

# Women and Mental Health

An E-manual to Replicating the Seminar Experience



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A Guide to Replicating the Seminar Experience

Presented by  
**L'Altre Festival**

This e-manual is based on the successful experience of the "Women and Mental Health" seminar, held in May 2025 in Barcelona. Designed to support cultural workers, professionals from social and health sector and open for all audience while promoting awareness about women and mental health, this guide provides step-by-step instructions to help you organize and facilitate similar workshops in your own community.

This workshop is a part of the project INclusive arts for Social Participation, Integration, Resilience and well-being in Europe (INSPIRE), co-funded by **Creative Europe** program, promoted by Nedomysleno, Fundacja Varszatovnia and l'Altre Festival.



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VARSZATOVNIA



# WHY?

Social and economic factors can put women at greater risk of poor mental health than men.  
(Mental Health Foundation, 2025)

**Around one in five women** have a common mental health problem, such as depression and anxiety. McLean points that even though progress has been made in decreasing the stigma surrounding mental health issues, there is still more work to be done in the field, especially when looking at variations in mental health between genders. The development of mental health issues is usually a combination of genetics and the role and experience the person has in society. Different genders have very different experiences. The combination of the two can influence how mental

health issues develop. Research has also shown that there are significant differences between genders when it comes to the development of common mental health disorders. These include eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety.

One of the most common mental health disorders someone might struggle with is depression. Twice as many women experience depression at some point in their lives when compared to men. Gender, genetic, social, and economic differences all play a role in the development of depression in women.

Arts activities can involve aesthetic engagement, involvement of the imagination, sensory activation, evocation of emotion and cognitive stimulation. Depending on its nature, an art activity may also involve social interaction, physical activity, engagement with themes of health and interaction with health-care settings.  
(WHO, 2019)



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# WHY?

## Women, Mental Health and Arts

Traditionally, the story of mental health issues and women has been told by men, corresponding with the role of women within the history of art more broadly. Women did not have the same artistic training as men in their journey to become professional painters or artists, meaning that female artists were undoubtedly less visible than their male counterparts. As a result, women have historically been the subjects, rather than the creators, of art, without a level playing field or creative platform to express themselves. (Jamieson, 2020)

As an example, it is estimated that 1 in 5 women develop a mental health problem in the perinatal period (Hahn-Holbrook et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2015), with depression and anxiety among the most prevalent conditions (Shorey et al., 2018). Importantly, these conditions have long lasting adverse effects on women and their babies, and place a heavy burden on families and society as a whole (Bauer et al., 2014; Gavin et al., 2005). Conditions such as extreme stress, conflict situations, emergencies, and natural disasters can increase the risk of developing specific mental illnesses (World Health Organization, 2016). Cultural experiences often evoke emotions and feelings that can have a profound impact on mental health. Additionally, culture and art contribute to social connectedness and community engagement. This fact is one of the keys to fight against solitude and isolation of women who are passing through mental health issues.

# WHO?

**Facilitators:** Women from cultural and mental health sector.

**Participants:** cultural programmers, professionals, students and individuals with and without mental health conditions.

One of the key aspects often overlooked is the importance of participant selection. This is the foundation of all activities we conduct—**bringing together a diverse mix of individuals is essential**, and it requires deliberate effort. Working on this aspect in multiple ways is crucial, but it is also one of the most time-consuming parts of the process.

Careful planning is necessary to ensure a balanced mix of participants that fosters meaningful discussions and interactions.

60-80  
participants

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# WHEN & WHERE?

**Suggested Duration:** 2 or 3 hours

**Suggested Venue:** Theaters, cultural centers, universities, or community spaces.



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# GOALS

1

Empower women to talk openly about mental health and to promote a more inclusive and supportive society.

2

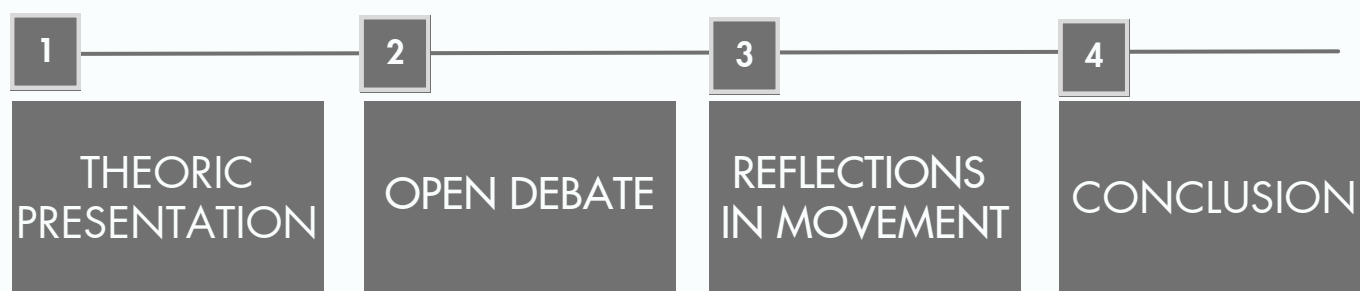
Raise awareness and promote discussion of the unique challenges and experiences women face in everyday issues of inner wellbeing.

3

Facilitate group reflection and creative exercises to deepen understanding of the topic.

# ACTIVITIES

## Table of contents





# Activity 1 THEORICAL PRESENTATION

This activity delves deeply into the context of the personal stories and testimonies from women who have suffered psychological violence related to racism and mental health problems. In our case, **Claudia Simone** presents her own book **QUE MALUQUICE É ESSA? ESCRIVIVÊNCIA PRETA CÊNICA: CORPORALMENTE, MULHERES NEGRAS, SAÚDE MENTAL NO TEATRO DAS OPRIMIDAS** with the aim to make visible this topic.



Book Cover of QUE MALUQUICE É ESSA? ESCRIVIVÊNCIA PRETA CÊNICA: CORPORALMENTE, MULHERES NEGRAS, SAÚDE MENTAL NO TEATRO DAS OPRIMIDAS: Claudia Simone.  
Illustration from Manuela Navas.

## Activity 2 OPEN DEBATE

This part of seminar aims to promote an open debate between all the participants to know their own story and experience related to the Women and Mental Health.

In this debate, it is important to **invite a diverse group of people representing various roles**, including individuals with disabilities, migrants, and other vulnerable groups, **to share their experiences and perspectives.**

Creating a "safe space" free from judgment or labels is crucial. For this reason, **the debate should be open to everyone**, without requiring participants to introduce themselves beforehand.

**Exemple of the questions that we should answer are:**

What barriers do you think that women find in our society?

Are there any differences between White men and Black women experience during the psychiatric admission?

How can we raise the women voices in our social and cultural context?

# Activity 3 REFLECTIONS IN PAIRS

This activity aims to connect and to reflect about the others we have in front of us, recognizing the differences and similarities.

We split the group into pairs and we facilitate the group a mask or a cloth to close their eyes.



From here, one person begins to pronounce the other's name, inviting him or her to follow and recognize his or her rhythm of movement, increasing and decreasing it during the exercise. The pair has to move in the same rhythm.

This exercise helps to break the ice and also to connect with the other we have in front of us.

Seminar Women and Mental Health in Barcelona  
(May, 2025) in the Fabra i Coats venue

# Activity 3 REFLECTIONS IN MOVEMENT

This activity aims to reconnect with our **body language**, expressing us with our body without using words.



Seminar Women and Mental Health in Barcelona (May, 2025)  
in the Fabra i Coats venue

Split your group into two teams, then assign each a concrete situation or word privately. The team must work together to spell the situation or word with their bodies. This situation or word should be related to the Women and Mental Health somehow.

The other group is observing and they have to figure out the situation or the word.

# Activity 3 REFLECTIONS IN MOVEMENT

## Step-by-Step Instructions

- ① **Select and plan the exercises** - it is necessary to create your own guide with 2 or 3 exercises to break the ice and promote the connection between the participants.
- ② **Secure a venue** – Book an accessible theater, community space, or online platform suitable for the showcase.
- ③ **Assemble a team** – Involve directors, performers, and technical staff, ensuring the exercise is executed effectively.
- ④ **Promote the event** – Use social media, cultural newsletters, and partnerships with mental health organizations to reach the right audience.
- ⑤ **Prepare audience materials** – Develop a program or informational guide to provide context about the seminar and its themes.

There is at least one facilitator who leads the exercises and gives the opportunity to **express all the voices**. It is important to promote “**safe space**” without judgments or labels and that is why this debate should be open to everyone without the participants having to introduce themselves beforehand.



# Activity 4 CONCLUSIONS

This exercise invites us to reflect about the diversity that represents our society, recollecting testimonies and voices from unrepresented groups, as Black women are in our current society. In this last activity, the facilitator recollects the opinions and experiences from the seminar.



Claudia Simone in Barcelona  
(May, 2025)



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# Have fun!



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