

PRESENTATION TITLE

Mas'phefumle: Breathing together through Trauma using Healing Arts Practices and Pedagogy

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

This paper presentation provides an experiential overview of the Healing Arts Practices and Pedagogy project launched at Drama for Life in 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic. It explores the impact on the learning experiences of learners/students, teachers/lecturers and the facilitators themselves.

Healing arts practices like telling stories, stamping in rhythm, singing and dancing can teach us about our history, help us memorise difficult concepts and most importantly for this time, support the alleviation of trauma. They help regulate our nervous system, connect us with others, and remind us who we are. These practices are both pedagogical and therapeutic.

In spiritual and cultural practices in South African communities, arts practices are readily employed to teach us the histories of our people and the wisdom of our ancestors for everyday living. They also engage people's natural healing and co-regulation capacities. Yet, in the education system the arts are shaped as a school subject, separate from other subjects and from the everyday practices of teaching and learning – not to mention community and individual wellness practices.

The HAPPY training positions the arts as a bridge between learning and well-being, education and therapy. It brings back healing arts practices into the school curriculum helping us slow down, learn better, become more resilient and support each other, while inviting systemic change.

The project is informed by Welma's PhD research into the effectiveness of teaching the HAPPY practices to teachers for use in their classrooms. It is informed and supported by Lucy's work on African wisdom traditions and healing arts practices.

FACILITATOR BIOGRAPHY

Dr Lucy Draper-Clarke is an educator, facilitator and mindfulness mentor with years of experience in education and curriculum development. Her PhD in Mindfulness and Teacher Education investigated stress amongst teachers and how cultivating mindful awareness and compassion creates safe spaces for learners.

Welma de Beer is a PhD researcher, experienced drama teacher and drama therapist whose study is focused on designing and testing systemic interventions for schools to address intergenerational trauma. She is a long time teacher and is now an Emergency Pedagogy trainer for teachers in South Africa.