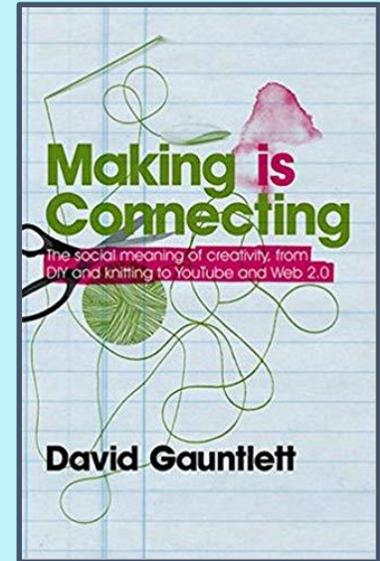
- Fashion & costume design background
- Worked in industry, FE & HE
- Worked in academic and support roles
- Experience of mental health issues
- Passionate about inclusion
- Childhood love of quiet, imaginary play
- Visual and multisensory learner
- Interested in mindfulness and 'Flow'



Inspiration

‘...going through the thoughtful, physical process of making something.....an individual is given the opportunity to reflect, and to make their thoughts, feelings or experiences manifest and tangible.’ (Gauntlett 2011, p. 4)

‘Lego Serious Play posits that learning is deeper and more personal when we make something and that the mind learns best and retains more when people are actively engaged.’ (James & Brookfield 2014 p117)



The Blossom model

Compassionate pedagogy

“In compassion, we identify with the struggles of another, and as a teacher...we may remember what it was like to be a struggling student, burdened by loans and tests and the real uncertainty of the future” White

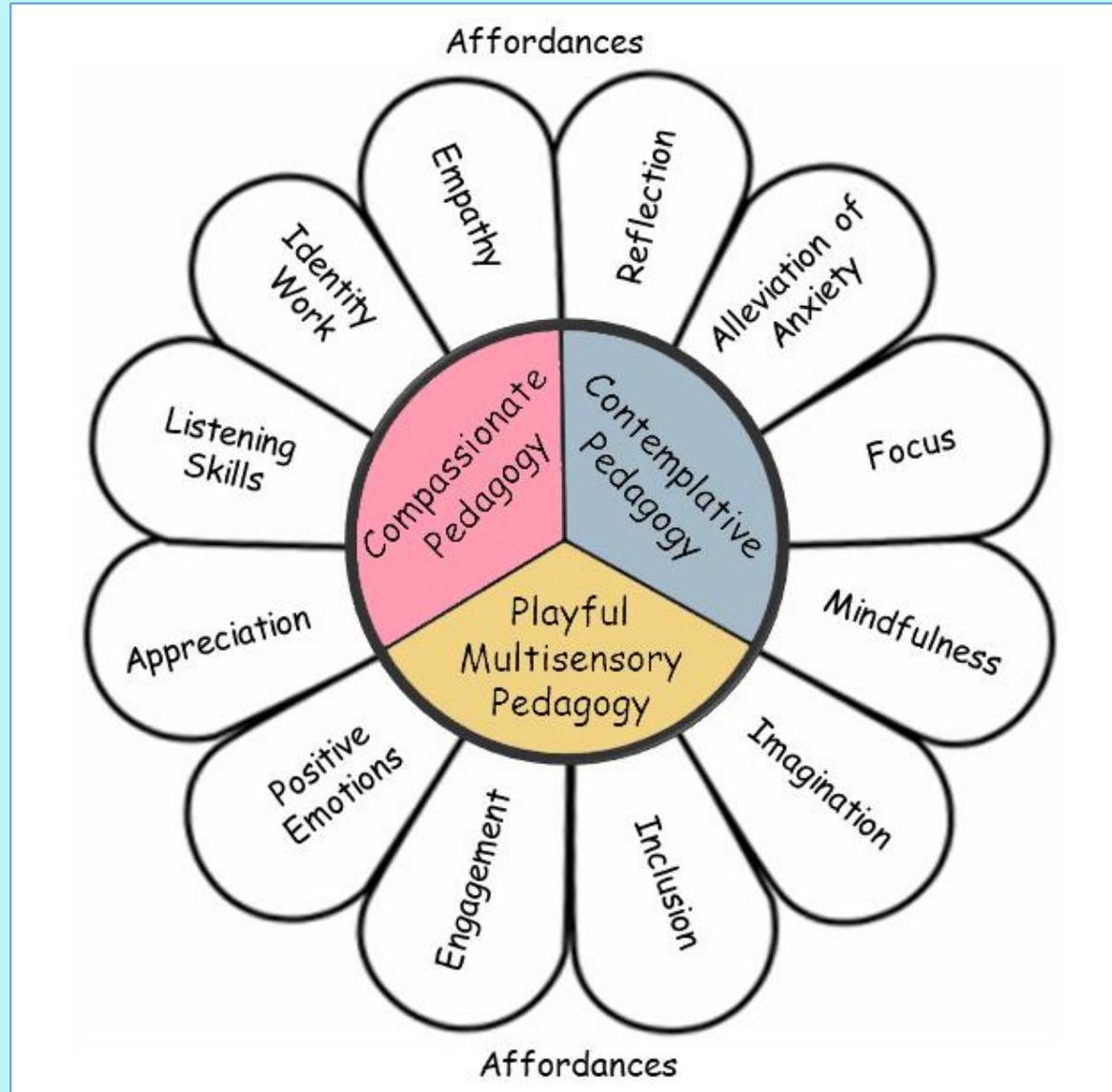
Contemplative pedagogy

“...the natural capacity for contemplation balances and enriches the analytic. It has the potential to enhance performance, character, and depth of the student’s experience” Hart

Playful pedagogy

“Playfulness is a more important consideration than play. The former is an attitude of mind; the latter is a passing outward manifestation of this attitude” Dewey

The Blossom model



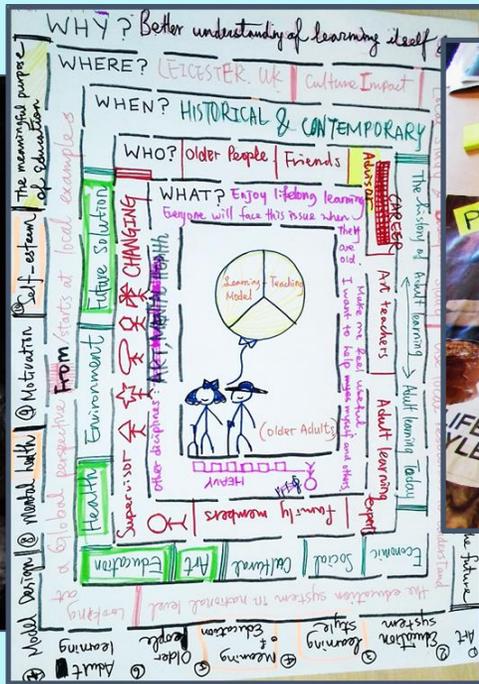
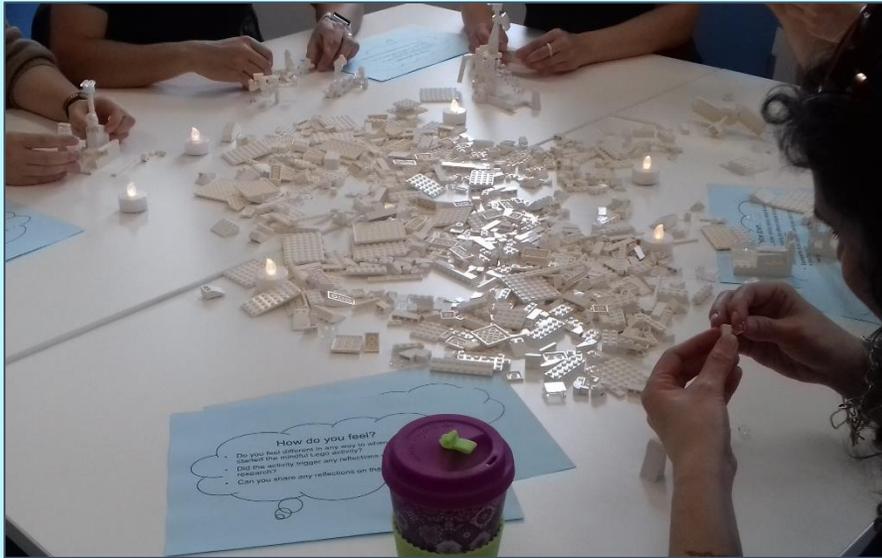
Read more here:

[Compassionate Play:](#)

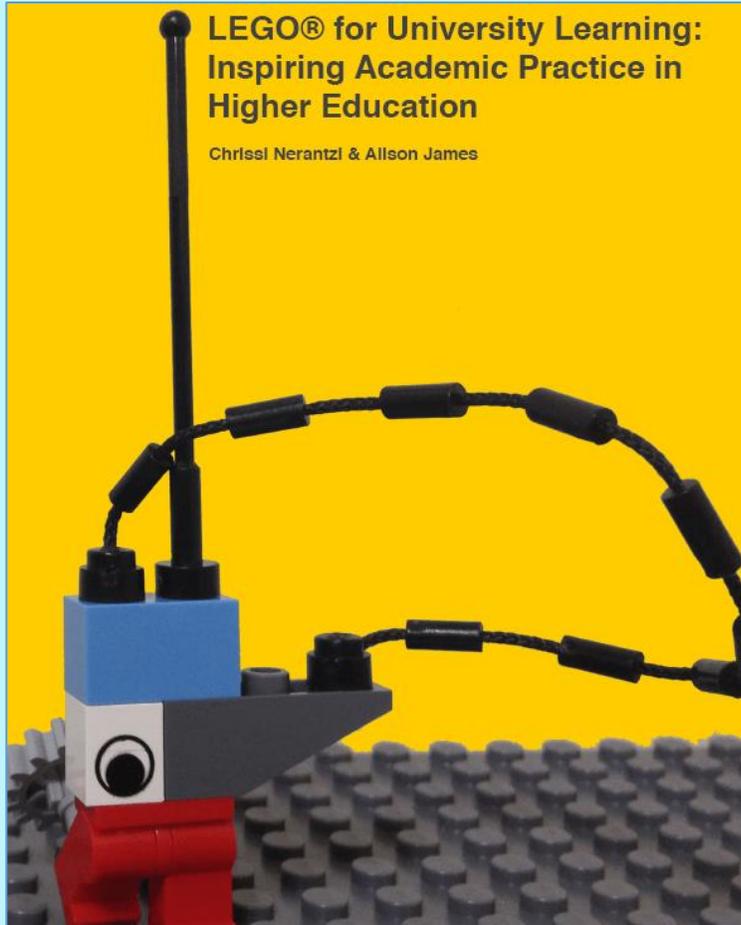
[why playful teaching is a prescription for good mental health \(for you and your students\)](#)

What tools do I use?

- LEGO® Serious Play®
- Swollage
- Reframing
- Mindful LEGO



What is LEGO® Serious Play®?



- A methodology used by educators to foster reflection, empathy and self-efficacy
- A way of looking at things differently
- A tool to enable storytelling
- “Serious play is not the building of literal models, but rather constructing metaphorical and symbolic creations that represent problems, solutions, realizations, and models of communication...” (James & Brookfield 2014 p116).

What is the process?



- A series of exercises using LEGO bricks
- Participants build models responding to the facilitator's questions
- Participants share the 'story' of their model with the group
- They move from individual to group models
- Crucially, participants progress from making literal models to metaphorical ones

Example: LEGO® Serious Play® to support mental wellbeing

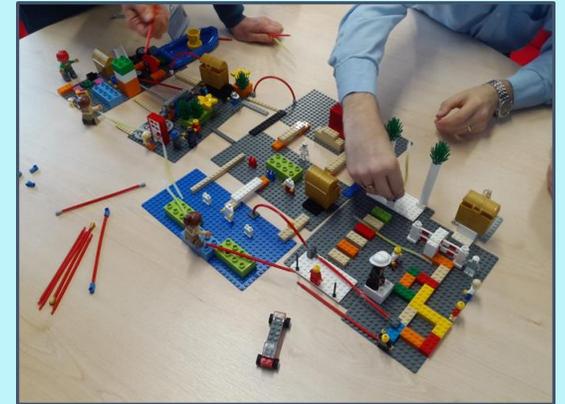
- ‘Exploring your learning journey with LEGO® Serious Play®’ transitions workshop for 1st yr. undergraduates
- Face to face workshop, small groups working on individual tables
- Relaxed atmosphere: music
- Series of exercises using individual Lego kits leading to:
- Individual and group reflections on the first 6 weeks at Uni and what they hoped the next 6 would bring



“People with anxiety, always think that they are the only ones...” Student

Impact: LEGO® Serious Play® to support mental wellbeing

- 95% found session helped them to reflect. Students retained the Lego to use for self-reflection in the future: “I will definitely use the LEGO again..., literally every night to do a brief of my day and how I am feeling”.
- 68% found the session helped them talk about their feelings, supporting mental wellbeing by providing safe spaces for discussion. LEGO was seen as a tool to support future wellbeing to use “when feeling stressed”.

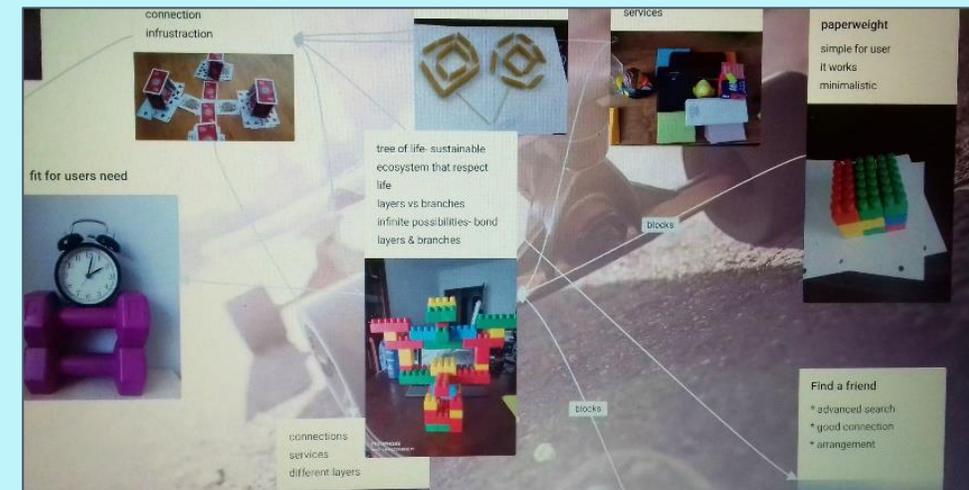


Online: LEGO® Serious Play® to support mental wellbeing

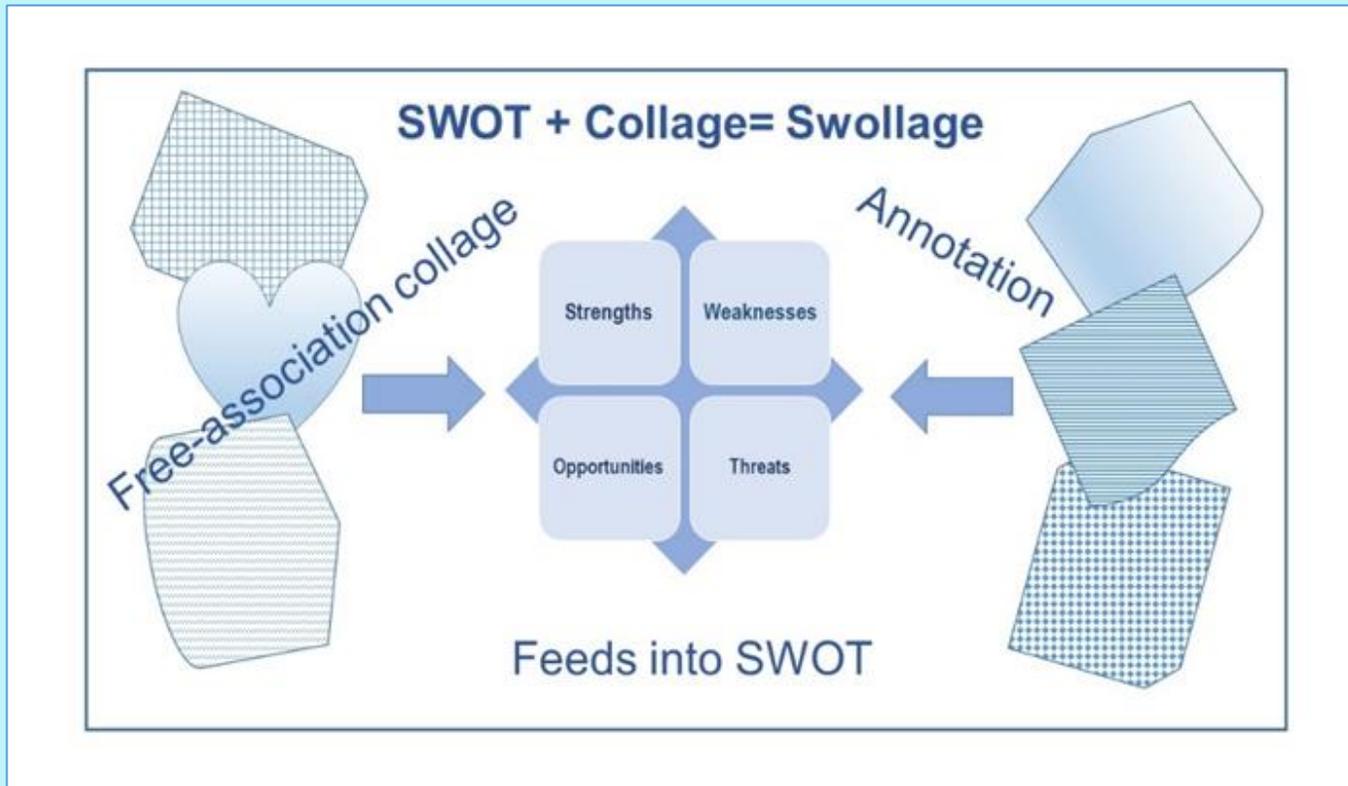
LEGO® Serious Play® has also moved online, either via:

- Small kits sent out by post to participants
- Utilising any building materials available
- Models can be shared via a Padlet or shared file

- Read more here: [Lego in Lockdown](#)



What is Swollage?



- A combination of free-association collage and personal SWOT(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis
- A tool to build skills in self-reflection
- A way of fostering discussion
- A route to greater self-efficacy through increased self-awareness

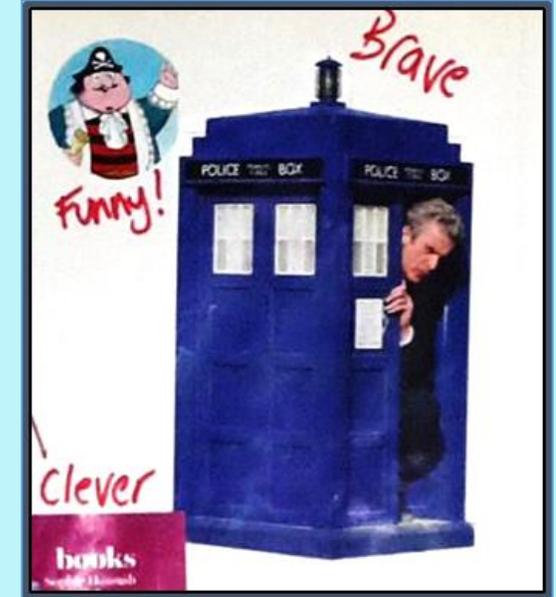
What is the process?



- Participants create a free-association collage
- Images from the collage are used to prompt annotation in stages
- Key words relating to the participant's own skills and attributes are added
- These are used to populate a SWOT template

Example: Swollage to support mental wellbeing

- ‘Swollage for Self-Reflection’ workshop
-
- Face to face workshop, small groups working on individual tables
- Embedded into Medical Science programme since 2018 as preparation for reflective reports



Empowers learners, building self-awareness: students discovered “strengths...” they “never really knew before”
Lecturer

Impact: Swollage to support mental wellbeing

- Connects with others, building sense of belonging: prompting “deeper, more meaningful” discussions, creating a “supportive and open forum for learning about themselves and others” Nursing lecturer.
- Develops self-reflection skills: enables students to “understand more about themselves before going on placement.” Placement co-ordinator.

Read more here:

[Swollage \(SWOT + Collage\) for Medical Science students](#)



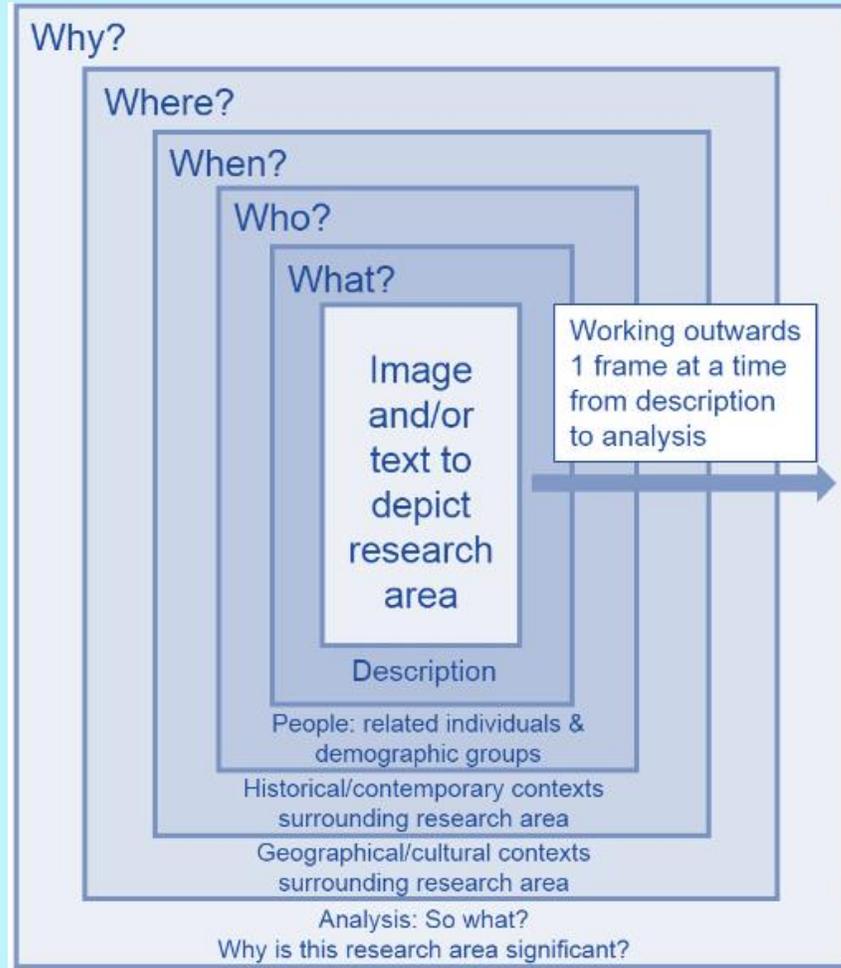
Online: Swollage to support mental wellbeing

Swollage has also moved online via:

- Free-association collages created prior to session
- Sharing, annotation and discussion carried out during online session
- Models can be shared via a Padlet or shared file



What is Reframing?



- A step by step interrogation of a topic
- A tool to build research skills and academic confidence
- A visual way to approach written assignments
- A basis for discussion with lecturers and peers

Example: Reframing to support mental wellbeing

- ‘Reframing your Essay Assignment’ workshop
1st yr. undergraduates
- Face to face workshop, small groups working on individual tables
- Students started in the centre of the ‘Frame’ with their essay topic, then filled in each section by responding to prompt questions and carrying out further research
- The final ‘Frame’ contained key words which could then be used in a follow-up research session

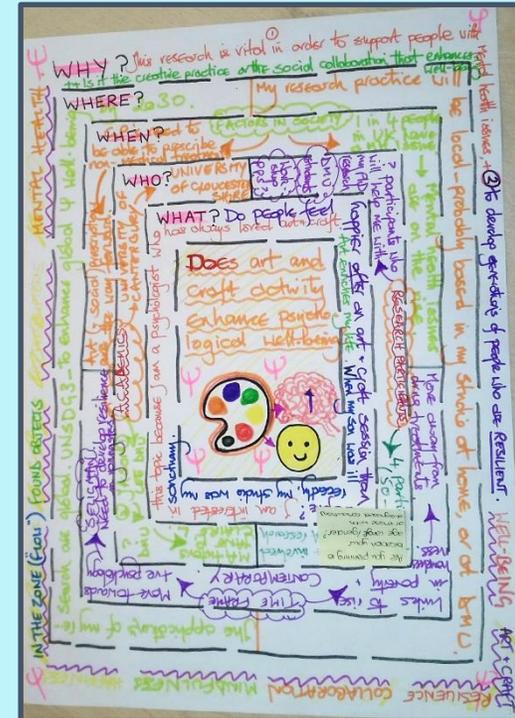


“Helps you see what information you know and what you need to research”
Student

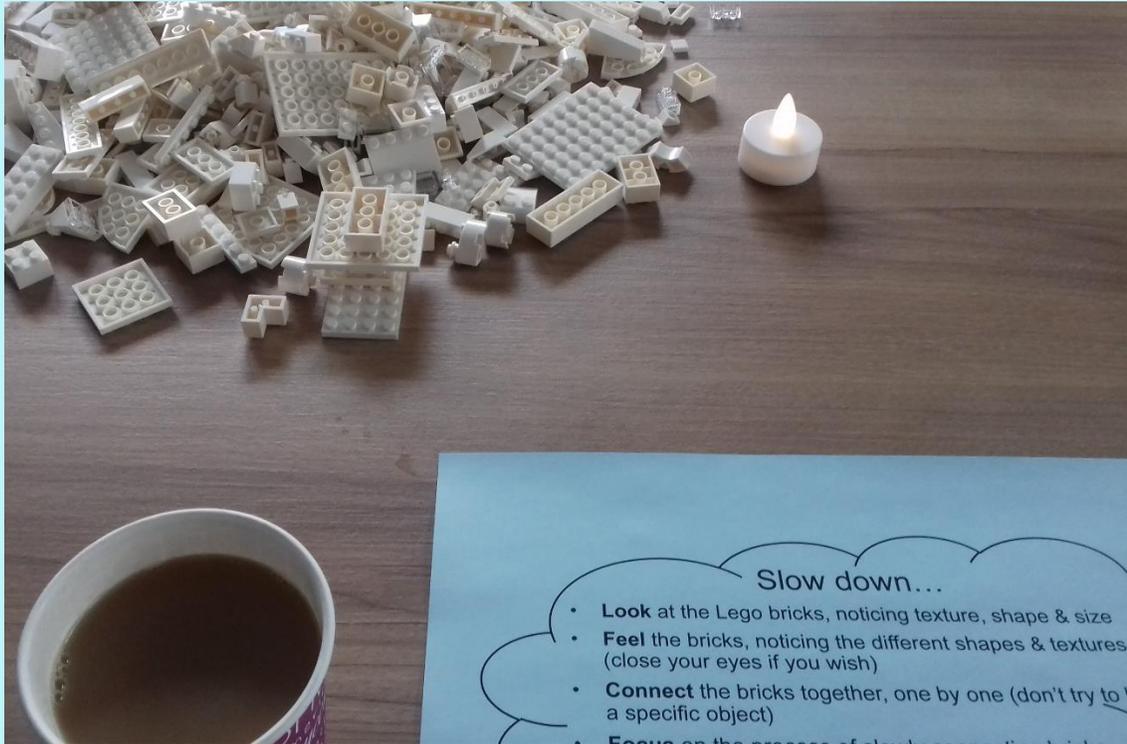
Online: Reframing to support mental wellbeing

Reframing has also moved online via:

- A paper template that can be printed prior to session
- Filling in 'Frames', sharing and discussion carried out during online session
- 'Frames' can be shared via a Padlet or shared file

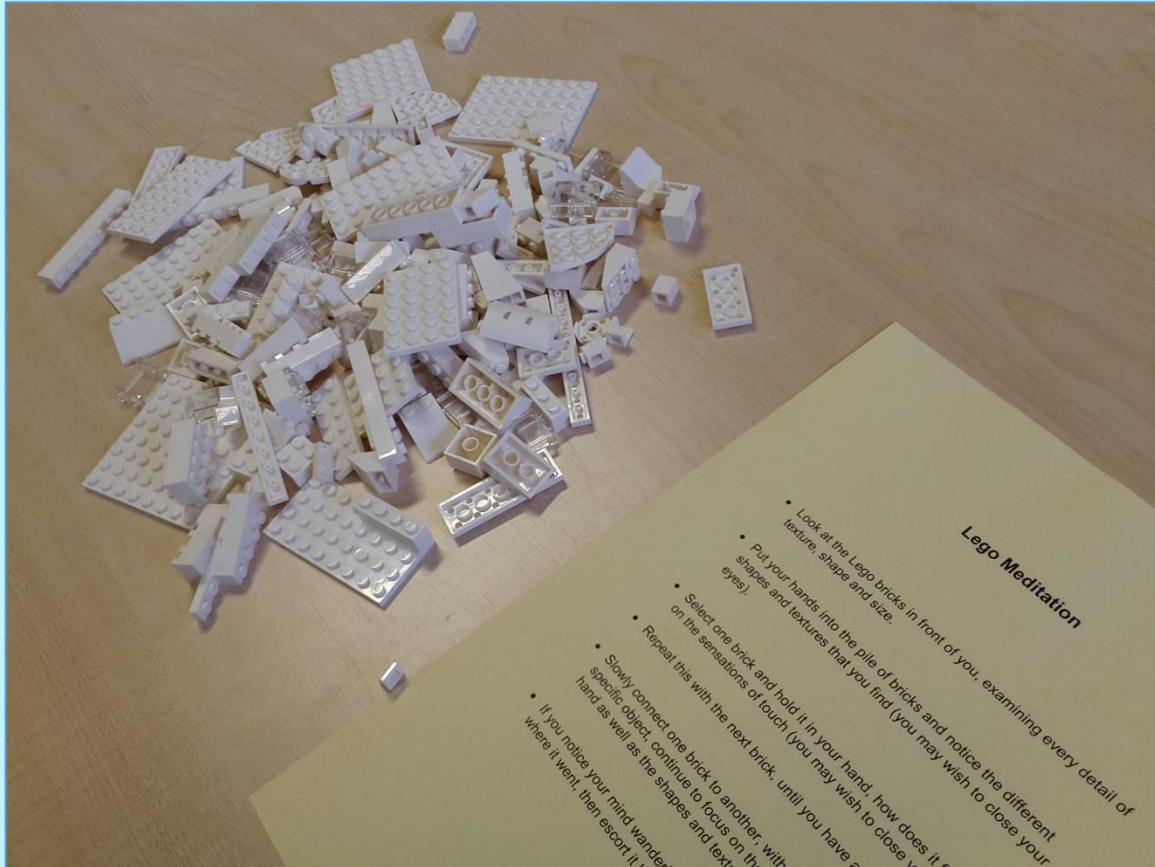


What is Mindful LEGO?



- Meditation using white and clear LEGO bricks to reduce anxiety and prompt reflection
- A multisensory route into mindfulness
- A relaxed way to foster social connection and a sense of belonging

What is the process?



- Participants are guided through a series of mindful exercises using Lego bricks
- Instructions can be verbal or written
- Calm atmosphere created with gentle music and LED tealights

Example: Mindful LEGO to support mental wellbeing

- Workshop for students on the autistic spectrum who were new to university
- Relaxed, loosely structured session
- Building activities provided a route into conversation with peers



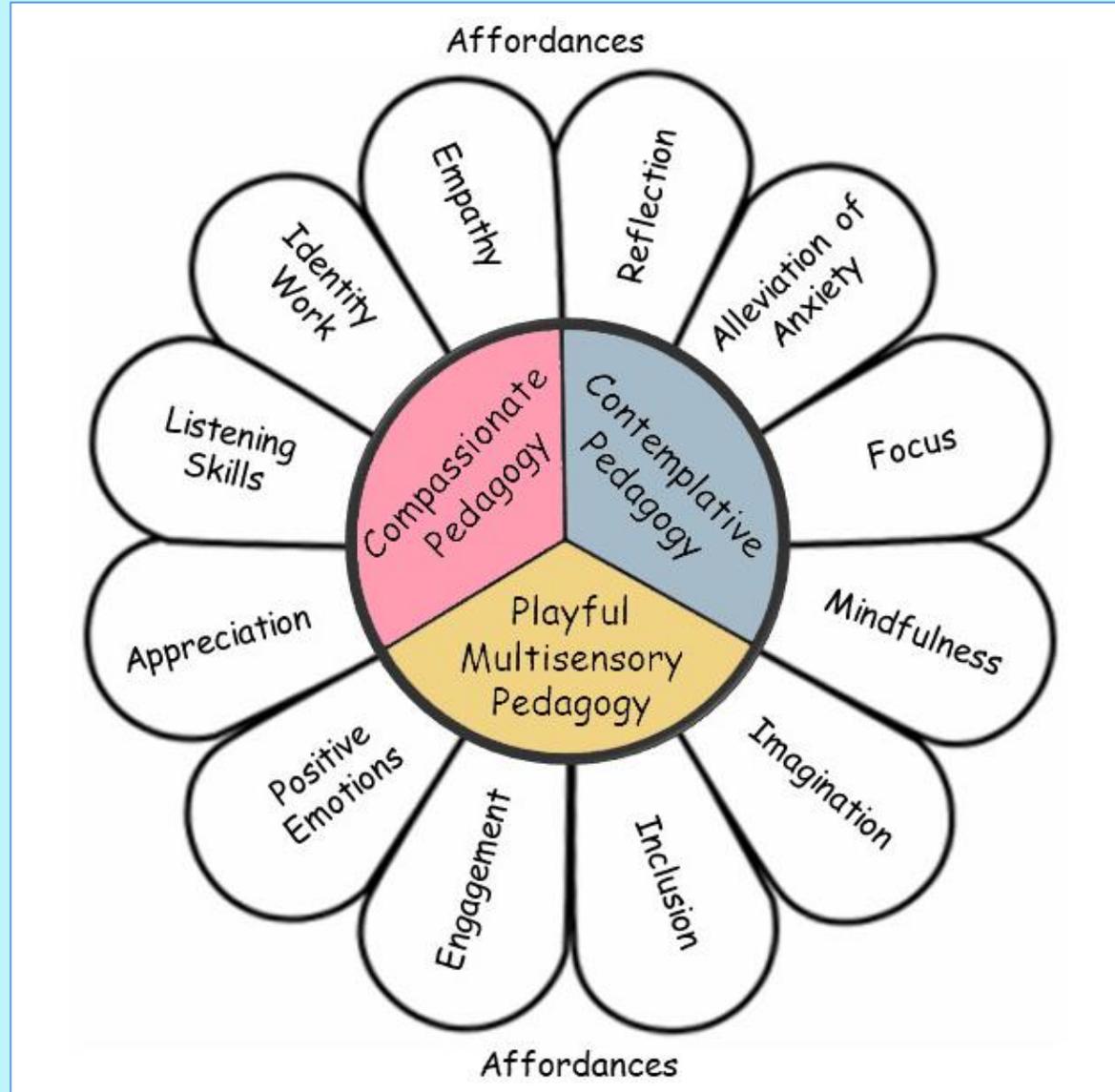
“I built a palace of light where you can wander around and find peace”
Student

Impact: Mindful LEGO to support mental wellbeing

- All participants reported increased feelings of relaxation and wellbeing following the sessions: “Allowed them to transition from a dazed anxious head space to a balanced calm one” Lecturer.
- Included in new QAA resources to support the embedding of mental wellbeing into the curriculum
[Embedding Mental Wellbeing – Methods & Benefits](#)



The Blossom model



Any questions?



Further Reading

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- Reeve, J. (2014) How can adopting the materials and environment of the studio engage Art & Design students more deeply with research and writing? An investigation into the Reframing Research technique, Journal of Writing in Creative Practice, 7 (2) p. 267-281.
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