



TAKE UP SPACE! YOU MATTER.

FACILITATOR HANDBOOK

trauma-informed, community arts-based (re)connection workshops

MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH CANADA AND THE SASKATCHEWAN HEALTH RESEARCH FOUNDATION





“More important than a work of art itself is what it will sow. Art can die, a painting can disappear. What counts is the seed.”

-Joan Miró.





THE GOAL

Simply put, we want to create something awesome for some awesome kids. Together.



And to do so with their and our wellbeing front of mind.
All the time.



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TAKE UP SPACE!

INTRO TO THE PROJECT

TAKE

THE IDEA

This project seeks to understand the impacts of trauma-informed arts-based engagements in dance, music, and skateboarding on youth's mental health and wellbeing. This project responds directly to the impacts of isolation and anxiety youth have been experiencing during COVID-19 through trauma-sensitive engagements which will be shaped to increase self-regulation and build healthy relationships. The research team will create a series of workshops to assess the mental health benefits for participating youth and facilitators.

- ★ Community-University collaborative team
- ★ Working and learning together
- ★ Support youth mental health
- ★ Offer workshop series

UP

THE PARTNERS

GRR!
VibesYQR
Femmes Across the Board
The Humanities Research Institute
The Child Trauma Research Centre

GRR's mission is to amplify and empower the voices of girls, women, trans, Two-Spirit and gender-expansive youth and adults through music creation, collaboration and performance.

VibesYQR Dance Collective's aims to build and strengthen the dance community within Regina, opening up its workshops to anyone in the community.

Femmes Across the Board is a skateboarding group designated for female-identifying, 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC within Regina.

SPACE!

HOW IT'S GOING TO WORK

Recruitment materials created and sent

Facilitator Training April 30, 2022

Workshops:
Saturdays May 7 - June 25 (GRR/ Vibes)
or Sunday May 8 - June 26 (FAB)

Focus Group Discussions: June 25, 26, 29



THE BASICS

- the language
- the practices
- being careful being care-full
- what to do if?

you matter.

the language

sometimes the words are (over)used without really knowing what they mean.

trauma

The word originates from the Greek word meaning 'wound', and was originally connected with physical wounds. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, it has also become connected with emotional and psychological strain. (PTSD). More recently, there is a growing understanding of individual and experiential elements of trauma.

Any negative or distressing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope.

An event, or series of events, an experience, or a prolonged set of experiences, a threat or a perceived threat that affects a person's wellbeing.

trauma-informed? trauma-sensitive?

Trauma-Informed: a more systems approach that takes into account all aspects of service delivery ensuring a client's safety, choice, and control, to shape the treatment culture.

Trauma-Sensitive: an understanding of trauma and its impacts that shapes interactions with children, youth, and each other, but that does not position the responsible adults as service providers.

Why is this important?

Because as facilitators all we hope to shape is an understanding of youth, their behaviour, and the importance of connection.

trigger:

a real or perceived signal of danger which leads to a set of safety/survival emotional, physiological, and behavioural responses (fight, flight, freeze, please).



Trauma can affect the mind and body involuntarily.

Imagine:

You are driving down the road on a cold, wintery day, and without realizing it, you hit a patch of black ice, your wheels are spinning, but the car is not moving forward.

Your entire body is engaged in a specific set of survival responses; for some: frozen, stuck for others: super strength for others yet: ejection for the car



the language

sometimes the words are (over)used without really knowing what they mean.

trauma-sensitive

Trauma-Sensitive: an understanding of trauma and its impacts that shapes interactions with children, youth, and each other, but that does not position the responsible adults as service providers.

chronic trauma

Chronic trauma occurs when someone has experienced a trauma multiple times, prolonged, or recurring in nature over a period of time.

complex trauma

Complex trauma refers specifically to trauma that has occurred in childhood that is invasive or personal and has occurred multiple times. When trauma such as this occurs at a vulnerable time in one's life it is acknowledged that complex trauma can have complicated and wide-ranging effects.

acute trauma

Acute trauma occurs when someone has experienced one isolated traumatic event.

the language

trauma responses (behavioural and physiological responses to a perceived or real threat/danger) are often categorized as fight, flight, freeze, or please. For many years children and youth were labelled or diagnosed as oppositional, as defiant, as disengaged. And yet, a better understanding of trauma responses suggests that perhaps the behaviours that were being displayed were responses to a perceived or real threat.

trauma responses

The primary function of the triggered response is to help the child achieve safety in the face of perceived danger. Remember, there are four primary danger responses available to human beings:

FIGHT

may look like:
Hyperactivity, verbal aggression, oppositional behaviour, limit testing, physical aggression, “bouncing off the walls”



FLIGHT

may look like:
Withdrawal, escaping, running away, self-isolation, avoidance



FREEZE

may look like:
Stilling, watchfulness, looking dazed, daydreaming, forgetfulness, shutting down emotionally



PLEASE

(fawn/ submit)
may look like:
Giving in too easily, denying the child’s own needs aligning with more powerful peers even when those peers are mean to the child



Emotionally, children may appear fearful, angry, or shut down. Their bodies may show evidence of increased arousal: trembling, shaking, yelling, shutting down, or curling up.

Look for moments when the intensity of the child’s response does not match the intensity of the stressor, or when a child’s behaviours seem inexplicable or confusing.

Consider: Might a child’s alarm system have gone off?

the practices

Practice 1: Understanding trauma & behaviour

“
Instead of asking:
Why are you acting like this!?
Say:
Your behaviour right now
makes perfect sense. You're trying
to protect yourself.
”

“
Instead of asking:
What's wrong with you!?
Seek to understand:
What happened to you?
”

“
Instead of saying:
*No, that's not it; you can't have that
right.*
Say:
Tell me more.
”

“
Instead of:
What's wrong?
State what you observe:
*You just got really quiet all of a
sudden. Did what I said upset you?*
”

“
Instead of saying:
*You are completely out of control;
get out of here.*
Say:
*I can see you are becoming
disregulated. Please use -----
strategy.*
”

the practices

Practice 2: Safety

Five Steps to Creating and Maintaining In-the-Moment Safety

Short statements

No speeches or long, logical conversations

Focus on physical and emotional safety

Reflect

- Use words to show/share what you are observing
- E.g. Your energy looks really high at the moment. Is there something you need from me right now?
-

Validate

- Recognize the behaviour as a logical response to a situation:
- E.g. It makes sense that you're frustrated; this is really hard.
-

Comfort/ Support Regulation

- Draw on supportive strategies
- E.g. You're letting me know that you are upset. Why don't we go sit over there for a bit?
-

Engage

- Sometimes the child/youth wants to be alone, but sometimes what they really need in the moment is just for someone to be there for and with them.
- E.g. I would really like to support you right now; can I sit down?
-

Praise

- Praise the decision to use good strategies or achieve regulation
- E.g. I am really impressed; that was a lot of work to get yourself back under control.
-

the practices

Practice 3: Trustworthiness and Predictability









Alarm signals, or triggers, are subtle. For example, trauma is often associated with unpredictability, chaos, or sudden change. As a result, even subtle changes in expected routine may activate a child's danger response.

Common triggers for children who have experienced trauma include:

- ☐ Unpredictability or sudden change
- ☐ Transition from one setting/activity to another
- ☐ Loss of control
- ☐ Feelings of vulnerability or rejection
- ☐ Confrontation, authority, or limit setting
- ☐ Situations that are perceived as unfair, injustice
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Sensory overload (too much stimulation)

For the workshops:

-  -Consistent personnel
-  -Consistent routine (start with preamble, move into...)
-  -Establishing boundaries and consequences
-  -Supporting emotional safety
-  -Seeking to understand what the behaviour is "saying"
-  -Consistent and congruent responses

Other ideas:

the practices

Practice 4: Connection and Belonging

Connection and belonging can be lost or broken as a result of shame within the trauma experience. By providing youth with experiences to reconnect and work toward a common goal, you are supporting in re-establishing that connection and belonging.

I can foster belonging...

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| with a smile | | |
| by setting a goal to learn everyone's names by the end of the first session | | |
| when I listen for understanding | | |

Listening for Understanding

- 1. Listen:** Focus on the child or teen. Listen with good eye contact and without interrupting. Hold what they are saying in your mind instead of planning what you are going to say next.
- 2. Reassure:** Communicate your care no matter what.
- 3. Validate:** Acknowledge and affirm the emotions, needs, or underlying goals of where the individual is coming from.
- 4. Respond:** Offer something that is true to yourself and to the relationship in response.
- 5. Repair:** If a misunderstanding or hurt feelings occur, fix it.
- 6. Resolve:** End with a focus on how to make things better moving forward.

the practices

Practice 5: Choice & Control

The loss of choice and control are very common within the trauma experience. When planning and facilitating experiences for youth, here are some aspects to consider:

Choice

- Depending on the individual's experience, opportunities for choice can be a liberating, connective experience and sometimes opportunities for choice can be overwhelming
- Guide participants by showing options and offering choice
- Support participants in their choices by offering genuine positive feedback

Control

- A common experience within trauma is loss of control either during the event or after in the way the situation was handled
- We can help to re-establish control by offering choice in a co-operative community environment
- As a facilitator, consider where you require control. Is that control necessary to the safety of the group, or is it perceived safety?

how I can offer choice

where might I be perceiving the need for control?

control necessary for group safety

how can I support myself in that?

the practices

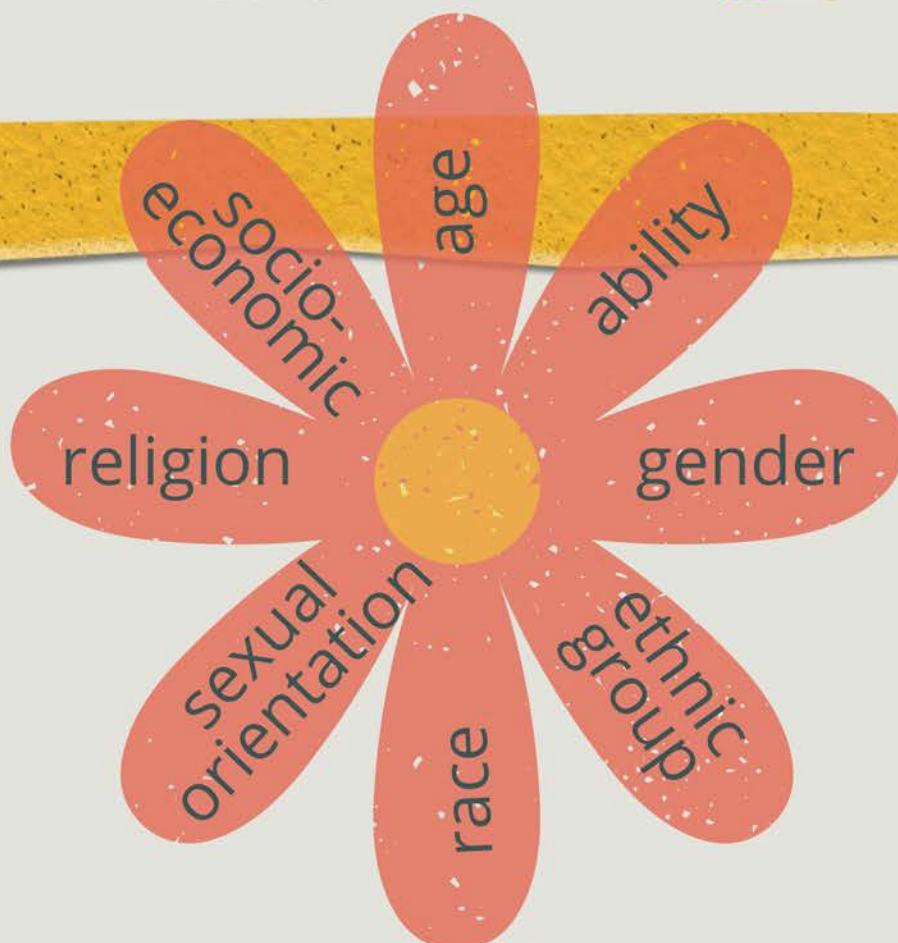
Practice 6: Identity

A celebration of identity fosters belonging and contributes to a sense of connection. It is important to honour and support identity while considering your own power and privilege as a facilitator.

celebrating & supporting creative contributions

cultural humility

including materials that are relevant to participant interests



Power Flower

A model to identify how power and privilege operate within socially dominant groups and to help us explore our own identities in relation to these groups

being careful being care-full

taking care of ourselves



"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet. This sort of denial is no small matter. The way we deal with loss shapes our capacity to be present to life more than anything else. The way we protect ourselves from loss may be the way in which we distance ourselves from life and help. We burn out not because we don't care but because we don't grieve. We burn out because we've allowed our hearts to become so filled with loss that we have no room left to care."

-Naomi Rachel Remen

compassion fatigue,
vicarious trauma,
secondary trauma—all
terms that in some way
describe the experience
of the caregiver/
supporter who feels the
effects of caring and in
turn may shut down or
shut out as a result.

fun fact!
the more regulated and
connected we are feeling,
the more capacity we
have to offer regulation
and connection in those
we are supporting

being careful being care-full

**myself:
care
plan**

what calms me

what I can do before each session

what connects me

what I can do after each session

someone
I can talk to

reason(s) why I am here

what do I do if?

Congrats! You are creating fun, connecting, action-packed experiences for youth in the community! You are making an impact with your care and passion.

Sometimes in the midst of the action (and even in the down-time and transitions), it can feel overwhelming for youth to process all that is coming to them, no matter how awesome the experience. This can be due to high sensory input, processing personal thoughts, emotions, and sensations, re-adjusting to being in community, etc. There is the potential for emotions to run high, for physical or psychological discomfort to make itself known, or for those previously mentioned trauma responses to surface.

it's a vibe

Every situation and every child is different. While we will often look for the perfect thing to say or do in a situation, showing we care with our vibes and body language can have a huge impact. You being a "caring you" in a tough situation speaks louder than words.

- Souers & Hall (2016) explore the importance of educators staying grounded amid chaos. Some ways we can do that include:
 - -Take a breath and ground yourself
 - -Avoid power struggles
 - -Keep a calm tone of voice and avoid raising your voice
- **IMPORTANT:** Staying calm and grounded does not mean ignoring the safety needs of the individual and the group. Priority goes to ensuring a participant is not of harm to themselves or others.

what do I do if?

Now that we know the importance of how staying grounded (or as grounded as we can) in chaos, let's explore some scenarios:

if...

a youth
discloses...

I can...

- establish
- consult
- report

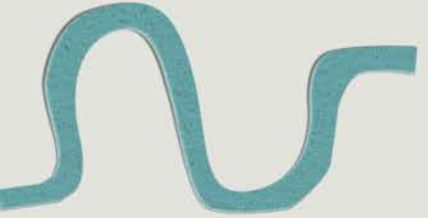
THE WEEKS



- ✦ possible warm ups
- ✦ preambles

THE WARM UPS

example: breathing exercises
(finger breathing, balloon breathing,
flowers and candles)





preambles

why a preamble?

we imagined framing your session with a
preamble - n. a preparatory statement, that
also carries the notion of movement

we will provide you with these for each week

you can shift and shape them as you get to
know your people

these are frames within which to situate the
workshop

the preambles

WEEK 1 - Introductions

WEEK 2 - Choice and control

WEEK 3 - The body remembers

WEEK 4 - Listening and responding

WEEK 5 - Safety

WEEK 6 - Identity

WEEK 7 - I am a canvas

WEEK 8 - Moving forward

week 1 INTRODUCTIONS



Preamble:

How do you want to be seen and known in this space?

What is something you want the group to know?

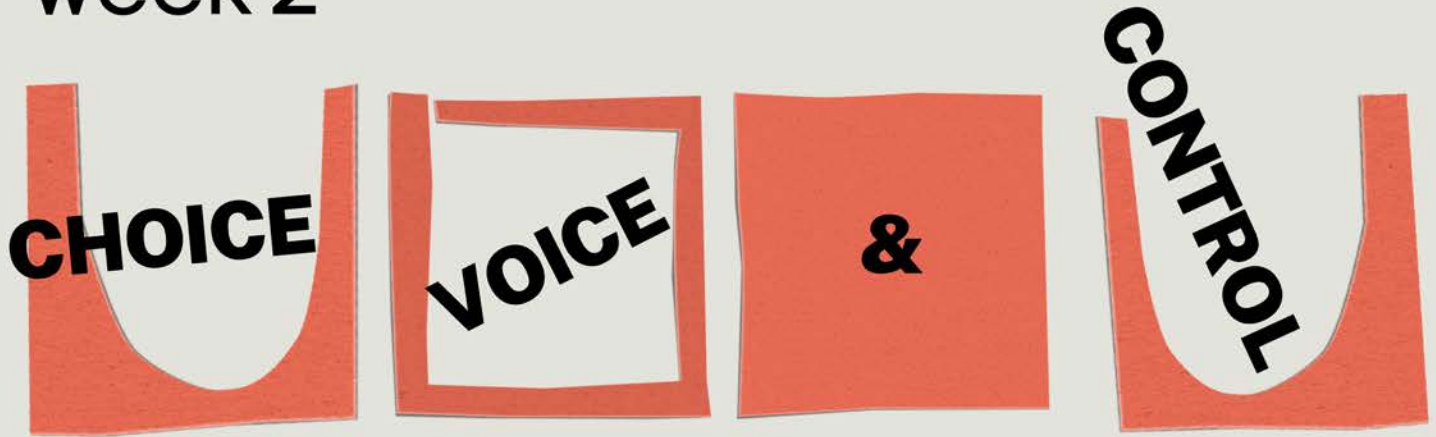
Knowing who we share our spaces with shapes those spaces!

Our suggestions:

- group agreement**
- name game**
- share an item**

What I think I could do
with my group:

week 2



Preamble:

Who we present to the world is made up of all the experiences we have lived so far. We choose if and when and how we want to show the best versions of ourselves, what our voices say, and we control these aspects. Knowing we have control is an important part of our being and becoming because it allows us to shape forward-looking stories of futures we want to live. These are all also important aspects in our desires to stay regulated - having conversations, feeling seen and heard, feeling like we are in control of our internal and external worlds, and feeling safe are all important needs that we all have! In this space, we will work to ensure that they are always met. In this space, know that you can and will make choices for you!

Our suggestions:

- dice game
- wayfinding game
- yes and! conversations

What I think I could do
with my group:



week 3

the body remembers



Preamble:

Our bodies are so much more than just a vehicle to satisfy needs and to move from place to place. Our bodies are our interface with the worlds in which we live. As such, our bodies, when we listen to them, can warn us, can protect us, and can tell us stories. Our bodies also have a way of remembering that goes beyond what happens in the brain. Sometimes, this remembering comes in the form of an upset stomach, sweaty palms, headaches, shortness of breath, etc. Sometimes our bodies become triggered and we enter into fight, flight, or freeze responses. It is important to be 'in tune' with our bodies and to develop the skills that help us recognize that this is what is happening, in order to decide if what is triggering us is perceived or real.

Movement and the arts support us to feel safe and alive in our bodies. They help us feel connected both internally and externally. That is why what we are doing here is so important - building connections to ourselves and each other.

Our suggestions:

- **heart map**
- **5 senses visualization**
- **hand painting**

What I think I could do
with my group:



week 4

listening & responding

Preamble:

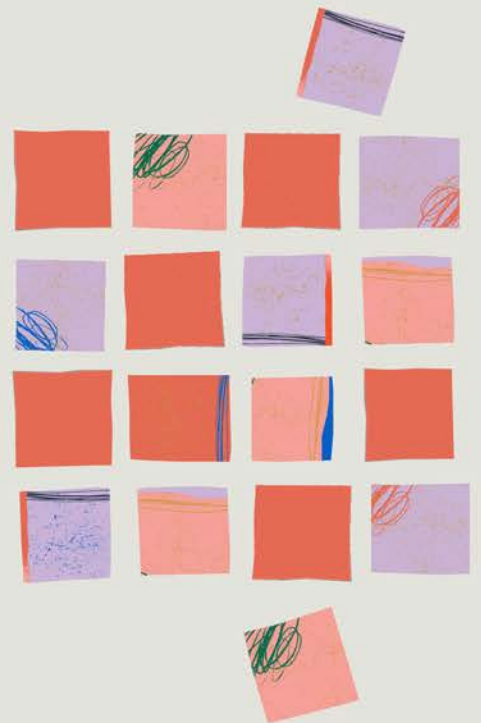
Healthy and supportive connections are so important to our wellbeing as they help us to feel both safe and hopeful. How we listen and respond helps to build trust, cooperation, and sharing. It is the sharing in decision making, the feeling seen and heard, and the working toward a goal that supports us in our times together. How do we show active listening and responding?

Our suggestions:

- **sound mapping**
- **zip zap zop**
- **drama game: the machine**
- **call & response**

What I think I could do
with my group:

week 5 predictability & safety



Preamble:

Have you noticed that we start and end the same way every week? Why do you think this is? Why do you think we do this? It sets the stage for predictability and safety. You show up knowing what to expect from us, from each other, and from yourselves. Think back to our first gathering: were you more nervous than you are now? Why do you think that is? Why do you think we created group norms our first time together? Why have we focused on the other aspects in our preambles? It's all about shaping a shared space together.

Our suggestions:

- **safety feet**
- **happy place**
- **rhythmic routines**

What I think I could do
with my group:

week 6 identity

Preamble:

Sometimes it's hard to focus on what we like about ourselves, or what we're proud of. Today we want to practice giving ourselves compliments. About who we are, about what we do, or don't do, how we spend our time, and about how we are in relationship with other human and more-than-human beings.

This is important to do because it helps us to feel good about ourselves.

Start with thinking with the following:

- one thing that I really like about myself is:
- what has influenced my identity (role models, cultural background, music, school)

Now think: was that an easy or hard exercise? Why?

Our suggestions:

- **personal logo/symbol**
- **me as a superhero**
- **we are we?**
- **post-it note positivity**

What I think I could do
with my group:

week 7

i am a canvas

Preamble:

So many times we are defined by outside forces - ideas others have about who we are as young people - and often we are defined by stereotypes (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender-identity, geography, religion, age, etc). Why do you think they exist? How might we be able to change them? Imagine you had a storefront window as your canvas in which you could showcase the complexity of your life. What would you show to the world? What would you want them to know, see, feel?

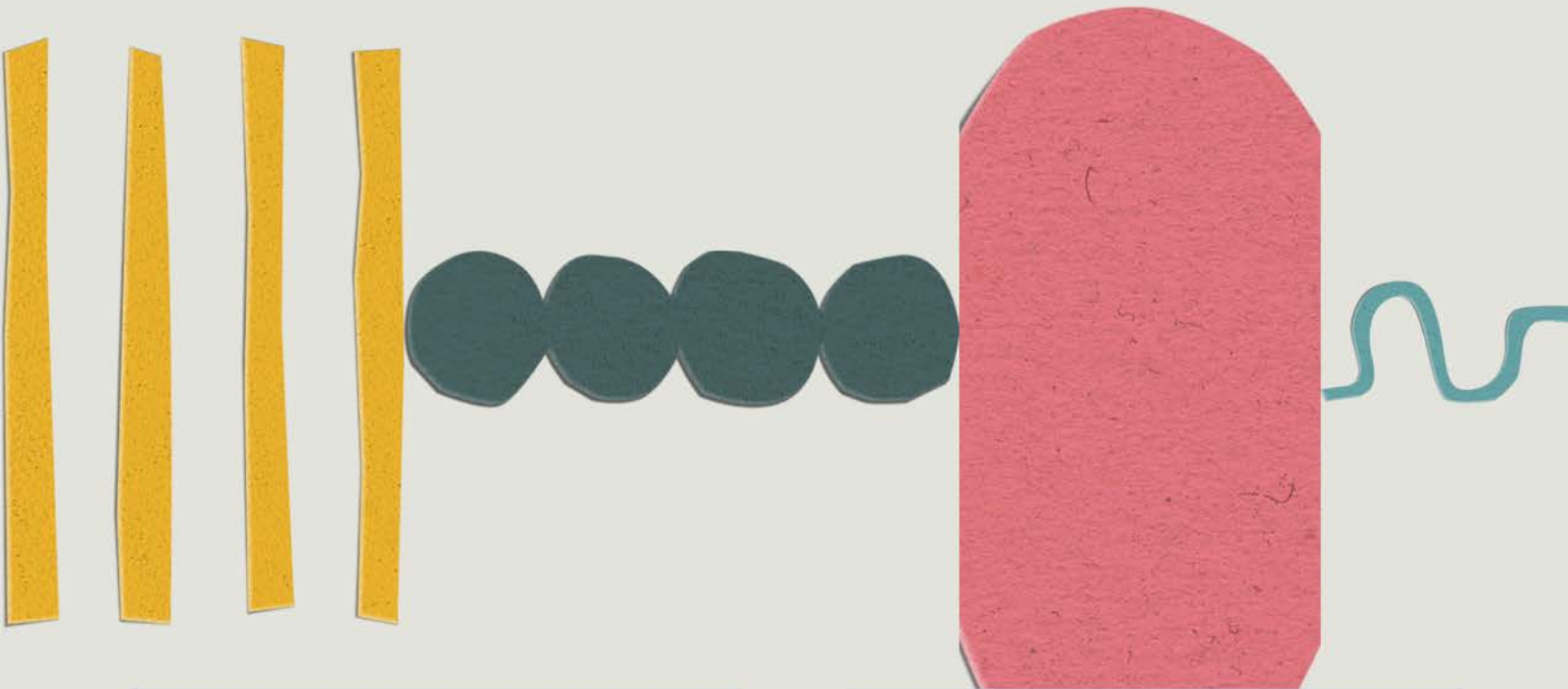
Our suggestions:

- storefront
- graffiti wall
- soundtrack
- inside/outside mask

What I think I could do
with my group:

week 8

taking up space from here



Our suggestions:

- **something I learned & something I'm curious about**
- **knowing what I know now, how do I want to move forward?**

What I think I could do
with my group:



thank you