



**Creative Movement Therapy Association of India with  
Christ University (Deemed to be University)  
Department of Psychology**

**Present**

**CMTAI'S 10th International Conference  
at Christ University Main Campus, Bangalore  
September 21st and 22nd, 2024**

**Beyond the Box: Innovations in Dance and Other Arts Therapies**

*Sessions are theoretical and experiential in nature and include areas relevant to dance/movement and other creative arts therapies.*

*Experiential session facilitators are listed in alphabetical order by first name followed by research presenters, poster presenters, panellists and discussion group moderators.*

*\*PLEASE NOTE THIS SCHEDULE IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE\**

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## 10th International Conference

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## - Sessions -

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### **Session: Implementing the Expressive Therapies Continuum in Clinical Practice By AKSHITA DESORE, Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapist | Delhi, India**

The experiential session will focus on the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC). The ETC is an arts-based assessment tool that views a person holistically and thus, their journey holistically. The ETC is “a theoretical and practical guide which provides a way to answer questions about what media to use, under what circumstances, and with which particular clients” (Hinz, 2009, p. 4). Often, when beginning work with a client, therapists can struggle with introducing arts in the session, ETC can be a helpful tool for expressive arts therapists to understand how to bring in the arts in the session and meet the client where they are.

**Bio:** Akshita Desore is a Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapist and a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) with the board of Allied Mental Health and Human Services Professions, Massachusetts, USA. She received her master’s in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Expressive Arts Therapy from Lesley University, Massachusetts, USA and currently works with individuals across ages in her private practice in Delhi with a focus on grief/loss, trauma and navigating and moving through transitions. She also works as a consultant psychologist for Pause and Color of Grey Cells. Working with a presence-oriented and trauma sensitive lens, Akshita’s approach is rooted in the use of arts to reconnect with our creativity and use our intuition and imagination. She works with clients to explore ways to become more present, accept and navigate emotions and develop meaningful relationships. Outside of her work with clients, Akshita is really passionate about research and education in the field of Expressive Arts Therapy and is a part of the Educational Resources committee of the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association, IEATA.



### **Session: Within Visible: An Immersive Exploration of Pareidolia as a Therapeutic Tool in Expressive Arts Therapy By ANISHA RENEE REGO, Counseling Psychologist & Expressive Arts Practitioner | Bangalore, India**

### **VINAYAK BIRLA, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (In Training) | New Delhi, India**

The workshop "Within Visible" will explore the therapeutic potential of pareidolia (finding meaningful interpretations in ambiguous stimuli), as an innovative method for fostering internal support through environmental interactions. This co-facilitated session will be grounded in the theoretical framework of projection, where individuals project personal and social narratives onto ambiguous stimuli. It will include the theoretical underpinnings of pareidolia and projection, drawing on recent literature and models. Participants will engage in immersive and projection-based experiences using modalities of imagination, visual arts, and movement. These exercises will help participants arrive at and receive the support emergent symbols offer, encouraging a novel "way of seeing" and allowing for the discovery and integration of meaningful symbols and narratives within the unfamiliar. The workshop will conclude with a collective movement ritual and debriefing discussion, providing a space for participants to reflect on their experiences and integrate their insights. By blending innovative techniques with established therapeutic practices, "Within Visible" will highlight the potential for the use of pareidolia to enrich therapeutic practices and enhance emotional well-being.

**Bio:** Anisha Renee Rego is a Counseling Psychologist and an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (in training), based in Bangalore, India. Having been a professional vocalist for several years, she has a strong and innate relationship with the arts and holds an embodied understanding of their therapeutic value. She believes that this deeply personal relationship with the arts makes her work as an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner feel almost like introducing her clients not just to a medium, but also to a very dear friend. She is currently building a platform called 'Within Visible' which hopes to incorporate expressive arts therapy practices to curate immersive experiences for varied populations. She hopes for this to be a space that is a resource to all, regardless of their expertise and proficiency in the arts. Some other things that bring her joy are travelling, spending time in nature and the satisfaction that comes from giving someone the perfect gift.

Vinayak Birla is an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner based in Delhi, India. He comes from a varied educational and professional background, involving both business and the arts, that contributes to the unique approach to his work. As a theater artist, he has, over the years, engaged with theater in various capacities donning hats of an actor, writer, director and an audience member. This built a solid foundation to understand the multi-layered and nuanced ways in which one can experience the arts. Through his work in the corporate sector, he recognised a longing to work with people to help them feel more connected with themselves and their greater purpose. Going forward, in addition to his work as an expressive arts therapy practitioner, he hopes to take his embodied learnings of expressive arts therapy into his craft as an actor as well as his career in business. Currently, he is building an expressive arts based platform called "Within Visible", where he hopes to open spaces for engaging experiences for anyone needing support through the arts.



**Session: A Space for Healing, a Space for Relationship. Dance Movement Therapy in Daily Life and in Stroke Rehabilitation**

**By ANNA LUISA SPAGNA, Assistant Professor, Certified Dance Movement Therapist | Bangalore, India**

The dance/movement therapy methodology with its dance-centered approach, the work on the whole-body movement patterns, the space and the group are proper elements to learn how to cope with the world and with the other bodies. The session will lead the participants to experience the global development movement patterns in the space through different varieties of work in dual settings, small groups, and large groups. The global development movement patterns and how they help us to display our body into the space are the main topics of the session. The session will also focus on their effective use in the daily life and in clinical cases of stroke rehabilitation.

**Bio:** Anna Luisa Spagna is an Assistant Professor at the Dept. of Performing Arts at Christ University in Bengaluru. As a Professional Dance/Movement Therapist, she holds a three years post-graduate degree from the International School of Relational Expressive Dance/Movement Therapy (Dmt-ER®) in Rome and a Master's Degree in Pedagogy from University of Lecce, Italy. She is a member of the professional art therapy associations ARTE (Associazione Professionale Arte Terapia) and Danzare le Origini. As a dancer she trained in ballet, in classical Indian dance Odissi and in a traditional Indian dance - Chhau of Seraikella. As a versatile dancer, she has developed a work with the body in which specifically artistic aspects of dance meet pedagogy, therapy, healing, and women's issues. She is author of books and articles on dance and has created the artistic artwork - Yogini of Hirapur Oracle.



**Session: Understanding the Therapeutic Elements of Hip Hop Dance**

**By ANUBHUTI RATHORE, Counseling Psychologist, ExAT-P, Special Needs Therapist, Yoga Trainer |Noida, India**

**TANUSHREE MISHRA, Counseling Psychologist and ExAT-P | Bhubaneswar, India**

What started in the 1970s as a mark of protest and revolution, the Hip Hop culture with its various sub-categories has grown over the years and has spread throughout the world prominently amongst the youth population. This greater affinity towards this street art form has captured the attention of multiple western researchers on identity formation, self-expression, emotional regulation, and coping to the extent that intervention studies have been formulated to enhance therapeutic well-being amongst the youth of their countries. However, similar research studies remain scarce in the Indian context despite the growing affinity of the marginalized youth, towards this street form. Thus, the facilitators' research study aimed to understand the potential therapeutic elements in Hip Hop dance reaped by the Indian youth in the age range of 19-29 through a qualitative approach with interviews as the mode of data collection. With themes of "Selfhood", "Impact on Mental Health", "Presence of Community", "Resilience Building" and "Mind-Body Nexus", the primary finding was of the strengthened attunement of the mind and body, which favourably impact other domains of their life. Further research could explore the implications and applicability of the results in the therapeutic settings in the Indian context. Thus, in line with the theme of the conference, the facilitators' attempt would be to translate the findings of this recent research study on the therapeutic elements of a dance style that questioned the structure, risked the courage to think outside of the box and co create safe spaces for themselves and similar such at-risk communities around the world, into an experiential where the participants would have an opportunity to have a first-hand experience of the same. While curating the experiential for the participants the facilitators would create a space of safety, enabling the participants to experience the four elements of Chacian theory namely body action, symbolism, therapeutic movement relationship and group rhythmic activity through using movement and rhythm of Hip Hop music and rap while simultaneously drawing insights and parallels from the philosophy of Hip Hop dance and the culture at large and the theory put forth by Marian Chace.

**Bio:** Anubhuti Rathore is a committed Mental Health Professional with an expressive arts therapy and a person-centered approach that is trauma-informed and queer affirmative. She is a dedicated special educator proficient in supporting individuals with special needs using applied behavior therapy, focusing on the social and emotional needs of the children and vocational training for young adults with disabilities. Experienced in collaborating with other professionals and therapists to ensure the holistic growth of individuals, she provides holistic physical and mental health wellness support to adults and children with yoga and yoga lifestyle.

Tanushree Mishra is a Counselling Psychologist and an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner. With a diverse experience in different psychosocial settings, she has had the good fortune of working with children, young and old adults on a range of inter and intrapersonal concerns, including career-related confusions, self-esteem issues, relationship difficulties, emotional challenges, body image issues, and general well-being concerns. She has held group spaces for individuals or communities like that of caregivers, young adults on the spectrum, for individuals finding themselves in moments of transitions in life, identity exploration group space for at-risk children, and therapeutic wellness groups for geriatric population to name some. She works with an insight-oriented lens by actively trying to incorporate the usage of different modalities of arts. Also a dancer herself, she actively integrates this identity to use the indigenous wisdom of her and the clients' bodies to make meaning of the therapeutic work.



**Session: The Power of Drama in Experiential Education**

**By ANURADHA ROHRA, Drama Based Facilitator | Mumbai, India**

An engaging workshop where learning professionals and educators will discover the power of drama in experiential education. Participants will explore practical techniques to use drama for teaching complex subjects, enhancing student engagement, and developing empathy. These techniques help learners understand teamwork, collaboration, conflict resolution, develop critical thinking and spontaneity along with immersive experiential experiences. Outcomes include enhanced storytelling skills, improved classroom interaction, and the ability to create compelling learning experiences. This workshop promises to be both insightful and fun, equipping you with dynamic tools to inspire and educate.

**Bio:** Anuradha Rohra is a Performing Arts Facilitator, Communication Coach certified Storyteller by Susan Perrow (Australia), and a certified listening hour guide by Jonathan Fox (founder of playback theatre – New York). She also has her diploma in Applied Theatre for Social Change by ImaginAction - California, and is a Happiness Coach certified by Happitude, California. She is the founder of i-Express Academy- a space that nurtures the art of effective communication, self-expression, and theatrical skills.



**Session: Embodying the Cellular Ecosystem: Insights into Emotional Expression**

**By APARNA RAMKRISHNAN, Dance Movement Psychotherapist | Chennai, India**

This workshop delves into the innovative approach of dance movement psychotherapy (DMP), harnessing the power of creative expression to foster a deeper connection between internal emotions and outer manifestations. By focusing on the ecosystem of our cells, participants will explore the intricate symbolism and imagery that resides within them. Through experiential exercises combining breathwork and movement, we will tap into the nuances of our cellular anatomy, unlocking a profound understanding of our internal landscape. Drawing from case studies with clients, this presentation will

provide empirical evidence for the efficacy of this approach in facilitating embodied awareness and reflective practices. By the end of this workshop, participants can expect to gain a novel perspective on this creative intervention and a deeper connection to their internal resources, empowering them to integrate this wisdom into their personal and professional practices.

**Bio:** Aparna Ramkrishnan is a Dance Movement Psychotherapist with a Masters degree from Goldsmiths, University of London. She also holds a Masters of Science in Medical Sociology from The University of Madras. She works at Parivarthan Counseling and Research Centre, where she primarily works with adolescents and adults in mental health. Aparna is a guest faculty member at the Sancheti Health Care Academy M.A Course and on CMTAI's Certification Course, where she teaches movement observation and analysis modules. She recently presented and facilitated a workshop on the topic 'Using the Relationship with Our Cells and the Internal Ecosystem to Bridge Inner Connection and Outer Expression within the Field of Dance Movement' at the World Arts Embodiment forum in March 2023 and Conference organized by the Korean Dance Therapy Association (KDTA) in June 2023, respectively.



**Session: Understanding and Embodying the Satisfaction Cycle - A Body Mind Centring Process**

**By ATMICA REDDY, Dance Movement Psychotherapist | Bangalore, India**

The satisfaction cycle highlights Body Mind Centering - BMC's 5 developmental movements to reinstate healthy development of self. This session will introduce the concept of BMC and guide the group into a gentle movement exploration of the five core movement patterns known as the Basic Neurocellular Patterns (BNP). The group will get a chance to reflect on their somatic experience with visual arts/writing and the session will close with a verbal sharing.

**Bio:** Atmica Reddy is a Mental Health Professional who strongly believes in offering a safe and non-judgmental space for her clients to express themselves. As a qualified Dance Movement Psychotherapist (MA DMP, Derby UK) she uses a combination of conventional talk therapy along with creative tools such as music, movement, and arts to facilitate the therapeutic process. This unique merging of verbal and non-verbal interventions enables clients to creatively express themselves and deepen their self-understanding beyond the limitations of language. She adopts a trauma-informed and person-centered approach to psychotherapy with an emphasis on the role of the body and its lived experience in understanding mental, emotional, and relational health.



**Session: Tech-Therapy Fusion: Exploring Emotions Through AI and Creative Arts**

**By DISHA SAMPAT, R-DMT | Mumbai, India**

**MURTUZA RAILWAYWALA, Psychologist | Surat, India**

In the dance of pixels and paint, AI and creative arts therapy bring inner worlds to life. This interactive and experiential session is designed to introduce participants to innovative arts-based therapies, seamlessly blended with AI technology.

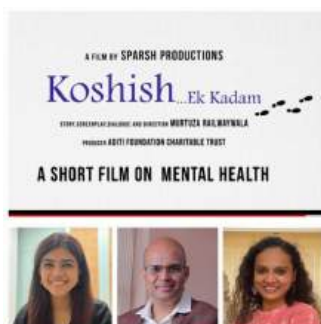
The session kicks off with an engaging icebreaker activity, setting a welcoming tone and preparing participants for a journey of exploration. Following the icebreaker, participants will delve into a compelling real-world case study from a school, illustrating how AI was effectively integrated into a creative arts therapy session with a child with autism. This case study will serve as a foundation for discussing key theories of self-concept and social learning, emphasizing the therapeutic impact of merging AI with creative arts.

Next, participants will embark on an experiential journey where AI and creative arts come together within a therapeutic framework. Through role play and brainstorming activities, guided by the principles of AI and the therapeutic use of creative arts, participants will explore how these tools can be used to express and process emotions. The session concludes with a processing and discussion segment, offering participants the opportunity for deeper reflection on the interplay between AI and creative expression, and how these innovative approaches can be applied in therapeutic contexts.

**Bio:**

Disha Sampat (R-DMT) is a practising Dance/Movement Therapist from Pratt Institute, USA. Currently residing in Mumbai, she works at Billabong High International School and serves as an Outreach Committee member with the Indian Association of Dance Movement Therapy (IADMT). Over the years, Disha has worked with individuals facing trauma, depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. Her person-centred approach emphasizes the importance of seeing individuals beyond their diagnostic labels and past traumatic experiences. Disha strongly believes in blending the arts with psychological frameworks to create supportive spaces where individuals can uncover their true selves through compassion and empathy. By humanising experiences and unlearning unhealthy patterns, she helps facilitate transformative healing and growth, creating a space where magic truly happens.

Murtuza Railwaywala is a Psychologist, Movement Therapy Practitioner and Psychotherapist. He is also the Founder and Director of SPARSH - a mental health and wellness centre in Surat. He holds a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology, and another Masters Degree in Mental Health Profession from University of Roehampton. He has also completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Naturopathy, a Bachelors Degree in Performing Arts (Dramatics), a Certification in Creative Movement Therapy from CID and CMTAI, Bangalore and a Post Graduate Diploma in Dance Movement Therapy from CMTAI and St. Mira College, Pune. Murtuza is also a trained and passionate mountaineer and theatre artist. He also works as a Theatre-in-education (Tie) facilitator for children with different disabilities. Murtuza holds 20 years of experience in the field of mental health, adventure, and theatre. He believes and practices blending adventure activities with theatrical action (theatre performance based on stories) along with psychotherapies with different groups and populations.



**Session: Lights, Camera, Ethics: Unpacking Therapeutic Values through a Cinematic Lens - Screening of "Koshish... ek kadam" (A short film on ethical practices in the field of mental health)**

**By DISHA SAMPAT, Registered Dance Movement Therapist | Mumbai, India**

**MUDRIKA AWASTHI, Dance Movement Therapy Practitioner, Certified Health Fitness Coach | Mumbai, India**

**MURTUZA RAILWAYWALA, Psychologist | Surat, India**

"Koshish... ek kadam" is a short film dedicated to Aditi Trivedi centred around the theme of Mental Health Awareness. In collaboration with Aditi Foundation and

Sparsh Mental Health and Wellness Centre, this creation serves as a meaningful tribute to her and aims to foster her vision of following ethical practices. Directed by Murtuza Railwaywala, this short film is shot in Hindi with English subtitles. The movie centres on mental health awareness, exploring the complexities of mental health and the ethical practices essential in this field. Through this session, the film aims to engage participants in a meaningful dialogue, using storytelling, cinematography, and character development to illuminate the challenges faced by individuals and the importance of fostering understanding and support within the community. Through open discussions and self-reflection activities, this session will serve as a valuable educational tool, inspiring mental health practitioners to uphold ethical standards and contribute positively to the field.

**Bio:**

Disha Sampat (R-DMT) is a practicing Dance/Movement Therapist from Pratt Institute, USA. Currently residing in Mumbai, she works at Billabong High International School and has her private practice. Her person-centered approach emphasizes the importance of seeing individuals beyond their diagnostic labels and past traumatic experiences, creating a space where magic truly happens.



Mudrika Awasthi is a Physical Therapist by qualification, a Pilates Instructor by profession and a Movement Therapy Practitioner by passion. With over 14 years of experience in the field of physical fitness, she has been combining DMT along with other essential elements of mindfulness practices which helps in the holistic wellbeing of individuals.

Murtuza Railwaywala is Psychologist, Movement Therapy Practitioner and Psychotherapist, founder and director of SPARSH - A Mental Health and Wellness Centre, Surat. He also holds a Bachelors degree in Performing Arts (Dramatics) and works as Theatre-in-Education (TiE) facilitator for children with different disabilities. Murtuza holds 20 years of experience in the field of mental health, adventure, and theatre.



### **Session: Training & Supervising Creative Arts Therapists**

**By EVAN HASTINGS, Art Therapist | Bengaluru, India**

In the rapidly evolving landscape of creative arts therapies, training programs must adapt to meet the needs of a diverse student body and the even more diverse settings where students work after they graduate. There is a growing need for innovative approaches in curriculum and supervision that embrace embodied creative methods to explore considerations for ethical practice, professional readiness, and responsiveness to community dynamics.

This workshop invites program faculty and supervisors to dialogue about these challenges. Together we can dream of a more resilient, creative, and impactful therapeutic arts community in India. To make it tangible we will focus on:

**Professional Development:** Leveraging peer learning between faculty and supervisors to advance skills and innovative methods for effective teaching and mentorship

**Curriculum Improvement:** Exploring strategies for continuous curriculum adaptation to align with the evolving field of creative arts therapies

**Community Connection:** Strengthening the relationship between training programs and the communities they serve to ensure relevance and impact

**Bio:** Evan Hastings is a Drama Therapist, Arts Leader and Academic. He holds a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology / Drama Therapy from California Institute of Integral Studies, is a registered Drama Therapist with the North American Drama Therapy Association and a registered Creative Arts Therapist with the Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association. Evan's teaching experience includes Harvard, Lesley University, University of Otago, Evergreen State College, Xavier's College Mumbai, Antioch University Seattle, Ahmedabad University, Srishti Manipal Institute, and Azim Premji University. Evan serves on the board of Drama Therapy India and the Governing Council of The MIECAT Institute, Australia.



## **Session: Uncertainty in the Creative Process, a Quantum Art Therapy Approach**

**By GENGETSU LILLY DEL LITTO, Maestra | Mexico City, Mexico**

Quantum art therapy is an integrative scientific and systemic-based approach designed to use art therapy to nurture one's soul, ameliorate a wide range of clinical symptoms, and address many problems in living. The purpose of this approach is to instill health and happiness through the creative process. The quantum approach applies quantum aspects to human life. This book presents the researched observations and results, affirming that when these quantum aspects are incorporated with art therapy treatment, there will be positive outcomes in all cases.

When the transgenerational information of one's family becomes conscious, images of the soul appear, and we can resignify them through art. The new quantum information gives order, peace, gratitude, harmony, and connection to our lineage and roots. I have called these art images, "Quantum Images of the Soul." Resignifying information through images is one of the goals in quantum art therapy. The book contains the theoretical foundation, and the workshop will give participants an art experience of collapsing new and better possibilities of consciousness through painting fabric and hand quilting it. Quantum art therapy is the study of consciousness and the opportunity to reconnect our creative essence so we can choose better and healthier possibilities, which enhance our lives.

As a part of this session, participants will get in contact with the sacred creativity process of our soul, through art making: quantum images of the soul. Upon completing this program, participants will be able to:

1. Define and describe Quantum Images of the Soul (QIS) under the quantum scientific paradigm.
2. Explain how knowledge about quantum physics improves therapy outcomes.
3. Describe how to utilize art materials to discover the quantum information in the psyche or soul, through images using the uncertainty as an ally in the creative process.
4. Explain how to get more information about QIS.

**Bio:** Gengetsu Lilly Del Litto is a graduate in Human Sciences, a Plastic Artist with a diploma in Creativity and Education. She has also studied psychotherapy in Humanistic Orientation, Gestalt and Bioenergetics Psychotherapy, Biomnemic Therapy, and is a Reiki master. She has also studied Bioenergetics with Gestalt Therapy, Gestalt Sensibilization in Group Therapy, and Symptoms with Gestalt Therapy. She has been a professional teacher in art, creativity, psychotherapy and psychology in different schools, institutes, and universities, since 1995, in Mexico. She has been a lecturer and workshop leader at business companies, national and international congresses, Channel 11 from Mexican TV, and Deliberately Radio in Mexico City, since 2002. Currently, she is dedicated to her private practice with patients of different ages, couples, families, and systemic counseling for schools and business companies, working online through Zoom with different countries in Spanish, English, and Italian languages and presidential modality in Mexico City. She teaches workshops and leads conferences of her authorship. She is also a psychology and psychotherapy supervisor in Ollinahui, Systemic Art Therapy Clinic, that she founded in 2001, which is her life's mission and her passion.



### **Session: Come Cartoon Yourself**

**By KOMPAL PANDEY, Art Psychotherapist | Pune, India**

This session will introduce participants (therapists) to Cartoon Yourself (CY), a journaling practice I invented. CY aims to help individuals develop a new interpersonal relationship with themselves, using their CY journal as a tangible safe space for self-work and in any other way they choose. The experiential art is designed to demonstrate how CY and Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy merge. For example, if a client finds parts work complicated, CY can effectively prepare them to engage in parts work both during and beyond therapy sessions.

The session will begin by generating curiosity about one's "protector part", based on IIFS. Participants will be guided into the mindset necessary to access their inner world through meditation. They will then delve deeper into their inner world through a comic art prompt, creating their own simple cartoon strip using stick figures. Participants will be encouraged to share their experiences creating their cartoon versions during the session. The session will also introduce the participants on how CY can be applied in any therapeutic setting, especially how it merges with IFS therapy. The session will conclude with a Q&A session and an embodiment, movement exercise.

**Bio:** Kompal Pandey transitioned from working as an event MC to becoming a psychotherapist after earning her MA in Applied Psychology and MFA in Art Therapy from MIT University, Pune. Specializing in art psychotherapy, she integrates therapeutic approaches with art forms, humor, and play, guided by a trauma-informed lens. Her practice includes clients with addiction, psychiatric conditions, visual impairments, special needs children, and mothers of visually impaired individuals. Kompal is the creator of Cartoon Yourself, a comic-art journaling method blending neuroscience and mindfulness. She applies this tool to create safe spaces for self-work beyond therapy sessions. In her spare time, she enjoys dancing and producing puppet skit videos promoting mental health self-advocacy.



### **Session: Innovative Alchemy: Transforming Expressive Arts with Technology and Imagination**

**By MANAN KAUR OBEROI, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner, Counseling Psychologist | Gurgaon, India**

Drawing inspiration from Shaun McNiff's belief that "Art heals" and Rick Rubin's insights on creativity, "Innovative Alchemy: Transforming Expressive Arts with Technology and Imagination" delves into the latest trends and techniques reshaping expressive arts therapies. This session explores how integrating science and technology can elevate therapeutic practices, fostering deeper emotional connections and personal growth. In a rapidly advancing digital age, creative arts therapies must evolve and incorporate innovative practices. This session addresses the need for therapists to stay informed and adept at utilizing cutting-edge tools and methods. By exploring the intersection of traditional expressive arts with modern technological

advancements, this session will provide a comprehensive view of the future landscape of therapeutic practices.

Participants will explore the role of technology in enhancing expressive arts therapies, innovative techniques such as virtual reality and digital platforms, and practical applications through real-world case studies. This session is designed to inspire therapists to push the boundaries of traditional methods and embrace the transformative potential of combining art and technology.

**Bio:** Manan Kaur Oberoi is a Counseling Psychologist, an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner, and an artist. She's experienced in working with diverse populations in a therapeutic and social work setup. She is determined to provide all sects with de-mystified mental health treatments and believes in the power of the arts to achieve the

same. Manan also hopes to make mental health as important as physical health by trying to end the stigma of mental illness in the status quo as a practitioner, as an artist, and most importantly as a human being. Learning is a lifetime process, and Manan is constantly looking for new opportunities to learn and progress.



**Session: Enhancing Movement Fluency - Introducing the Crispiani Method for Neuromotor Activation in Dance Movement Therapy**

**By MUDRIKA AWASTHI, Dance Movement Therapy Practitioner, Certified Health Fitness Coach | Mumbai, India**

The Crispiani Method represents a cutting-edge approach in the realm of neuromotor activation, particularly through the utilization of cross pattern motor pathways and their significance in motor learning and rehabilitation. Developed by Dr. Piero Crispiani & Dr. Eleonora Palmeiri (Italy), this method integrates principles from neurophysiology, movement science, and therapeutic practice to optimize motor function, cognitive processing, and emotional regulation. This session will be an experiential sharing of 2 weeks of observation training at FIDI Academy, Macerata, Italy - an intensive training school for children and young adults with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Autism, and other developmental disorders.

Through this session, participants will be introduced to the fundamentals of motor training in the Crispiani Method, elucidating its theoretical underpinnings, practical applications, and therapeutic benefits. Participants will gain insights into how this innovative approach enhances neural connectivity and motor coordination to promote optimal movement and well-being. The session will include demonstration of specific exercises and movement sequences designed to activate cross pattern motor pathways effectively, while discussing the role of proprioception, sensory integration, and brain-body connectivity in optimizing movement patterns. This session is designed for DMT practitioners, therapists, researchers, educators, special educators, and allied health professionals interested in expanding their knowledge of innovative therapeutic approaches.

**Bio:** Mudrika Awasthi is a Physical Therapist by qualification, a Pilates Instructor by profession and a Dance Movement Therapy Practitioner (DMT) by passion. She is the founder of “The Good Folks - A holistic wellness & travel company”. With over 14 years of experience in the field of physical fitness; as a mental health practitioner, she has been combining DMT along with other essential elements of fitness and mindfulness practices, which help in the holistic well-being of individuals and groups. She specializes in training neurodiverse adults and children as well as those with myalgia and arthritic pains, cardio-pulmonary, metabolic, and lifestyle disorders. As a DMT practitioner, she has been working with SOPAN - A special school in Mumbai where she works closely with children under the autism spectrum, dyspraxia, cerebral palsy, Down’s syndrome, and other developmental disabilities. She has also been working with adults with Parkinsons’ disease and other neurodegenerative disorders.



**Session: Expressive Arts Therapy with Couples**

**By NISHTHA AGARWAL, Expressive Arts Therapist | New Delhi, India**

This session will explore the application of expressive arts therapy as a powerful tool in working with couples in a therapeutic setup. The participants will learn how to integrate different art modalities such as visual arts, movement, drama, and writing in clinical practice as tools of expression and exploration, improving communication and enhancing connection between partners. The session will include experientials that practitioners can take back to their practice, case studies to enhance the understanding of its application along with theories of expressive arts therapy, family systems, and couples work.

**Bio:** Nishtha Agarwal is an Expressive Arts Therapist and a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with the Board of Allied Mental Health and Human Services Professions, Massachusetts, USA. She is also one of the co-founders for Creative Movement Therapy Association of India (CMTAI). She currently has a private practice in Delhi and works closely with individuals, and couples incorporating a trauma-informed, eclectic, body-based approach in expressive arts therapy. Her past work includes a wide range of populations across India and the US such as outpatient mental health clinics, adults and adolescents with eating disorders, immigrants, couples and family therapy, psychoeducation for adults with first episode psychosis, homeless adults with acute mental illness, adolescents and young adults in high schools and university settings and children with visual impairment.

She is a faculty member for the PG Diploma DMT at St. Mira's College (Pune), and the certificate course in DMT (CMTAI). Her personal training includes a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Expressive Arts Therapy from Lesley University (Cambridge, USA), a Masters in Applied Psychology from Delhi University (Delhi, India), and a certificate in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT).



### **Session: The Forgotten Song of the Warrior**

**By PRASAD NAVEEN, Therapist, Ritualistic Facilitator | Coimbatore, India**

During the olden days, when the warriors went out for the war to protect the interests of the village or the kingdom, they used to wear armor. Different tribes used to wear different armours. Some wear the armor made of steel, whereas others wear it from hard leather, others based on the materials which were available in their dwelling space, the climate and the environment which supplied them the materials for the armour.

All this add on to the body and the movement of the body is restricted, yet protection is established. Later on the same protection becomes the imprisonment. The physical armour, later on started translating into a mental armour, the physical armour one would know it, and be aware of it since its gross and it can be seen and the weight of it reminds us of its existence. The mental armour in subtle, it does weigh upon the body, and when we are caught up in the war with the world for our own peace and settlement, as the war moves on and on for a longer period of time, we forget that we had worn the subtle armour. And next time, we build another armour on top of it without the awareness that an armour already exist.

Later on our own protection tool becomes our own liability and it starts weighing upon us. This module is designed to address the modern-day equivalent of the physical armour worn by ancient warriors: the mental armour. By exploring the concept of mental armour as a barrier to personal growth, well-being, and authentic connection. Participants will develop strategies to identify, understand, and dismantle these limiting beliefs and behaviours.

#### **Bio:**

Prasad Naveen is a dynamic psychotherapist and facilitator, guiding individuals toward self-mastery. He seamlessly blends his expertise in psychology with a deep understanding of Eastern and Sagi'c animistic spirituality and a passion for adventure. Prasad's therapeutic approach is multi-layered, incorporating techniques from NLP, Gestalt, and Psychodrama to facilitate shadow integration and personal exploration. His spiritual journey has led him to embrace meditation, Advaita Vedanta, and various yogic techniques, enriching his practice with wisdom from ancient texts like the Bhagavad Gita.

He also incorporates healing rituals from the Sagi'c Animistic tradition, connecting individuals with the natural world and ancestral wisdom for holistic well-being. He finds inspiration in the mystical landscapes of Rishikesh and the Himalayas, further fueling his commitment to human evolution. At Pavithram ([www.pavithram.info](http://www.pavithram.info)), Prasad nurtures a space for transformation, offering programs like Disha, Dharayantram, and Living with Fire. These programs serve as crucibles for self-discovery, encouraging participants to explore, experiment, and integrate various aspects of their being. His dedication to empowering others is evident in the lives he has touched, having guided over 800 individuals on their unique paths.

Prasad embodies a bridge between worlds, a catalyst for change, and a vessel for transformative power. His multifaceted nature and unwavering commitment to growth make him a beacon for those seeking to delve deeper into themselves and unleash their boundless potential.



**Session: Empowering Voices: Playback Theatre for People with Disabilities in the Digital Space**

**By DR. RADHIKA JAIN, Accredited Playback Theatre Trainer, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner | Bangalore, India**

This workshop will explore the possibilities of using assistive technology to support people with disabilities in practicing and performing Playback Theatre online. We will discuss the need, the initial steps, challenges faced, and the broader impact of this experiment for disability awareness and inclusion. Further, the participants will experience the process of creating and expressing, sharpening their skills of improvised yet authentic responding. This performative element of Playback Theatre would help the participants to utilize this as a tool for deeper work with their communities.

**Bio:** Dr Radhika Jain is the Co-founder and Artistic Director of First Drop Theatre, Bangalore. An accredited Playback Theatre Trainer from the Centre for Playback Theatre P.P(CPT), USA, she is a visiting faculty for Playback Theatre at the Azim Premji University, Applied Theatre India Foundation and she also teaches 'Theatre for Health and Community Engagement' to Global Arts in Medicine Fellows. She is the co-editor of the International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN) journal and the Secretary (Executive Committee) at the CPT, USA. She is a certified Listening Hour Guide. She has been selected as the Global South Arts and Health Envoy 2024. A theatre practitioner for over ten years, Radhika is trained in multiple formats of interactive theatre like Playback Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Applied Improvisation etc. As an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner, Radhika combines the elements of Expressive Arts with tools of Theatre in her sessions with individuals and groups, in therapeutic and other settings. Radhika has a PhD in Molecular Microbiology from Germany and has corporate experience of 7 years in the field of consulting prior to entering the world of Applied Theatre-based training.



**Session: Silent Fury: An Exploration of Suppressed Anger Through the Lens of Therapeutic Theatre**

**By RAKSHITA GOEL, Drama Therapist, Self Employed at TaptoHeal | New Delhi, India**

Therapeutic theatre is a component of drama therapy which utilizes theatrical techniques and performances to foster mental and emotional healing. By engaging participants in various aspects of theatre such as acting, improvisation, storytelling, and scriptwriting, therapeutic theatre allows individuals to explore their emotions, experiences, and relationships in a safe and creative environment.

According to the Indian Aesthetic Theory of emotions, known as the 'Rasa Theory', anger (Raudra) is one of the nine basic emotions. Anger is generally associated with negative connotations. For some, it is a 'bad' emotion, and for others, there is no place for anger in a relationship, as it is often seen as the opposite of love. Although it is natural to feel angry when in distress, many believe that anger is an unacceptable emotion.

The workshop aims to create a supportive space for participants to become aware of and explore how their bodies carry unexpressed emotions. This experiential workshop will specifically focus on latent anger, using the context of drama therapy to foster somatic awareness and emotional expression. Through carefully structured theatrical

exercises, participants will be encouraged to connect with their suppressed anger and experiment with various theatrical methods to express and channel this powerful emotion. By the end of the workshop, participants will have gained valuable insights into both therapeutic theatre as a creative arts therapy technique and their own emotional processes. This will ultimately enhance their ability to support clients in their journey towards emotional well-being.

**Bio:**

Rakshita Goel is a Creative Arts Therapist specialising in Drama Therapy, as well as a certified Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) practitioner, with over 8 years of experience in mental health, spanning India and England. For the past 5 years, she has been practicing as a therapist at her private practice, Tuptoheal. Additionally, she is affiliated with The Mind Garden, Aagaz Theatre Trust and serves on the Executive Board of the Drama Therapy Association of India (DTI).

She has extensive experience of working with the age group of 18-50 years experiencing/suffering from trauma, abuse, grief, relationship difficulties, stress, and anxiety, among other issues. Her work draws upon exploring self using a trauma-informed lens, utilizing internal family systems, relational work, and creative expressive methods within a therapeutic relationship. She has done her graduation from Delhi University, India and her post-graduation for MSU Vadodara, India and Roehampton University, London. She has previously worked with organizations like National School of Drama (TIE), Centre for Child and Adolescent Well-being and I am Wellbeing. Additionally, she holds passion for community and grassroot-level work and has run multiple therapy groups with Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan.

Apart from the therapist hat, she wears a hat of an amateur improvisational theater artist who likes going for improve jams in her free time.



**Session: Indian Indigenous Gond art in Art Therapy: A Nature-Based Creative Process**

**By RITU DUA, Art Therapist | Pune, India**

**PRAGATI ADHIKARI, Art Therapist | Pune, India**

Integrating Indigenous art practices into art therapy presents a powerful and innovative approach to strengthen creative practice and research. A survey by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Archibald, 2012) confirms contemporary use of arts in healing programs. Interest in understanding the connection between Indigenous knowledge, nature, and artmaking is growing (Kaimal & Arslanbek, 2020). However, information on health implications

of Indian Indigenous art practices is scarce. Sensitively adapting indigenous knowledge, like Gond practices, can promote awareness about interconnectedness with nature, artmaking, and storytelling, offering therapeutic benefits for self-care in art therapy. By exploring and integrating such creative methods, art therapists can enrich their clinical practice, and contribute to innovative research that highlights the profound impact of these traditions on mental well-being.

This workshop will highlight the potential therapeutic benefits of incorporating Indian Indigenous art in art therapy. This innovative approach could work towards making art therapy more comfortable and inclusive for the Indian population. The participants will engage in nature-based guided imagery visualization with Gond folk tale narration and create Gond inspired artworks based on their experience using natural pigments.

**Bio:** Ritu Dua is passionate about the arts and is a strong believer in their therapeutic powers. She is a qualified Art Therapist with an MFA in Art Therapy. Ritu is also an author, with a published article on using Indian Indigenous Art as a therapeutic tool in the Art Therapy-Journal of the American Art Therapy Association. She is currently associated as a Consultant Art Therapist with Center for Mental Health, Pune and Mpower, Pune. Here she works with people from diverse cultures, age groups, and with varied needs. With a strong belief in the healing powers of nature, she extensively uses nature-based techniques and materials in her art therapy sessions. She also designs mindfulness-based art interventions and integrates folk arts and traditional healing techniques and contemplative

practices into art therapy. It is her dream to establish art therapy as a distinct and accessible mental wellness service in India.

Pragati Adhikari is an art therapist by profession. She has explored myriad careers in the world of garments design, art, teaching, counseling, editing, and translation, and is now nurturing her decade old dream of being an art therapist. Her areas of interests are mindfulness, contemplative art therapy-based tools for self-care, personal development, and working towards becoming whole.



### **Session: Wabi Sabi for Self!**

**By SHIRIN M.A CHIMTHANAWALA, Art Therapist | Mumbai, India**

Wabi-Sabi, a Japanese aesthetic embracing imperfection, impermanence, and incompleteness, offers a profound lens through which to explore self-awareness and creative expression. Inspired by Richard Serra's Verb List, which emphasizes process and material transformation, participants will be encouraged to explore the depths of self-awareness and creative expression using old scrap cloth as a medium. Transforming discarded materials into meaningful creations will mirror the Wabi-Sabi aesthetic, fostering a sense of acceptance and appreciation for life's imperfections.

By engaging in hands-on textile manipulation, participants will be guided to connect with their inner world, fostering mindfulness and emotional resilience. Old scrap cloth pieces offer a unique medium for art therapy. Their tactile nature, varied textures, and colours can evoke a range of emotions and memories. The session will integrate art therapy techniques with Wabi-Sabi philosophy, providing a safe and supportive space for participants to explore their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Through creative exploration, individuals will learn to find beauty in imperfection, embrace change, and appreciate the present moment. This experiential session will offer a unique opportunity to cultivate self-compassion, gratitude, and a deeper connection to oneself and the world, through the lens of Wabi-Sabi.

The session will include a brief introduction to Wabi-Sabi and art therapy, followed by an exploration of Richard Serra's verb list and an understanding of the themes for the experiential. Based on individual themes, the participants will be asked to work with the different textured scrap cloths to create their artwork. The session will incorporate mindfulness and gentle reflection elements, providing a safe space for participants to explore their inner world and cultivate self-awareness. By the end of the session, individuals will have created unique pieces of art while gaining insights into their own experiences and perspectives. The session will conclude with a sharing circle, allowing participants to reflect on their experiences and share insights gained.

**Bio:** Shirin M.A. Chimthanawala is an Art Therapist and Counsellor, working passionately towards building emotional wellbeing for children and adults. She curates and creates workshops, seminars, and sessions for social-emotional learning, mental health, psycho-education and art therapy. Believing art to be an expressive therapy and the flow of emotions from self to the environment creates emotional and physical wellness. Shirin is a good listener and an empath making her an effective Life Coach and Counsellor. She has held 25+, curated workshops for "Healing through Art" and mental wellness for children and adults, alike. She has done her Diploma in Art & Design from Leeds Arts University, UK, and her MFA in Art therapy from MIT ADT, Pune.





### **Session: Moving with Sloth, Rest & Silence**

**By SHRAVANTHI VENKATESH, Psychotherapist & Drama Therapist | Bengaluru, India**

As part of my practice, rest and silence are one of the most sacred and let practices within healing. Only when we learn to still ourselves as practitioners can we provide this space for our clients. This I have personally experienced as deeply transformative for my clients, and as a self-practice as well.

It is a session that aims to bring about awareness for the practitioner, while also using the space to demonstrate intentional co-regulation, through movement and connection, learning to come back to the body, be present, get creative in communication, acquaint ourselves through rest and silence. The participants will be facilitated

through rest and silence, supported by self-reflection through movement activities. The practices will be supported by theories on co-regulation, Embodiment-Projection-Role, and reflection by the group. The participants will take away the uses and impacts of slowness, silence, and rest.

**Bio:** Shravanthi Venkatesh (she/her) is a Bengaluru-based Drama Therapist and Psychotherapist, and has an experience in the field for over 9 years. She has worked in settings ranging from hospitals, schools, Ngos, corporates, and communities in both London and Bangalore. Her work draws upon a blend of clinical-artistic-spiritual approaches. She now runs her own practice and initiative, Svaha Space with a growing team which provides creative-expressive therapy, training, internships, workshops, psychoeducation, community events, and continues to evolve in its definition as a conscious, healing space.



### **Session: Queerness: Creative Reflective Practice for Practitioners**

**By Shruthi Garg, Drama and Movement Therapist | New Delhi, India**

The field of creative arts therapies, social work, and other developmental/health professions are not untouched by heteronormativity. Our trainings and ethical guidelines are mostly based upon the assumptions of gender binaries and heteronormativity. While it leads to invisibilization of queer experiences, this as well leaves the well intentioned practitioners feel helpless/uncomfortable while working with queerness in the sessions.

This discomfort comes from a space where most of the practitioners never had a space to explore their own gender and sexuality beyond the societal norms. I believe that queerness as a concept, should be of interest to everyone, and even if a practitioners identifies themselves as a cis-het person, it can be valuable for them to explore the gender and sexual diversity that might exist within their context. This self-reflective practice in return can support them to cater to their queer/trans clients in more queer affirmative ways.

**Bio:** Shruthi Garg is an HCPC UK regd. Drama Therapist and has done her MA in Drama and Movement Therapy from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London University. She is certified in Queer Affirmative Therapy and holds a PG Diploma in Trauma Focused Therapy. Being a Queer person herself, she brings her own lived experiences alongside with theoretical orientation, while working with Queer individuals, and while facilitating training sessions for mental health professionals. Her work in gender and sexuality is carried on by her practice as a drama therapist, as well as through stand-up comedy and Improv Theatre. By bringing these modalities together, she is working towards curating experiential and play-oriented sessions for professionals to be more queer affirmative. She holds a special interest in mythopoetic approaches to trauma and her chapter, "The Harmless Ghost: A Mythopoetic Approach to Trauma" was published by Routledge UK in Trauma and Embodied Healing in Drama therapy, Theatre and Performance.



**Session: A Part of Me: Where Internal Family System Meets Dance/Movement Therapy**

**By SUKRITI DUA, Psychologist & Dance Movement Therapy Facilitator | Bangalore, India**

Ever heard yourself or someone saying, "A part of me feels like...?" or "A part of me wants to...?" That is what this session focuses on - identifying and exploring the mind-body connection in collaboration with parts work. This session will bring together a niche interweaving of the Internal Family Systems approach with the dance/movement therapy methodology. The IFS perspective highlights that every individual has different parts within their personality that are led by the 'self' of that person, whereas DMT highlights the use of the individual's personal movement language towards their health

and well-being.

Offering a combination of these, participants will be experiencing a movement based exploration of parts in order to gain insight into how the body holds and presents different portions of our being and what may impact them. This will also be theoretically supported by understanding how these two frameworks converge and apply to therapy settings.

**Bio:** Sukriti Dua is a Trauma-Informed Psychologist and a Dance/Movement Therapy Facilitator. Having done her post-graduation in Clinical Psychology, she has completed certifications in Dance/Movement Therapy and Trauma Informed Care. She has her own private practice under 'Mentally Yours' and also works as a Consultant Psychotherapist with The Color of Grey Cells, catering to individuals across the ages: from adolescents to adults. She is currently the Course Co-Director for CMTAI's flagship program in DMT and is also their core team member. In the past few years, she has also worked with children of various needs, whilst visiting schools, NGOs, intervention centers, private organizations and more, through counseling and DMT. She has been conducting workshops and awareness-building programs with schools, universities, and corporates across Delhi NCR and Bangalore, and is actively grabbing opportunities to continue advocating for the field. With her vast experience across the sectors, she also teaches on DMT and Psychology programs, and also offers supervision to early career therapists. Besides these endeavors she also takes interest in dance as a performing art and has a venture called "Beat It Productions" across social media. Her major interests lie in applying her therapeutic knowledge with different populations, spreading awareness about mental health, facilitating positive mental health, and pursuing her passion for dance.



**Session: Somatic Resourcing: Returning to Self Through a Movement-Based Ritual.**

**By TRIPURA KASHYAP, Movement Therapist / Dance Educator | New Delhi, India**

The human body is a site within which all our pains and pleasures unfold, the body also acts as a repository of resources that we can access as and when needed. This experiential session will explore a '14-step body based resource' practice developed by the presenter to self-regulate oneself as well as co-regulate oneself with others. This ritual acts as a self-care tool to help release stress, anxiety, pent up anger, or agitation, and reduce emotional overwhelm while reclaiming the body's power to sustain our resilience, energy, and self-efficacy.

**Bio:** Tripura Kashyap pioneered Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) in India in 1990. She co-founded the Creative Movement Therapy Association of India (CMTAI). She authored 'My Body, My Wisdom' India's first book on dance therapy. She has received fellowships from the Ashoka Foundation, the Indian Ministry of Culture, and the

Sancheti Healthcare Academy for her innovations in DMT. She teaches on certificate, PG diploma and M.A courses in DMT across India and has presented her work at several national and international conferences.



**Session: From Freeze to Flight to Flow – A Polyvagal Perspective on Movement for Enhanced Outcomes in Movement Therapy**

**By DR.WINNIE BAJARIA, Doctor/Coach | Mumbai, India**

Movement is a fundamental characteristic of the animal kingdom. It is associated with the ability to survive with respect to seeking out food, mates, and locomotion to move the body to safety in case of danger in the environment. Our nervous systems have evolved beyond supporting movement to include social engagement – attachment and forming social bonds.

The Polyvagal perspective outlines the phylogenetic evolution of the autonomic nervous system from parasympathetic to sympathetic to social engagement systems. It also proposes the journey of the body's stress response from a socially engaged to the most primitive 'Freeze' state of immobilization. Engaging with the Ventral Vagal Complex aids in moving the body out of the freeze state to a state of social engagement. Given this background of the theory, various exercises have been developed that engage with components of the ventral vagal complex that can benefit in restoring a state of 'homeostasis' or balance from the chronically stressed states.

In this session, therapists will be introduced to basics of polyvagal theory, the stress response, its psychological correlation, its impact on the body, and exercises that have been known to restore social engagement by reinforcing the vagus nerve function. Including these exercises in their therapy regimens can augment their outcomes by supporting the nervous system regulation in clients and patients, leading them to experience less anxiety and arousal due to chronic stress and feel a sense of calm, safety and trust due to restored social engagement.

**Bio:** Dr. Winnie Bajaria is a trained allopathic doctor from the prestigious Grant Medical College and Sir J.J. Group of Hospitals in Mumbai. She completed her M.D. in physiology, focusing on the body's mechanisms and the impact of stress on the nervous system. Her thesis centered on studying heart rate variability in meditators, and she has extensively explored the Polyvagal Theory in this regard. Dr. Bajaria has also worked at J.J. Hospital, G.T. Hospital, and HBT Medical College (Cooper Hospital). Beyond her medical training, she is a certified NLP and Hypnosis Coach from Vitality Living College, a Human Design Reader from Mind Body School (U.S.A.), and a 100-hour certified Meditation Teacher from Yogamu. She works with individuals to train them in using biofeedback mechanisms with yogic and visualization principles, decode their optimal productivity mindset using the Human Design System, and coach them to achieve their desired growth and productivity levels.

## - Research Presentations -

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### **Session: Understanding the Effect of Bhava Interplay on Flow State and Emotional Regulation: A Sequential Explanatory Study**

**By ADITI H.P, Research Scholar | Mysore, India**

**Abstract:** Bharatanatyam, one of the oldest Indian classical dance forms, traces its origins to the Natyashastra, confers both physiological and psychological benefits. This study focuses on understanding the impact of Bhava Interplay in Bharatanatyam on emotional regulation and flow state experiences, aiming to discern the psychological benefits of engaging in this classical dance form. The study encompassed a diverse sample of 92 participants, comprising 46 Bharatanatyam dancers and an equal number of non-dancers, employing a mixed-methods approach incorporating quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitatively, the study utilizes well-established instruments like the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18) and the Flow State Scale (FSS). The research indicates that Bharatanatyam dancers exhibit superior emotional regulation skills and experience heightened flow states compared to non-dancers. Qualitative data analysis further elucidated the efficacy of techniques such as mirror work, self-talk, self-discovery and journaling in facilitating emotional expression among dancers. These findings not only highlight therapeutic potential of Bharatanatyam practice but also suggest opportunities for thoughtfully integrating its elements into therapeutic interventions to enhance emotional regulation skills and cultivate optimal states of flow. By bridging artistic expression with psychological processes, this study offers a meaningful contribution to the discourse surrounding dance/movement therapy and psychological interventions, paving the way for further exploration in this interdisciplinary domain aimed at enhancing holistic well-being.

**Bio:** Aditi.H.P is currently pursuing a PhD in Psychology from JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research (JSS AHER). She holds a Master's degree in Science in Psychology, giving her a strong foundation in both theoretical and applied aspects of the field. Her research interests focus on mental health, human behavior, and the integration of psychological principles into everyday life to improve well-being. In addition to her academic pursuits, she is a Bharatanatyam artist with a proficiency certificate from KSEEB Karnataka. Her involvement in classical dance complements her psychological studies by offering a unique perspective on the connection between mental and physical well-being. This interdisciplinary approach enables her to explore innovative ways to address psychological issues through the arts.



### **Session: Crafting Catharsis: Project Bhava's Performative Approach to Community Mental Health**

**By AMRUTA HUDDAR, Drama and Movement Psychotherapist | Bangalore, India**

**Abstract:** Across civilizations and eras, performing arts have acted as a vital bridge between community and healthcare, offering catharsis, expression, and healing. In Ancient Greece, the Asclepeion sanctuary treated body, mind, and spirit as inseparable, connecting health centers to theatre venues where patients witnessed performances of comedy or tragedy to assist in their recovery. Project Bhava draws inspiration from this timeless connection, exploring the intersection of arts and mental health through evidence-based, immersive performances. The project is rooted in the Greek concept of Psychagogia - education for the psyche, guiding spectators towards reflection and critical thinking (Batzoglou, 2017).

The first chapter of Project Bhava took place in Brighton, UK, from March to November 2023. It featured a unique curation of nine stand-alone ticketed performances designed to evoke spontaneous sensations, movements, sounds, and thoughts encompassing emotional experiences. Led by two artists who identify as Indian Classical Dancers and

Drama and Movement therapists, this project incorporated the Navarasas, conceptualized within the framework of Indian aesthetics.

This framework analyzes the representation of human emotion in artwork and our capacity to not just find 'representation' beautiful but to actually get inside of it (Pollock, 2016). The project explored how artists skillfully create specific bhava (emotional states) in the audience through verbal, physical, and performative choices. Performances were created through a heuristic process, with artists drawing from their own relationship to the emotion of the month.

Each episode followed a uniform structure and included pre- and post-event questionnaires to gauge audience responses. Results from the nine episodes revealed an overall increase in participants' connection with the featured emotion after each performance. This presentation will delve into the methodology, findings, and potential applications of Project Bhava highlighting the relevance of art-based practices for the health of the community.

**Bio:** Amruta Huddar's (she/her) passion for dance, movement and theater informs her work as a mental health professional. She has been dancing since childhood and is trained in Indian classical and contemporary styles including Bharatnatyam and Odissi. She juggles her work as a Dramatherapist (HCPC) for children impacted by parental substance misuse at Oasis, UK, having her private practice, and being a Mental Health Consultant. As an India Fellow, Amruta worked in the unique mental health initiative 'Udaan' – a first-of-its-kind partnership between Tata Trusts and the Government of Maharashtra. She worked on the Institutional Reform Project and District Mental Health Programme in Nagpur, India. She is vehemently against being boxed in a singular definition and is always on the lookout for new adventures. With her empathy, curiosity and adventurous spirit, Amruta seeks to make Indian philosophies and classical arts more relevant to modern mental healthcare.



### **Session: The Body in Nature: A Heuristic Inquiry into the Experience of Embodiment**

**By ANUKRITI CHAWLA, Student | Mumbai, India**

**Abstract:** Embodiment, the awareness of internal bodily sensations and their connection to affective states, holds paramount significance in expressive arts therapy and serves as a foundational theory in arts-based research. Underscoring its interdisciplinary nature, researchers often draw from cognitive and developmental sciences, psychotherapy, performing arts, and philosophy to delve deeper into its myriad aspects. However, studies have seldom explored the experiences that underlie the transition from disembodiment to embodiment. Furthermore, given nature's influence on the body, it plays a pertinent role in accessing embodiment. Employing a

heuristic methodology within an arts-based paradigm, this study aimed to uncover the nuanced aspects of the aforementioned transition in the context of nature. Creative modalities like movement, visual arts and drama were used to gather and understand the data. This study pushes the boundaries of the conventional research box by exploring the social and structural dimensions of embodiment as well as by employing an innovative methodology to unpack it. Findings from the study reveal that nature aids in building awareness of neglected needs and takes on different roles which serves as a medium for personal reflection. Fear and disgust emerged as key affective responses shaping the researcher's exploration of the impact of intersectional social identities on embodied experience. Insights from this heuristic inquiry add a nuanced perspective on facilitating embodiment in therapeutic contexts using nature based and expressive arts therapy techniques. It opens up questions and possibilities for accessing nature not just as not just as a therapeutic resource but also as a therapeutic space itself. It also carries implications for the development of nature-based and socially and culturally informed counselor education. .

**Bio:** Anukriti Chawla holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a PG Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research from Ashoka University. She is a trainee Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner and is currently pursuing her Masters in Counseling Psychology at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.

The arts and nature have always been her personal sanctuaries and provided an accessible medium for self-exploration. She wishes to bring this into her professional work as a therapist in the future.



**Session: Healing Arts: A Study of Selected Art Forms of India**

**By CHIRMI ACHARYA, Dance Movement Therapy Practitioner | Jaipur, India**

**Abstract:** Folk dances and music are the essence of a folk culture that carry with them the nuances of culture's beliefs, practices, rituals, and even healing practices. Dances are celebratory in nature, and the movements allow us to share and express the joy or release any pent-up negative emotions. Dances are also a means of connecting with spiritual energy and experiencing mindfulness. Movements allow the individual to be in a state of flow which is therapeutic in nature. Dance movement therapy is a therapeutic modality that uses movements and dances as means of eliciting issues and using movement as a way of healing. India is replete with dances, classical, folk and tribal.

Each one of them has their aesthetic elements, physical benefits and also psychological benefits. This paper discusses two such folk dance styles - Tera Taali from Rajasthan and Dhol Kunitha from states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The dances are performed in reverence of the community's folk deities. The study is aimed to understand the inherent therapeutic elements that can be extracted from these folk styles to be used in a dance movement therapy session and can also be used with people from the same culture to enhance their well-being and mental health.

**Bio:** Chirmi Acharya has a doctorate in psychology and is currently working as an Assistant Professor at Manipal University Jaipur where she teaches courses in cultural and indigenous psychology. She has been trained in Bharatnatyam and is a theatre practitioner. She is also a Dance Movement Therapy Facilitator and works with adolescents and young adults. Chirmi is a recipient of the prestigious Junior Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and is working on culture and therapeutic elements of Indian dances.



**Session: Moving from Procrastination to Flow using Expressive Arts: A Heuristic Arts-Based Inquiry**

**By KHUSHI MANISH BHEDA, Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner | Mumbai, India**

**Abstract:** This heuristic inquiry explores the transformative potential of expressive arts in transitioning from procrastination to flow state in creative writing. Employing Moustakas's six phases of heuristic inquiry, the study delves into personal artistic engagements, including visual art, music, movement, and drama, followed by creative writing sessions. The research reveals seven key themes: initial struggle and stuckness, emerging ideas, navigating emotional landscapes, connecting the dots, finding a rhythm, embracing authenticity, and creating a balance. Emotional shifts

play a crucial role in overcoming procrastination, with expressive arts acting as a catalyst for achieving and sustaining flow. The study underscores the importance of bodily engagement and emotional regulation in the creative process, highlighting the therapeutic potential of expressive arts. It offers practical strategies for creative individuals to embrace expressive arts as tools for overcoming procrastination and unlocking their creative potential. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between procrastination, flow, and creative engagement, emphasizing the holistic nature of the creative process.

**Bio:** Khushi Manish Bheda is a dedicated Clinical Psychologist with a Masters Degree and P.G. Diploma in expressive arts therapy. She believes that art is a powerful tool for unlocking emotions and insights when words fall short. Her practice emphasizes the process over product, creating a space for clients to explore their creativity and experience healing. With a trauma-informed and queer-affirmative approach, she offers compassionate, non-judgmental support through individual and group therapy sessions. She is passionate about helping clients find their voices and build resilience through artistic expression.

## - Poster Presentations -

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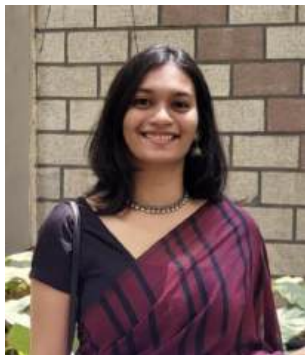


**Title: Vocalising the Voice Within: A Heuristic Inquiry into Intermodal Vocal Improvisation as a Therapeutic Tool**

**By ANISHA RENEE REGO, Counselling Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (In training) | Bangalore, India**

This heuristic inquiry seeks to comprehensively explore the psychological and somatic implications of Intermodal Vocal Improvisation (IVI) prompted by instrumental music across diverse genres. The operational definition of IVI is “intuitive melodic vocalisation arising through intermodal arts-based processing.” This research explores its potential as an innovative support tool in the therapeutic context, using the voice to unearth the unconscious, facilitating nuanced psychological exploration. The study examines IVI in relation to the pitch and rhythm of the instrumental music utilised during initial engagement, aiming to contribute to the potential of this intervention to be used in a more deliberate and intentional manner. By integrating visual art, poetry, and music, the research illustrates how intermodal exploration enhances the poly-aesthetic potential of the arts, thereby providing deeper therapeutic wisdom. This study adopts a heuristic framework, wherein the researcher assumes the dual roles of inquirer and participant in a single-participant sample. The findings aspire to make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature on Expressive Arts Therapy by bridging an identified gap in understanding the cohesive therapeutic value of vocal improvisation and intermodal arts-based processing.

**Bio:** Anisha Renee Rego is a Counselling Psychologist and an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (In Training), based in Bangalore, India. Having been a professional vocalist for several years, she has a strong and innate relationship with the arts and holds an embodied understanding of their therapeutic value. She believes that this deeply personal relationship with the Arts makes her work as an Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner, feel almost like introducing her clients not just to a medium, but also to a very dear friend. She is currently building a platform called ‘Within Visible’ which hopes to incorporate Expressive Arts Therapy practices to curate immersive experiences for varied populations. She hopes for this to be a space that is a resource to all, regardless of their expertise and proficiency in the arts. Some other things that bring her joy are travelling, spending time in nature and the satisfaction that comes from giving someone the perfect gift.



**Title: Artscaping in Urban India**

**By DISHA KALKE, Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner | Navi-Mumbai, India**

This study is a heuristic inquiry that delves into the intrapersonal experience of artscaping for an urban Indian woman, exploring the intersection of art and personal identity. The researcher, as the sole participant, employs a heuristic inquiry. Through poetry, visual art, and movement, data collection unfolds within the realm of arts-in-nature practices. The study seeks to unravel the layers of self-expression, cultural resonance, and emotional resonance that emerge during these immersive experiences. By placing herself, an urban, Indian woman, at the centre of the investigation, the research aspires to illuminate the unique ways in which she navigates her identity, emotions, and connection to the environment through artistic engagement. As the researcher engages in this intuitive exploration, the study aimed to contribute to a richer understanding of the intrapersonal dimensions of artscaping, shedding light on the profound impact of arts-in-nature practices on the individual within the context of urban Indian woman’s lived experiences. Some of the emergent themes include the

influence of urban architecture, gaze, and experiences of awe on experiences of artscaping. Themes also concern ecological grief, escapism and slowness as a radical act.

**Bio:** Disha Kalke is a dedicated researcher and mental health professional with a strong commitment to client-centred care and ethical intervention practices. She has a Postgraduate Degree in Clinical Psychology from Christ Deemed to be University, Central Campus, Bengaluru (20-22) and is an outgoing student of the P.G. Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy (23-24) from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. Her training lies in integrating expressive arts therapy into mental health counselling and training across various age groups, from children to older adults, to enhance creativity and emotional well-being. She is passionate about exploring the role of the arts in health, AI, and mental health, and neuroaesthetics. With a solid academic background in clinical psychology, Disha brings rigorous assessment skills and a focus on innovative, evidence-based approaches to advance mental health practices.



**Title: Seeing the World Through a Physically Changed Body: a Heuristic Inquiry into Attitudes Toward Physical Health**

**By MAITRI RAJASHREE MINAJKUMAR, Counseling Psychologist | Mumbai, India**

The present study seeks to explore both implicit and explicit attitudes toward physical health that emerge from undergoing a significant physical change. It also aims to examine how urban and semi-urban environments influence these attitudes.

Employing a qualitative approach through heuristic inquiry, the researcher, a 24-year-old cisgender female, gathered data based on her personal experiences. Creative methods such as visual art, poetry, and drama were utilized for data collection. Themes and patterns were identified from the data; and further elucidated through creative synthesis.

**Bio:** Maitri Rajashree Minajkumar is a counselling psychologist with a Postgraduate Degree in Clinical Psychology. Certified in queer and trans-affirmative therapy by the International Institute of Psychotherapy, she integrates an intersectional, social justice perspective into her practice. Passionate about both art and psychology, she enjoys reading and loves cats. Currently, she is advancing her expertise by pursuing a PG Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.



**Title: Embracing eternity: An Embodied Exploration of Death from the Teachings of Bhagavad Geeta.**

**By PRATIKSHA BALASAHEB SHINDE, Psychologist, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (trainee) | Pune, India**

This study explores the embodied experience of teachings from the Bhagavad Geeta, specifically focusing on concepts related to death as interpreted through a Marathi translation. The research investigates the impact of these teachings on perspectives of death, self-concept, and self-extension. Utilizing a heuristic approach, where the researcher is also the participant. As this is arts-based research, this study incorporates various artistic modalities including movement, visual arts, drama, and poetry for data collection. This paper outlines the primary, secondary, and tertiary research questions, and details the timeframe and ethical guidelines for conducting heuristic-based

research. Through this innovative approach, the study aims to offer new insights into how the Bhagavad Geeta's teachings can influence personal understandings of mortality and identity.



**Bio:** Pratiksha Balasaheb Shinde is a SET-qualified Mental Health Professional dedicated to advancing ethical standards in the field. Through teaching, she fosters the curiosity of future professionals, equipping them with essential ethical frameworks for compassionate mental health care. A lifelong learner, she believes in continual growth and recently pursued an EXAT diploma to integrate arts into her practice. As both a psychologist and a passionate dancer and performer across various art forms, she advocates for the healing and expressive power of the arts in therapy. Her goal is to synergize artistic expression with counseling techniques to provide holistic and impactful support to her clients.



**Title: Embodied Liberation: Exploring Dance Movement as a Catalyst for Relational and Feminist Identity Development**

**By SWATI MODH, Psychologist | Indore, India**

This heuristic research explores the role of anima and animus archetypes in dance, focusing on how their incorporation allows dancers to express themselves through movement and enhances personal expression and psychological engagement. The primary question investigates the impact of these archetypes on dancers' self-expression. Secondary questions examine how dance movements contribute to a deeper understanding of relational identity within liberation psychology, and how dancing in gender-embracing or non-emphasizing styles shapes feminist identity through the intersection of free association and the anima-animus framework. As this research is arts-based and heuristic in nature, it collected data by making dance videos, creating choreographies, response art, poetry and data synthesis based on emerging themes. This study highlights the transformative potential of dance as a medium for psychological and emotional expression, providing valuable insights into the interplay between movement, identity, and gender dynamics.

**Bio:** Swati Modh, has completed her Bachelor's Degree with Honors in Liberal Arts and Humanities (major in Psychology) from O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat. She also completed Masters in Science in Clinical Psychology from Christ Bangalore (main campus) and is currently pursuing Diploma course in Expressive Arts Therapy from St. Xavier's, Mumbai. She is trained in Bharatnatyam Dance, loves to listen to music and act in drama/skits. She has interned with several organizations which work with special kids, have given pro-bono sessions to female adults and people from the queer community.



**Title: Diving into the Mushroom World: Exploring the Emergence of various Narratives and the Impact of Characters in Video Games on the Player Through Heuristic Inquiry**

**By YUVETTE D'SA, Expressive Arts Therapy Practitioner (Trainee) | Mumbai, India**

This study delves into the intricate relationship between gender, identity, and power dynamics within the predominantly male-centric gaming landscape. Through a heuristic inquiry lens, it examines how these elements are embodied and performed within gameplay. By meticulously analyzing the researcher's personal gaming experiences and observations of other players, the study uncovers nuanced themes surrounding the body, identity construction, power relations, and character representation. Moreover, the research offers concrete recommendations for enhancing player experiences through the development of more inclusive character customization options and dynamic narratives that resonate with diverse audiences. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social and cultural implications of gaming, while also providing actionable insights for game developers and players alike.

**Bio:**

Yvette D'sa is an Expressive Arts Therapy student at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. Her background in Psychology, Literature, and Anthropology provides a robust foundation for understanding diverse clients and tailoring therapeutic approaches. Passionate about the arts, she seeks to deepen her knowledge by pursuing a Master's Degree in Psychology. Yvette is drawn to working with children, aiming to introduce them to the transformative power of artistic expression, a journey she has personally experienced. Her commitment to community engagement and collaborative exploration is central to her therapeutic philosophy.

## - Panel Discussion -

### **Topic: Navigating the Digiverse: Opportunities and Challenges in Creative Arts Therapies**

This panel discussion will delve into the nuanced intersection of technology and creative arts therapies, featuring insights from a diverse group of experts: a sex and art therapist with a significant social media presence, a neuropsychologist pioneering virtual reality in mental health, and a dance/movement therapist and innovator dedicated to integrating emerging technologies responsibly.

The conversation will explore both the opportunities and challenges presented by digital therapeutics, social media, virtual reality, and other technology in enhancing mental healthcare and creative arts therapies. Topics may include increasing accessibility, scalability, and awareness, alongside the ethical dilemmas of data privacy, informed consent, and maintaining the integrity of the therapeutic relationship in the digital age. This discussion aims to move beyond surface-level considerations, addressing the deeper intricacies and potential positive and negative impacts of technology on the human experience in therapeutic settings.

#### **Moderator**



**REETU JAIN, Co-founder & Executive Director of CMTAI, DMT Facilitator | Thailand/India/US**

**Bio:** Reetu Jain is Co-founder & Executive Director of Creative Movement Therapy Association of India (CMTAI), a Dance/Movement Therapy Facilitator, faculty on dance therapy programs, and a dancer/artist. In her therapeutic capacity over the past 11 years, Reetu has primarily worked with adolescents in shelter homes, transwomen in NGOs, and adult females in community settings. Her humanistic, feminist, strengths-based approach focuses on creating safe spaces for exploration, dialogue, and expression, especially around topics related to gender and sexual well-being. Reetu was selected as an ADTA Talks' speaker at the American Dance Therapy Association's 50th Annual Conference and has served as guest faculty at universities including Pratt Institute, NYC, Ashoka University, Delhi and Ambedkar University, Delhi. Reetu is pursuing her PhD in

Expressive Therapies from Lesley University, USA.

#### **Panelists**



**NEHA BHAT, ABT, ATR-P and Sex and Trauma Therapist | India/US**

**Bio:** Neha Bhat (ABT, ATR-P) is a Sex and Trauma Therapist who practices psychotherapy from an art-based, spiritually focused, creative-wellness perspective in India and the US. She has worked in sexual assault trauma care at global institutions such as the University of Michigan, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Rush Medical Centre and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She employs trauma-focused therapy in a depth-based, multicultural context for people who have either survived or perpetrated sexual violence and teaches therapists to use art as a tool to navigate a complex world. Through her widely influential social media presence @indiansextherapist, Neha shares psychotherapy tools and insights that raise awareness about sexuality and encourage people to connect with their inner selves. She recently released her psychotherapy bestseller book *Unashamed: Timely Truths and Guidance from the Desk of an Indian Sex*

*Therapist.*



**NINA JANE PATEL, Co-Founder and Principal Researcher at Kabuni, Dance/Movement Psychotherapist | UK**

**Bio:** Driven by the values of innovation, agency, and empowerment, Nina Jane Patel is a pioneering force in the intersection of technology and well-being. With a relentless focus on the psychological dimensions of immersion, presence, and embodiment in spatial computing and extended realities, Nina brings a unique perspective to the ever-evolving landscape of emerging technologies. As an Emerging Technology Consultant for institutions including Interpol Metaverse Expert Group, National Online Safety, the Zero Abuse Project, and Middlesex University and the University of East London, Nina is dedicated to responsibly integrating emerging technologies into classrooms and homes. With an MA in Movement Psychotherapy, from Goldsmiths College, University of London, with experience within the

NHS (England), HM Prisons (England) and with the Vancouver School Boards (Canada), she is committed to ensuring that technological advancements enhance, rather than diminish, the human experience. Beyond professional titles, Nina is a mother, researcher, and advocate passionately concerned about the societal and psychological implications of the metaverse, spatial computing, blockchain, Web3, and AI. This session is a testament to her dedication to forging a future where innovation and well-being walk hand in hand. She has been featured in the media and press by the BBC, The Washington Post, CNN, NBC News, The Telegraph, The Guardian, and Vogue, talking about the metaverse.



**NISHTHA BUDHIRAJA, Co-founder, Chief Medical Officer, and Principal Psychologist at Wundrsight Healthcare | Bangalore**

**Bio:** Nishtha Budhiraja is the Co-founder, Chief Medical Officer, and Principal Psychologist at Wundrsight Healthcare, a mental health startup utilizing Digital Therapeutics to make mental healthcare more accessible and affordable. Wundrsight has positively impacted the lives of over 700 individuals. Since 2016, Nishtha has been integrating Virtual Reality (VR) into her private practice, reaching more than 300 clients. With over eight years of experience as a Neuropsychologist, she has worked with more than 2,000 patients dealing with anxiety, stress, depressive disorders; trauma; and other mental health conditions. Nishtha holds a Master of Arts in Psychology from Ambedkar University, Delhi, and a Master of Sciences in Cognitive Neuropsychology from the University of Essex, UK. Before co-founding Wundrsight, she held leadership roles at

Loop Health and Cult.Fit.

## - Discussion Forums -

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The discussions forums will provide a platform for conference delegates and respective panelists to engage equally, contributing to and exploring the nuances of critical topics through open dialogue and the exchange of new ideas.

### **Bridging Art Therapy and Sex Therapy: Exploring Stigma, Trauma, and Healing**

This discussion group will be co-moderated by Neha Bhat and Rashmi Balakrishnan. Rashmi is a trauma-informed, queer-friendly, Movement-based Art Therapy Practitioner. She is also a certified Youth Mentor, Menstrual Educator, and Gender Educator, working with adolescents, providing psychosocial support in environments where it's most needed, and she is also a fellow of the Global Arts in Medicine Fellowship, 2024.

This dynamic group discussion will delve into the intersection of art therapy and sex therapy, featuring insights from Neha Bhat, art therapist, sex therapist, and author of *Unshamed*. This forum will explore the practical and ethical considerations of addressing stigmatized topics and related trauma through arts therapies. The dialogue will be opened up on how creative arts therapies can offer accessible and relatable tools for exploring issues of sex and sexuality or other sensitive topics, particularly in sociocultural contexts where these subjects are taboo.

### **Charting the Landscape: The Scope and Challenges of Mental Health Startups in India**

This discussion group will be co-moderated by Nishtha Budhiraja, and Preethi Rajagopalan. Preethi is a trauma-informed Dance/Movement Therapy Practitioner. She currently works at a psychiatric hospital facilitating movement sessions for different populations and age groups with emotional and mental health issues, and she is also a fellow of the Global Arts in Medicine Fellowship, 2024.

This engaging group discussion will open dialogue on the burgeoning field of mental health startups in India, drawing from the experiences of Nishtha Budhiraja, Neuropsychologist and Co-founder of Wundrsight Healthcare. This forum will explore the urgent need for innovative approaches to mental healthcare in India and how startups can effectively address these needs using tools like VR digital therapeutics. The discussion may touch on the practical steps to building a mental health startup, ethical considerations such as data privacy and informed consent, and the challenges of scaling mental health solutions in a diverse and vast country like India.

### **Protecting Children in the Digital Era: Shaping the Future of Therapy and Technology**

This discussion group will be co-moderated by Nina Jane Patel, and Sukriti Dua. Sukriti is a trauma-informed Psychologist and a Dance/Movement Therapy Facilitator. She applies her therapeutic knowledge with various populations through private practice, consultancy, teaching, and advocacy in the field of mental health alongside pursuing her passion for dance.

This open and interactive discussion will focus on safeguarding children in the digital era, guided by the knowledge of Nina Jane Patel, dance/movement psychotherapist, innovator, and author of *Navigating the Future: Child Safety in the Digital Age*. As children increasingly engage with digital tools like Zoom, social media, gaming, and VR, this dialogue will explore the mental, physical, and emotional implications of these technologies on their well-being. The group conversation will also address how these issues surface in therapy sessions and the ethical considerations creative arts therapists face when integrating digital tools into therapeutic work with children.