

# Artist Self Care Project

## CHECK LIST

**This check-list evolved from a conversation between artists present at a Making Time forum in WA in 2017. It aims to support artists and organisations to think strategically about and activate strategies for self care before, during and after projects.**

### Pre Project

- Is this really a good time for me to be taking on this project? Why/ Why not? What do I need to know to make an appropriate/useful/caring decision?
- Who do I need to talk to in making a decision about taking on this project? – family, partner, friends.
- What further information about the project/ community/issue do I need before making a decision?
- Is the fee adequate for pre research and consultation, during reflection time and post reflection time?
- Is this timeline achievable? How will it impact me directly?
- Is it possible to have better impact and self-care within a different timeframe/outcome expectation for the project?

### Protocol - Respecting Culture and Tradition

Going to the land you will be working in and speaking to the right people to understand the place, relevance and appropriateness of the project is deeply important in the set up and commencement of a project.

Protocols change all the time when travelling through Country. Until you get there you don't know what is going on. The welcome you receive will depend on your protocol of engagement.

Connection through family lines and relationships established by the team members is the best way of beginning.

It can be stressful negotiating these processes – take time out of the space, then go back. You know you have to talk to the right person and they will reassure you and support the next phase. Finding the senior person/boss in community is the key. They are the ones with the rights to speak

- Is there time in contracted hours to do introduction meetings/cups of tea with elders/community leaders?
- Who is your mate/trusted confidant in the organisation/community you are working with?
- Who is the person in the organisation/community who will be the 'angel' to do self-care check-ins? This is a great strategy to ensure it doesn't all rest with the project team.
- If a large project, have a buddy system established to support each other in self-care strategies and check-ins to ensure issues can be caught before they develop into unwell states.
- Where is the professional supervisor coming from, how do I get support for this from the contractor?
- Establish milestone points in project timelines to have check-ins with supervisor/peer/friend
- Step trigger word for your team if feeling stressed
- Ask yourself if you need specific training or PD to deal with the specifics of issues/trauma you might be working in. Discuss with contractor and ensure budget allocation to support this.
- Self-care apps preloaded on phone/computer eg Smiling mind app
- Office/workspace survival kit – headphones for quiet times, relaxing/aromatherapy spray
- Define your hours as specifically as possible, allow for flexibility by think through your boundaries and those of the participants. Share your reasoning with your team/community.

- How can you talk about self-care at work/project in a safe way? What forum is there for this in context of work/project that is clear and collaborative?
- Check that you have adequate per diems in contract to cover costs if away from home.
- Check that travel costs are suitably calculated for real travel impact.

## During

- Set up beautiful environment, beautiful picture personal object in work space
- Have lunch outside, at least outside workspace, everyday
- Beautiful tea/coffee ready and available
- Healthy treats ready and available
- Breathe
- Is my behaviour 'silencing' the participants/ community? – redirecting, shutting down, minimise, or neglecting issues/material/behaviour due to inability to cope due to stress/burn out

## Post

- Factor time for a rest and reflection – away from all other work commitments. This is difficult in freelance life but ultimately means you are truly ready for the next project in the calendar. Perhaps negotiate it as part of your contracted hours. This should be a validated task as it ties in to reportage and suitable evaluation.

- Identify things you want to do outside of work hours – dinner club, dance class
- Does the contractor have established self-care processes for their artists/workers? Define how you can link in with these.
- Have you made time in your life at the end of the project for rest and reflection?

- If something happens which interrupts the potential for continuation make a decision on priorities for self - You are not indispensable – perhaps it is better to hand the project on to others???
- Record hours in journal to keep healthy record of hours worked
- Exercise regime is non-negotiable, even just a daily walk.
- Eat regularly & healthily and drink lots of water.
- Calling stop... “No. I can't take that on”... Don't be afraid to push back where appropriate

- Eat healthily and drink lots of water.
- Check in with your counselor if you have one, else find a supervisor/peer to support some reflection on personal engagement and the broader project.
- Feed back to the community your personal benefits from participation. And thank them for the opportunity.

- Plan moments for self care into your timeline, project workshop program
- Do a meal plan before you start the project – what when where, what access to healthy food options, fresh food options, clean water
- Build in budget for sundries

- If you are on a long project factor in “away days” – a weekend at the beach, a day away with a picnic packed, an afternoon in the movies with the world closed out. Make this an important part of your scheduling.
- Keep to your established 'check in' times with supervisor/friend/peer
- What activities each day are nourishing and what activities are draining?

- Spend some time writing down thoughts, feedback, ideas for better ways of doing – a rigorous reflection. Written down gives you greater focus, articulation and enables you to have something to look over at the planning phase of the next projects to remember.

Further thoughts and ideas can be found at: <https://creativerecovery.org.au/prepare/artist-self-care/self-care-check-list/>