

# CREATING CONNECTION

Enriching lives through the  
power of **creative expression**



## Message Guide

*A resource to support effective communication in making creative  
expression a recognized, valued, and expected part of everyday lives*

[CreatingConnection.org](https://CreatingConnection.org)

**Arts**  
MIDWEST



Metropolitan Group



## 1 Introduction

An overview of this document and how it can be used to create or customize messaging to promote arts and culture as a recognized, valued, and expected part of everyday life.

## 2 Primary Messaging

The core messaging intended to serve as the inspiration for communication to reach and engage diverse constituencies.

## 3 Narrative

The primary message framework in narrative form.

## 4 Growth

Suggested language articulating how creative expression contributes to our growth and development.

## 5 Voice

Suggested language articulating how creative expression helps people find and share their voice and celebrate the creative expression of others.

## 6 Well-being

Suggested language articulating how creative expression promotes our health and well-being at all ages.

## 7 Happiness

Suggested language articulating how creative expression contributes to our happiness.

## 8 Calls to Action

Ideas to inspire the development of tailored calls to action.





## Using this message guide

The goal of the Creating Connection initiative is to make arts and culture a recognized, valued, and expected part of everyday life. This messaging guide is intended to provide a framework for communicating about arts and culture in ways that are engaging to broad and diverse people, and to provide suggestions for how to customize messages and create calls to action that motivate your constituencies.

The message framework articulated here has been informed by a significant body of research showing that most people value arts and culture experiences for the opportunities they provide to connect—with people close to them, with their communities and the world around them, and with themselves. Our research also suggests that for most people, framing messages in terms of “creative expression” is a more welcoming introduction to a conversation than framing messages in terms of “arts and culture.” Thus, while our goal remains focused on making arts and culture a recognized, valued, and expected part of everyday life, our messaging for these new constituencies is framed in terms of creative expression.

For detailed background on the research that informed this message guide, please download our report at [CreatingConnection.org](https://www.creatingconnection.org)

This guide includes language that our research suggests will be effective in engaging people of color, parents of young children, people under 40 years of age, and women. It also includes stories and examples that illustrate the four key benefits these audiences derive from creative expression, as well as questions to help you identify stories and examples from your own work.

This guide also provides suggested calls to action for engaging this broad and diverse constituency, and questions to help you create your own calls to action.

It is also important to note that while messaging articulating the impact of arts and culture on economic or community vitality might not be motivating to the constituencies referenced above, such messaging might continue to be relevant for other constituencies (e.g., funders, policymakers, etc.). Thus, the messaging recommended here is not intended as a replacement in those instances.



*This page captures the primary message framework to guide the development of communication tools and resources to engage a broader and more diverse set of audiences and stakeholders. This framework includes the core message that should be a key takeaway from all messaging, benefit statements, and calls to action. Additional narrative to support these benefits and calls to action can be found on the pages to follow.*

Core	<p>Sharing <b>creative experiences</b> and <b>expressing our creativity</b> build powerful <b>connections</b> with the people we're closest to, with our community and the world around us, and with ourselves.</p> <p>Creativity is in everyone and all around us.</p> <p>Exploring and experiencing creative expression enriches our lives and communities.</p>
Benefits	Helping us <b>grow</b> and find personal fulfillment.
	Empowering everyone to find and share their <b>voice</b> and enabling us to experience the voice of others.
	Promoting our health and <b>well-being</b> .
	Contributing to our <b>happiness</b> .
Call to Action	Connect with people and the world around you by exploring, sharing, and supporting creative expression.





## The message in narrative form

When we share creative experiences and express our creativity, we build powerful connections with the people we're closest to, with our community and the world around us, and with ourselves. Opportunities to build these connections through **creative expression** can be found anywhere because creativity is born in each of us and expressions of creativity are all around us. Creativity is in everything from the clothes we wear, the technology we use, and the music we enjoy to the festivals, museums and theaters in our communities.

Exploring and experiencing creative expression in all its forms enriches our lives and communities in important ways. It helps us **grow** and find personal fulfillment, teaches and challenges us, and helps us understand and empathize with others. Creative expression empowers everyone to find and share their **voice**, elevates new voices and perspectives, and enables us to experience the voice of others, including artists of all kinds. It promotes our health and **well-being**, reduces our stress, promotes child development and lifelong brain health, and connects us with what's most important in our lives. And it contributes to our **happiness** by creating lasting memories of good times spent with those we love.

We can build powerful connections with people and the world around us by recognizing and **exploring** the creative expression that is everywhere, by **sharing** our own creative voice and experiencing creativity with others, and by **supporting** the opportunity for everyone to experience and express creativity in their daily lives.

# Exploring and experiencing creative expression enriches our lives and communities by helping us grow and find personal fulfillment.

*On this page, you'll find guidance on how to incorporate one of the key benefits of **Creating Connection—Growth**—into your own messaging. Use what's provided here to inspire your own messaging, supplemented by stories and examples of your own that will ensure authenticity and resonate powerfully with the people you're trying to engage.*

## Creative expression


- Inspires us, teaches us new things, raises important questions, and challenges us.
- Helps us understand, appreciate, and empathize with other people, perspectives, and cultures.
- Enlarges our emotional capacity.
- Fosters the critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills that are essential both to the education of children and to lifelong learning.

## Questions to ask

- 1 In what ways are you inspiring and challenging people, teaching them new things, and raising important questions?
- 2 How are you helping people understand, appreciate, and/or empathize with other perspectives and cultures?
- 3 In what ways are you helping people enlarge their emotional capacity?
- 4 How are you fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills?

## Examples that illustrate this message

- Employees at The Standard, an insurance company based in Portland, Oregon, participate in a pop-up gallery in their offices, showcasing employees' visual and textile art, jewelry, and fashion pieces. The show breaks down barriers among departments, fosters better relationships among co-workers, and encourages innovation in the workplace.
- Public art, like Cloud Gate ("The Bean") and the Crown Fountain in Chicago's Millennium Park, draws people of every race, ethnicity, class, and geography to connect with each other.
- Libraries across the country are promoting summer learning programs that incorporate creative expression into science, technology, engineering, and math activities, based on evidence that such programs help address the summer learning slide.
- Wisconsin's Kohler Company established an artists' residency program in 1974 to introduce artists to technical knowledge that enables them to explore forms and concepts in ways that would not be possible in their own studios, as well as new ways of thinking and working that benefit both artists and industry.
- The Children's Dance Foundation uses professional dancers with hoops, loops, and a lively narrative to uncover the interesting nature of the circle and the mysterious number known as "pi."
- The University of Iowa's College of Engineering hosts a collaborative program called NEXUS, which explores the mutual impacts of artists working with engineers. The college notes that engineering itself is an inherently creative endeavor that is enhanced by artists' creative vision.



# Exploring and experiencing **creative expression** enriches our lives and communities by empowering everyone to find and share their **voice** and enabling us to experience the **voice** of others.

*On this page, you'll find guidance on how to incorporate one of the key benefits of **Creating Connection—Voice** into your own messaging. Use what's provided here to inspire your own messaging, supplemented by stories and examples of your own that will ensure authenticity and resonate powerfully with the people you're trying to engage.*

## Creative expression

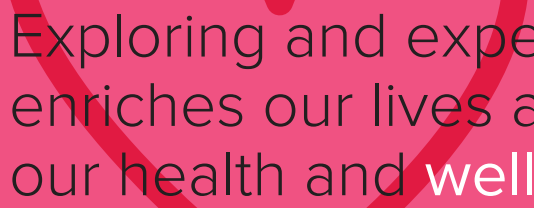
- empowers us to share our creativity and talents through what we do and how we do it.
- brings new voices and ideas to the table where decisions are made, elevates diverse perspectives, and suggests new solutions to the challenges we face.
- provides opportunities for us to experience and be inspired by the voice and creative expression of others, including artists of all kinds.
- reflects, contributes to, and advances diverse culture and heritage.

## Questions to ask

- 1 In what ways are you helping bring new, more diverse voices and ideas to the table?
- 2 How do you reflect, contribute to, or advance diverse culture and heritage?
- 3 In what ways do you provide opportunities for people to find and express their unique voice?
- 4 How are you providing opportunities for people to experience or be inspired by the creative expression of others?

## Examples that illustrate this message

- New works, like those commissioned as part of the American Revolutions program of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, explore moments of change in America's past, connecting us with issues such as immigration, civil rights, economic disparity, and globalization.
- Youth poetry slams, like those produced by Youth Speaks in San Francisco, challenge and inspire young people to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of social change through creative expression.
- Through renowned artwork and interactive exhibits, the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Pendleton, Oregon, enables visitors to immerse themselves in the history, culture, and hospitality of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes that have lived on the land for more than 10,000 years.
- Founded in 1965 on the Delano grape strike picket lines of Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers Union, El Teatro Campesino uses creative expression to present a more just and accurate account of human history, while encouraging the young women and men of a new generation to take control of their destiny through creative discipline, vibrant education, economic independence, and artistic excellence.
- The Minneapolis Institute of Art is rewriting the labels describing its paintings and sculptures based on input from its visitors, who expressed interest in finding a connection to the featured artists by understanding the stories behind their creative inspiration.
- The creative expression of people who have lost someone to HIV/AIDS has made the NAMES Project Foundation's AIDS Memorial Quilt the world's premier symbol of the pandemic, used to foster healing, heighten awareness, and inspire action.



# Exploring and experiencing creative expression enriches our lives and communities by promoting our health and well-being.

*On this page, you'll find guidance on how to incorporate one of the key benefits of **Creating Connection—Well-being**—into your own messaging. Use what's provided here to inspire your own messaging, supplemented by stories and examples of your own that will ensure authenticity and resonate powerfully with the people you're trying to engage.*

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## Creative expression

- Reduces stress and helps us find balance
- Promotes cognitive development and lifelong brain health
- Energizes and recharges us
- Connects us with ourselves and what's most important in our lives

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## Questions to ask

- 1 In what ways are you helping people reduce stress or find balance?
  - 2 How are you promoting cognitive development or lifelong brain health?
  - 3 In what ways are you giving people the chance to energize or recharge themselves?
  - 4 How are you helping people connect with themselves or with what's most important in their lives?
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## Examples that illustrate this message

- Pediatric cancer patients at Providence Children's Hospital in El Paso, Texas, are expressing themselves creatively through Project AIM, which uses artistic expression to help relieve stress and anxiety, improve morale, and strengthen coping skills.
- To promote brain health, 14 museums in Wisconsin are creating meaningful experiences for older adults with dementia and their caregivers as part of the SPARK! Project in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association.
- The National Veterans Art Museum in Chicago offers space for military personnel, veterans, and civilians to use creative expression to open a dialogue over the real impact of war, using art therapy to treat post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological responses to trauma.
- More than six million people in 75 countries regularly participate in Zumba dance classes, incorporating creative expression through dance into their fitness regimens. Zumba has been incorporated into First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign.
- While coloring books for adults have become increasingly popular in recent years as a stress-relieving activity for adults, the founder of analytical psychology, Carl G. Jung, first used coloring as a relaxation technique for his patients in the early 20th century. Now, cultural institutions like the Wangensteen Historical Library in Minnesota are sharing coloring pages of images from their rare book collections via social media.



# Exploring and experiencing creative expression enriches our lives and communities by contributing to our happiness.



*On this page, you'll find guidance on how to incorporate one of the key benefits of **Creating Connection—Happiness**—into your own messaging. Use what's provided here to inspire your own messaging, supplemented by stories and examples of your own that will ensure authenticity and resonate powerfully with the people you're trying to engage.*

## Creative expression

- Creates lasting memories
- Promotes interaction with people and builds stronger relationships
- Kindles the feeling of being alive, helping us experience the full range of human emotion, and making us more present in everyday moments
- Is fun!

## Questions to ask

- 1 In what ways are you providing opportunities for people to create lasting memories?
- 2 How do you promote interaction between people?
- 3 In what ways are you giving people the chance to experience the full range of human emotion?
- 4 How do you make it possible for people to have fun?

## Examples that illustrate this message

- Generations of parents have bonded with their children and created lifelong memories on annual outings to productions of the Nutcracker, theater in the park, or concerts.
- Using smartphone cameras and photography apps, people all over the world are capturing the meaningful moments in their lives and sharing them in creative ways to connect with their friends and communities.
- Whether it's getting up to dance at a Pink Martini concert in Oregon or taking part in a group dance class in Chicago's Grant Park during the Chicago SummerDance series, creative expression is helping people connect and meet others in ways that build lasting and rewarding memories.
- In 2015, the Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses, Master Quest tour attracted enthusiastic, sellout crowds of younger audiences by fusing live classical music played by a symphony orchestra with video game visuals.
- Across the country, museums like the Art Institute of Chicago are hosting after-work weekday gatherings in their galleries to promote social interaction between people and introduce new audiences to their collections and exhibits.
- The Dayton Art Museum is often referred to as "Dayton's living room" because of its wide range of family-friendly activities designed to promote interaction, including its Experientcenter, an interactive family gallery.
- The Princeton University Art Museum's Artful Adventures program includes self-guided tours and activities designed to help children and their caregivers have fun while learning about objects in the collection.

# Connect with people and the world around you by exploring, sharing, and supporting creative expression.

*As much as possible, messaging should invite or suggest action people can take to incorporate creative expression and experiences into their lives. The calls to action below can be adapted to best meet the needs of the people you are trying to reach.*

## Here’s how you can help

## You can do this by

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize creative expression all around you and the value it brings to your life, to your community, and to our world.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thinking about how creative experiences and expression have been an important part of your life, and sharing your story and your creative expression with others.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore and share your own creative expression, the creative experiences available in your community, and the creative expression of others.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Looking for opportunities in your community to experience creative expression, and inviting people you know to join you in experiencing something creative together.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support opportunities for everyone to experience and express creativity in their daily lives.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being an advocate for arts and culture funding and for robust arts education opportunities for all children.</li><li>• Volunteering and/or supporting the arts and cultural organizations in your community.</li></ul>

## Questions to ask

- 1 What specific actions would you like people to take? (Incorporate these into your tailored calls to action.)
- 2 In what ways do you make it possible for people to take these actions?
- 3 What might you do to make it easier for people to take these actions or derive more value from them?





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