

Arts and Culture for Newcomers

Social prescribing connects people with community activities that support their overall wellbeing, considering social connections, personal needs, and environment. For newcomers, it can ease language barriers, cultural adjustment, and isolation. Learn more about arts and culture prescribing.

Why Arts and Culture? Engaging with arts and culture can significantly improve health and wellbeing. Creative expression helps people cope with challenges such as stress, mental health issues, loneliness, physical conditions, and isolation.

Cultural organizations (e.g. museums, galleries, community arts events, festivals, etc.) offer supportive environments where individuals can connect creatively, build resilience, and enhance overall wellbeing.

Social prescribing is a person-centered approach, and it will look different for everyone. Examples of arts and culture, not limited to the following:



Creative Arts Activities

- Community art workshops (painting, drawing, printmaking) to support self-expression and reduce stress.
- Craft circles such as knitting, sewing, pottery, or beadwork that encourage social connection and fine-motor engagement.
- Photography walks that combine creativity with gentle physical activity.

Cultural Experiences

- Museum or gallery visits with guided tours that encourage reflection and cultural learning.
- Visits to heritage sites that connect people to local history.
- Cultural festivals or community celebrations that help newcomers feel included and connected.
- Art in the park sessions where participants sketch, paint, or photograph nature.

Sound-Based & Movement Activities

- Community drumming or rhythm sessions, accessible without musical experience.
- Instrumental workshops (e.g., ukulele groups, keyboard basics) that support cognitive wellbeing.
- Dance or movement classes tailored for different ages or abilities, including culturally specific dance traditions.

Literary and Language-Based Activities

- Creative writing or poetry groups where participants can explore personal stories safely.
- Book clubs—including multilingual or newcomer-friendly groups—to build community and reduce isolation.
- Story-sharing circles integrating oral histories or cultural traditions.

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- 1. Identify Participants' Needs** Conduct a need assessment with the community you are working with. This can include interests in specific art forms, cultural backgrounds, accessibility needs, mobility considerations, or language preferences. Gathering this information helps shape an experience that feels welcoming, safe, and meaningful for everyone.
- 2. Partner with Local Arts & Culture Organizations** Reach out to museums, galleries, theatres, libraries, community arts studios, or cultural heritage groups. Discuss their capacity to host small groups, provide guided activities, or offer multilingual or culturally sensitive programming. Strong partnerships allow organizations to tailor activities to the goals of social prescribing.
- 3. Plan a Supportive Visit** Create a simple, predictable structure for the visit, such as a short tour, a hands-on creative activity, and time for informal conversation. Ensure the space is accessible and that participants know what to expect in advance (timing, transport, what to bring). A calm, flexible schedule helps reduce anxiety, especially for newcomers with dynamic lives. **Packing a snack is a small piece of joy to integrate into the visits (e.g. granola bars, fruit gummies, notebook etc.)**
- 4. Facilitate Engagement On-Site** Begin with a warm welcome and introduce the venue and staff so participants feel grounded. Encourage curiosity and creative expression, whether through observing artworks, discussing themes, or making something themselves. Offer guidance gently and allow people to participate at their own comfort level, there is no “right” way to engage in arts and culture.
- 5. Follow Up and Reflect** After the visit, check in with participants to understand what they enjoyed, what could be improved, and whether they would like to continue participating in cultural or creative activities. Share this feedback with partner organizations and consider next steps, such as ongoing workshops, peer groups, or regular cultural outings. Reflection helps build confidence, connection, and long-term wellbeing benefits.