



# SENIORS' LIFE REVIEW **THROUGH** **THE ARTS**

A TOOLKIT



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Joann Chew, a social work associate from AMKFSC Community Services helps a senior with her mask

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# 1.3 Empowerment Guidelines for Practice

The following Guidelines for Practice were adapted from the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) OLD module that measures the quality of life of older persons.<sup>6</sup>

The 12 guidelines reflect the facets in the domains of Autonomy, Social Participation, and Past, Present & Future Activities<sup>7</sup>. It has been shown in the NCSS Quality of Life Study that these three domains contribute significantly to the quality of life of seniors.

An underpinning theme of empowerment is that to recognise seniors as participants, and not recipients in services. Social service organisations and practitioners may apply the following principles to empower seniors through the process:

## Seniors are:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Personal Potential</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Provided with opportunities to identify their strengths</li><li>2 Provided with opportunities to develop and apply their strengths</li><li>3 Provided with opportunities to develop new skills or gain knowledge</li><li>4 Recognised for their achievements or contributions</li></ol> |
| <b>Autonomy</b>             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5 In an environment that encourages them to make their own decisions</li><li>6 Able to decide on the activities they wish to participate in</li><li>7 Able to pursue activities that they are personally interested in</li><li>8 Able to look forward to each day positively</li></ol>    |
| <b>Social Participation</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9 Meaningfully engaged each day</li><li>10 Satisfied with how their time is spent</li><li>11 Satisfied with how they are being engaged each day</li><li>12 Provided with opportunities to participate in their communities</li></ol>  |

<sup>6</sup> From the World Health Organization (WHO), European Office (Copenhagen) WHOQOL-OLD Manual, May 2006  
<sup>7</sup> We have categorized the facets of Past, Present & Future Activities Domain under 'Personal Potential', which is a more relevant description for practitioners on the ground.

# 1.4 Notes from the Artist

This toolkit is a wonderful way to share our learnings and adventures from close to a decade of social advocacy and community artwork. Discovering the Community Arts practice was a key in our practice to more empowering shared experiences for those we advocated for.

In 2013, I worked on a palliative care project in Asia in partnership with the Lien Foundation. I was introduced to the concept of a good death. Respected Professor Chantal Chao, known as the mother of palliative care in Taiwan, is a veteran nurse who specialises in caring for the terminally ill. Over decades spent in hospices, she's seen how patients turn to the good times in life as a source of comfort. There is a gentle rush to recollect precious moments, which are often times spent with people and places they love.

This kickstarted my journey on various eldercare-focused Community Arts projects with the National Arts Council, which all serve as inspiration for this toolkit.

Together with NAC and NCSS, I hope to inspire others to discover Community Arts as an inclusive, gentle way of starting a conversation with seniors in our midst and experience high-quality collaborations where you create with them, not for them.

There are clearly beneficial and therapeutic effects to our work, but that's not why we do it. The purity about the process in an environment where anything is possible is what drives creativity in any community-based projects. As the arts drive conversations, conversations inform the arts. We are all different and no two artworks from two seniors will look the same.

We encourage you to put aside your professional training and enjoy, as you would tell the seniors to. Let conversations and the arts feed each other. Surprise yourself. These art journeys will invigorate and remind us we don't have to wait till the end of life to celebrate who we are.

**Jean Loo**  
Community Artist

## 1.5 Objectives of Toolkit

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- 1** **Inspire and enable** people working with seniors to use the arts as a way of empowering seniors to better understand themselves, gain confidence and thrive in life.
- 2** **Be an accessible and helpful guide** for volunteers who have little experience in running arts programmes.
- 3** **Foster a culture** of kinship and build ownership for all parties involved through the process of artwork creation. The possibilities of each senior's project are endless.

## 1.6 Introduction to Community Arts

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Community Arts is a practice of working together with communities of people on art projects through creative, collaborative experiences. It aims to promote self-expression, self-advocacy and communication by communities in an environment that gives them the space to be themselves.

### Why we love Community Arts:

- **DIFFERENT IS GOOD**  
We do not chase after one single aesthetic effect or social goal, but diversity through a shared creative process.
- **NEW PEOPLE, NEW ENERGY**  
It brings together art practitioners and non-arts trained individuals and unites them through the language of art.
- **EVERYONE IS CREATIVE**  
It focuses on the creative contribution of each participant, not their disability, age or social background.
- **CREATED BY CONVERSATION**  
Conversation drives the art in a community. It inspires practitioners, experts or facilitators to put down professional biases and think about creative new ways of facilitating dialogue to enhance the group's creative experience.
- **PERSONAL FREEDOM**  
Community Arts is a release from controlled environments and offers a new avenue of personal freedom free from the stigma and discrimination that some seniors might face in their lives. The transformative potential is huge.

## ART JOURNEY SESSION PLANS:

### 3.1 JOURNEY A: SUPERHERO ME MASK

A values-based arts and craft movement inspiring people to develop a stronger sense of self through crafting Superhero masks or costumes. Visit [superherome.sg](http://superherome.sg) for more information.



RECOMMENDED NO OF SESSIONS	1 session x 2 hours
ART MEDIUM	Crafting
VOLUNTEER : SENIOR RATIO	1:6 Seniors
VOLUNTEER PROFILE	New volunteers with high and positive energy, and an interest in arts and craft
OUTPUT	1 mask + 1 portrait per senior

#### MATERIALS

- **Mask:**  
Paper plates (big ones), cardboard, cardstock paper, elastic bands or ribbons
- **Craft Materials:**  
Assorted textured paper, cloth, old-school items, pompoms, foamastic strips, corrugated cardboard, buttons, colored string, sequins, alphabets, feathers, glitter, crepe paper, aluminium foil etc
- **Essential Tools:**  
Paint (poster or water color), glue gun, various sized brushes, newspapers, scissors, masking and double-sided tape

#### TIPS

- **SHOW EXAMPLES:**  
Facilitators can wear masks that can be created from paper plates or previous Superhero Me projects at [superherome.sg](http://superherome.sg)
- **CHANGE THE ENERGY:**  
This is designed to be a high-energy art session with lots of fun. Play high-tempo music. Facilitators could also start the session as Superheroes themselves to spark fun conversation with seniors.

#### SESSION OUTLINE:

TIME	PROGRAMME
15 mins	<p><b>If you had a superpower... what would it be?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the concept of Superheroes and photos Superman, Justice Bao or Sun Wukong, then link to Superhero Me examples</li> <li>• Go around the group to share, it can be anything from Rambutan man to Toto king or Happy Mama. What would they use their powers to do? How would they express their powers through the mask?</li> </ul>
45 mins	<p><b>Crafting time – Make your Superhero Mask!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage participants to be as fun as possible</li> <li>• Facilitators can make masks as examples before or during the session</li> <li>• Be sure to play happy, upbeat music during the session</li> </ul>
20 mins	<p><b>Time for our Portrait!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants pose against a clean, happy backdrop and strike a Superhero pose for the portrait</li> </ul>
15 mins	<p><b>Group Sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go round the group where everyone shares their Superhero name and power they want to have</li> <li>• Reinforce the power of positive thinking</li> <li>• Wrap up with a group photograph</li> <li>• Do send prints to participants</li> </ul>



Scenes from the Superhero Me mask workshop at AMKFSC SAC, piloted with NCSS and NAC.

