



**Creative Places,
Edenderry**



Looking after the Artist/Facilitator

Four Artists/Facilitators in Conversation with Creative Places, Edenderry Coordinator, Seonaid Murray



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council



A Unique Snapshot from Four Different Practices/Perspectives

Grab a comfy chair and a cup of tea and have a read!

Welcome to our 4th Community Toolkit. Our Creative Places, Edenderry Coordinator, Seonaid Murray sat down to talk to four experienced Artists & Facilitators about their practice. The following includes their thoughts, advice for best preparing for, delivering and post facilitation of an Arts based workshop; how to 'ground' yourself in order to move on to the next workshop/event or to head home to decompress!

Conversation Three:

Susan Kidd, Creative Relaxation and Mindful Drawing facilitator, based in Edenderry talks to Seonaid on Zoom.

Seonaid: Good morning Susan!

Susan: Good morning!

Seonaid: How would you describe your practice?

Susan: Health and Wellness, all sorts, energy healing for both people and animals, mental, physical, emotional well being, relaxing, creating a safe place for people to come and to find peace that's within themselves. For Creative Places, Edenderry I have delivered Creative Relaxation and Mindful drawing workshops.

Seonaid: Perfect, thanks - that brings me to our first question - we have worked together a few times now in Edenderry and I know you facilitate widely in different contexts - as you have just said - so how would you look after yourself if you had a workshop today?

Susan: Well, I think it out the day before and prepare and make sure I am a bit rested myself. I definitely make sure I am ready 30 minutes before the event starts or a bit longer but make sure to be there with a bit of quiet time myself to be grounded and to be in that space where I just park everything -

and I am ready to facilitate. I might say a grounding ritual. I like to create a peaceful atmosphere for the group and greet people when they arrive.

Seonaid: Charmaine McMeekin, who is a dance facilitator was telling me that she has a particular Mantra that she would say to herself before a workshop - what about you?

Susan: It would kind of vary but it's the same intention of being present and bringing yourself present within the room and giving your all to what you are facilitating - and being nicely organised ahead of time. That the tables are laid out and everything - so that you are not under pressure or rushing at the last minute.

Seonaid: I have witnessed that and you have a very calm presence. It is important that you are calm yourself before welcoming anyone else into the workshop - how do you prepare yourself for the unknown element of a workshop?

Susan: I'm always prepared to go with the flow - every session is different and

you have no idea what is going to come up - but you just work with it - and I like to do an introduction if everyone is comfortable, 'what's your name and what are your interests' or whatever and get everyone to feel included and welcome in it and feel part of the group and the circle - yeah, definitely go with the flow - I learnt very quickly that you can prepare an outline of what you are going to do but it can go in all sorts of directions.

Seonaid: So, expect the unexpected? And then if you were imagining yourself towards the end of the workshop - do you have anything similar about looking after yourself after the workshop? We talked a bit about this yesterday as well - we do tend to soak up the atmosphere - I would be facilitating a music workshop which I know is a bit different to what you do but still has similarities - you still take on the energy of the room - do you have anything that you would advise - regarding looking after yourself after the workshop?

Susan: In general I don't have a big ritual - I might say, 'come back into your own' and

prepare to return to daily life and my routine outside of the space.

Seonaid: It can just depend can't it? I was facilitating a freelance workshop with a group of children on Saturday and it is a different type of energy! It was really good fun & afterwards I felt uplifted because I enjoyed the workshop but I know that maybe I was a little tired so I just took a little minute before moving on to the next thing. It's just good to give yourself a bit of space. Would you have any pitfalls to look out for?

Susan: I haven't had many pitfalls or negative experiences - ehm - it's not really a pitfall but there was a workshop I facilitated at the Parish Centre in Edenderry and I was very aware that there were so many different cultures. I asked would it be compatible with each person's cultural beliefs and explained that they were welcome to take part or just observe if they preferred. I was really happy with that because all of our different cultures and all of our different beliefs and everything are so

diverse but still everyone is one. So yeah - just being aware. And also making sure to ask people how they identify before assuming.

Seonaid: That is so important. Sometimes you know everyone in the room because they have all registered with you or you have worked with them before. However, sometimes, as you have just explained, you are facilitating for another organisation or group and you need to be aware that there might be people within the group who identify differently than you might expect. And it is important for people to be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and let them tell you and the group how they like to be addressed.

Susan: Yeah - and actually the same day there were some young people who identify as disabled in the group and it was such a diverse group. I went home and I thought - everyone relaxed into the session and it was great - I said to my husband, 'I have never had such a diverse group and everyone fitted in and it was lovely.'

Seonaid: Exactly - enjoy the workshop in a way that suits you best and that is the same for communication -

Susan: Absolutely! They don't have to be performing or saying anything or doing anything - yeah - everyone is accepted as one....

Seonaid: Yeah - and I think as well as that you would bring your experience - so if you were in a room and a new person comes along - it just takes them a little while to settle in - but a workshop with yourself is brilliant for that - because all of a sudden you realise that it's time for you to relax with no pressure at all...

Susan: Yes - I love working with groups.

Seonaid: Would you have any lessons that you have learnt as you have been facilitating over the years?

Susan: Mainly that you go with the flow - it will always be positive but the energy of the group is made up of the people who happen to attend so every group is different depending on who is there. The odd time you get a quiet person - don't let them sit back and feel left out - without putting pressure on them - but make sure that you ask them questions. Some people will want to talk and be centre of attention and others will want to sit back and it's a balance then to get some of them to calm down and settle and to get the quiet ones to be part of it - gently like -

Seonaid: That's interesting and we talked about that yesterday too - and in different art forms - dance & drama - there is always that element that everyone in the room is different - there will be that one person who is more quiet than the others and someone else might be making a lot of noise but there will be a reason for that - because maybe they are nervous - and their nervous energy is just bubbling over - so like you say

it is how you balance that - so if you were in that situation, you are obviously a lovely calm person but is that your approach? That you just let someone express themselves and then sort of....

Susan: And then yeah - definitely let them express themselves but then bring it to this one and that one and move it around the room - and yeah, yeah -

Seonaid: Brilliant - would you have any good advice that you have been given or that you would give to others about looking after yourself?

Susan: Oh yeah - it's love yourself first, you are the priority and I have to work on that myself sometimes - you can be running round looking after everyone else - definitely make the time - put the same effort into looking after yourself - as someone said, one person you are guaranteed to spend your whole life with is yourself so yeah, love yourself and look after yourself - and the rest all falls into place -

The minute you're born and the minute you die you are with yourself so if you can be happy and look after yourself - you can love this one and that one and they will come and go and all the rest but you will always have your own self as your constant companion.

Seonaid: That's brilliant - and probably a really good way of describing the art of facilitation - you can tell - if you have a really good, experienced facilitator - or maybe they are new but they just have a natural way but I think if a facilitator is calm within themselves it makes the group feel more comfortable doesn't it?

Susan: Oh absolutely -

Seonaid: And not to be negative but I am sure we have all experienced a teacher in the past or something - and you can tell that they are having a bad day and they have let it come through....

Susan: I found that recently in a computer class in Naas and I had to reassure the person -

beside me that it wasn't anything personal but the teacher was just having a bad day!

Seonaid: And that's a shame when that happens - we are very lucky with Creative Places, Edenderry - because we have people like yourself - so it makes me, as the coordinator feel very reassured knowing that the project is in safe hands. Is there anything else that comes to mind?

Susan: Not really - I love what you are facilitating and I know a lot of the facilitators and they are lovely....

Seonaid: What would you maybe say to yourself if you could go back and talk to yourself at the beginning of your facilitation journey?

Susan: Maybe just step up and step out and do a bit more of it - yeah - I love it and I've been happy on my journey.

Seonaid: That's brilliant - that's really good to hear - and long may it continue -

Susan: Thank you, this was a lovely idea and I really appreciate it so thank you!

Seonaid: Thank you!