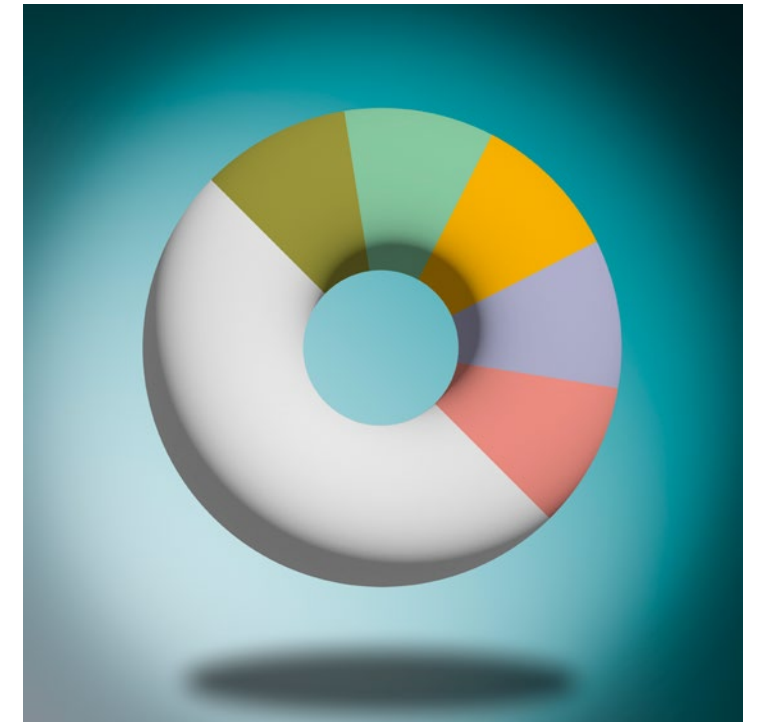




CREATIVE  
ECOSYSTEM

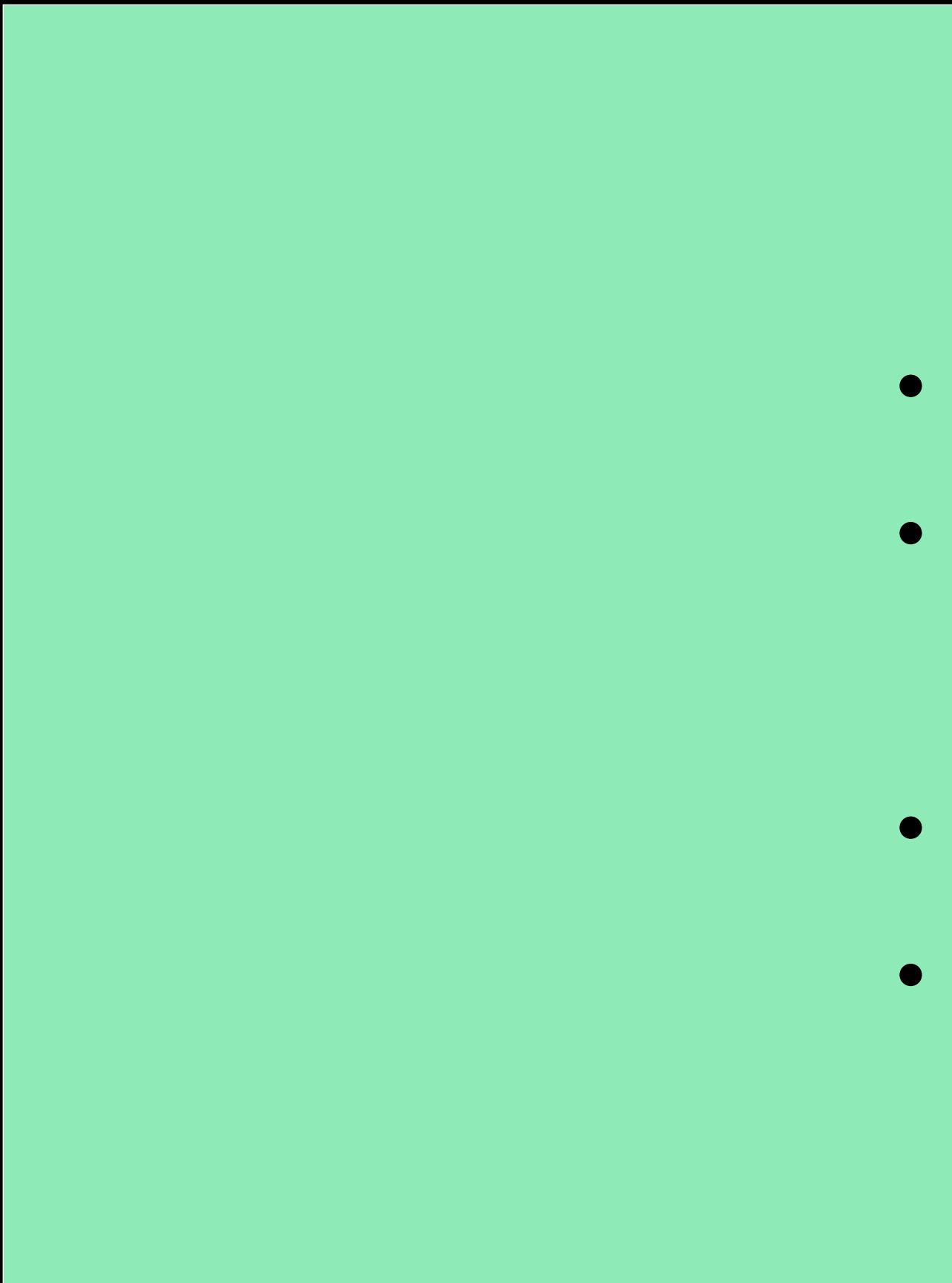


# Creative Ecosystem

An introduction to the  
creative wellbeing model  
by Emmi Salonen



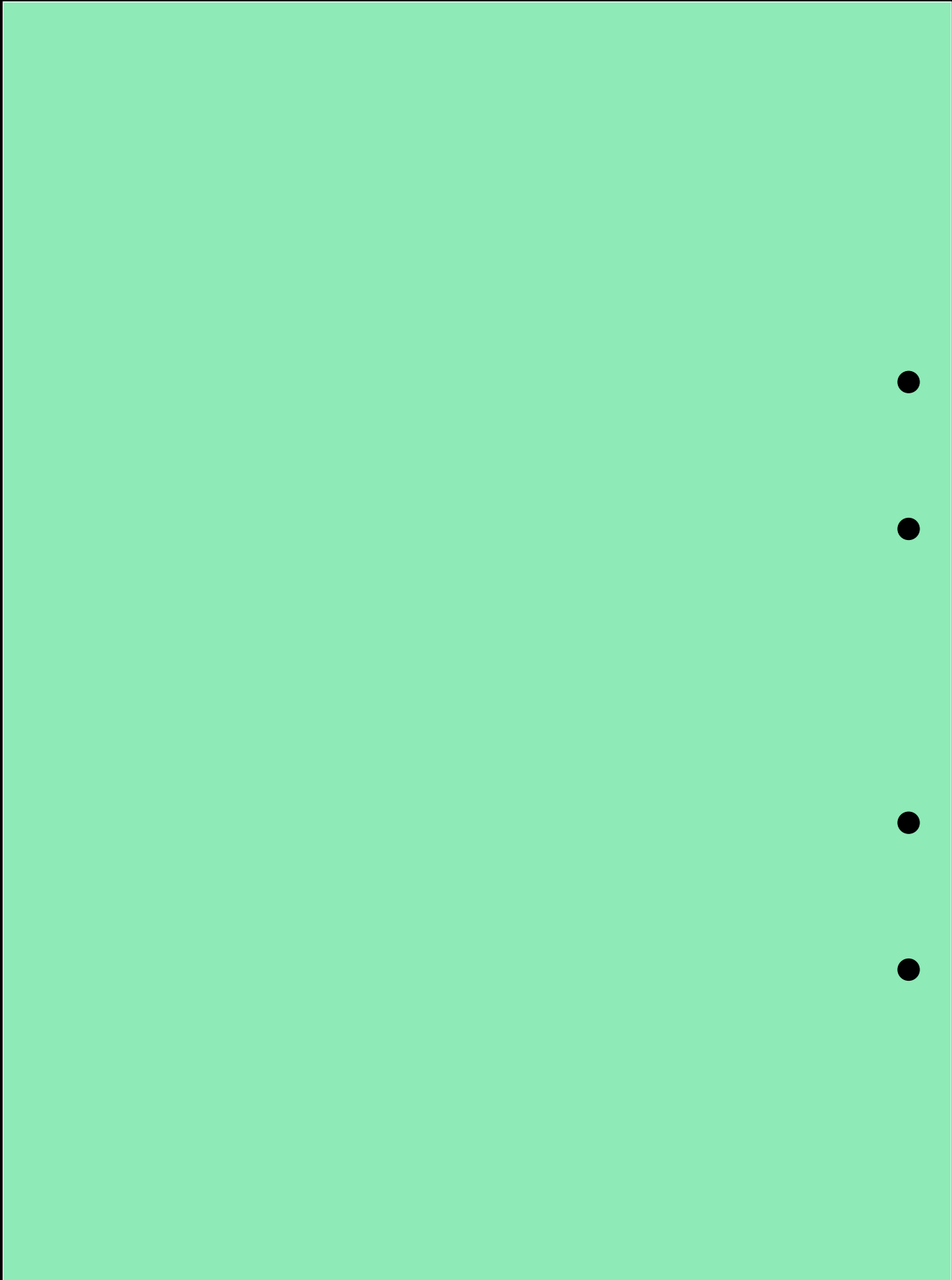
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# Introduction



## Why a creative wellbeing model is needed

A recent study\* by Studio Emmi found 67% of responding creatives regularly lack motivation, combined with 66% experiencing anxiety. In fact, people in the creative industries are **three times more likely to have ill mental health and experience burnout.**\*\*

Creative thinkers are often so hyper focused on output, that the need for input is overlooked. If you're not refuelling your creative energy, you might struggle to find purpose, inspiration, intuition, or resilience.

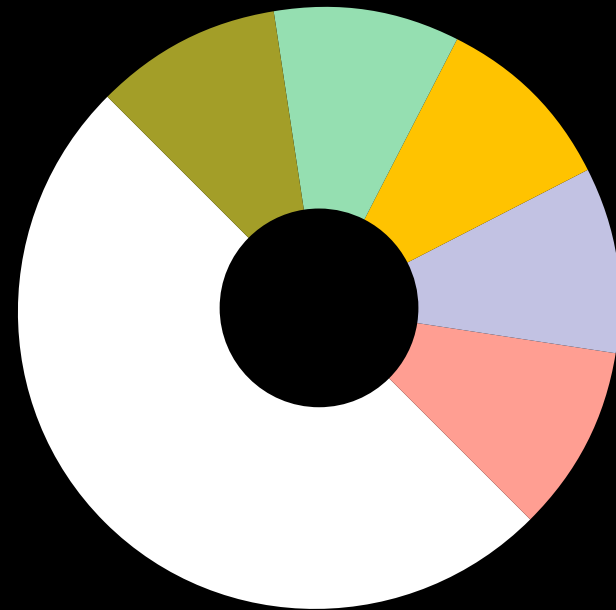
The Creative Ecosystem model, developed by Design Leader Emmi Salonen, is designed to support fellow creative thinkers. Emmi's talks and workshops provide wisdom and enriching tactics to help prevent burnout and sustain a creative practice.

\* Creative Wellbeing Insights (click for PDF download)

\*\* Wellbeing charity Inspire and Ulster University



# The Creative Ecosystem model



Creative  
OUTPUT

Nourishing  
INPUT

- Connection
- Wonder
- Pause
- Movement
- Joy

## Introducing the Creative Ecosystem model

Sustaining creative wellbeing requires us to balance our creative outputs with nourishing inputs. But what should those inputs look like? The Creative Ecosystem model outlines the five fundamental types of creative input: *Connection, Wonder, Pause, Movement* and *Joy*.

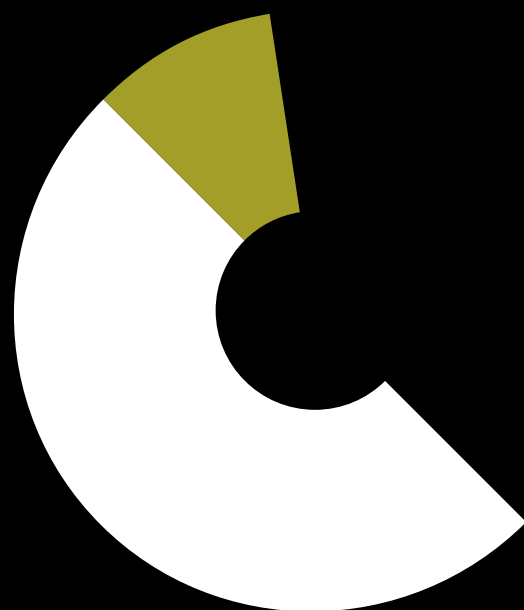
In the following pages, we will explain more about each type and provide practical tips on how to more actively engage with them.

By focusing on these core five inputs, the model encourages you to make the most of the resources you already have within and around you – in your own personal, unique creative ecosystem – to nourish a more fulfilling creative practice.



# Connection

Connecting with others and your personal values will help you sustain your creative output by giving you *purpose*.



Nourishing  
INPUT

Connection



## Grounding yourself

You might struggle to ask for support, have difficulty recognising your own strengths, or feel unresourceful.



If so, look back to your foundation, and reflect on your unique story and the roots from which you've grown.



Earth yourself in the present. By evaluating where you are and where you want to go, and aligning with your personal values, you ensure your actions and decisions resonate with what truly matters to you.



Importantly, connecting with those around you is also essential. Building and maintaining relationships is crucial for a well-rounded and fulfilling creative life.



It is through these connections that we find support and develop a sense of belonging in our creative endeavors.

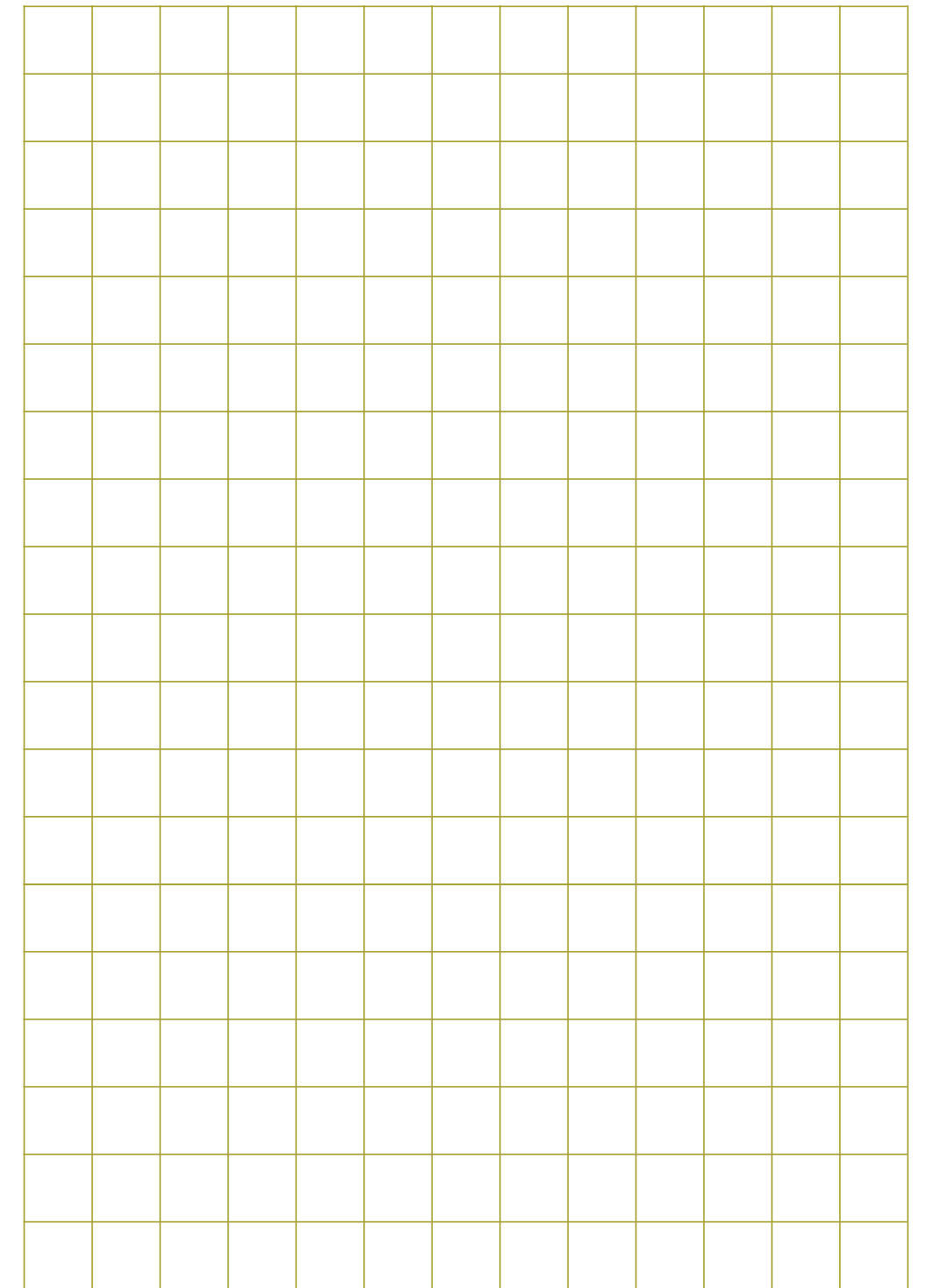
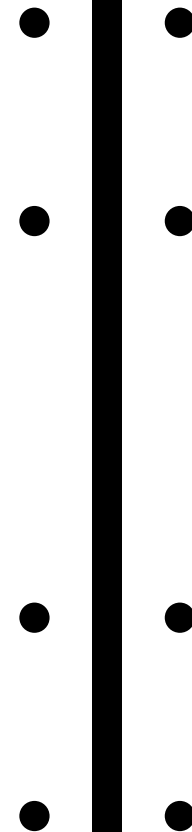
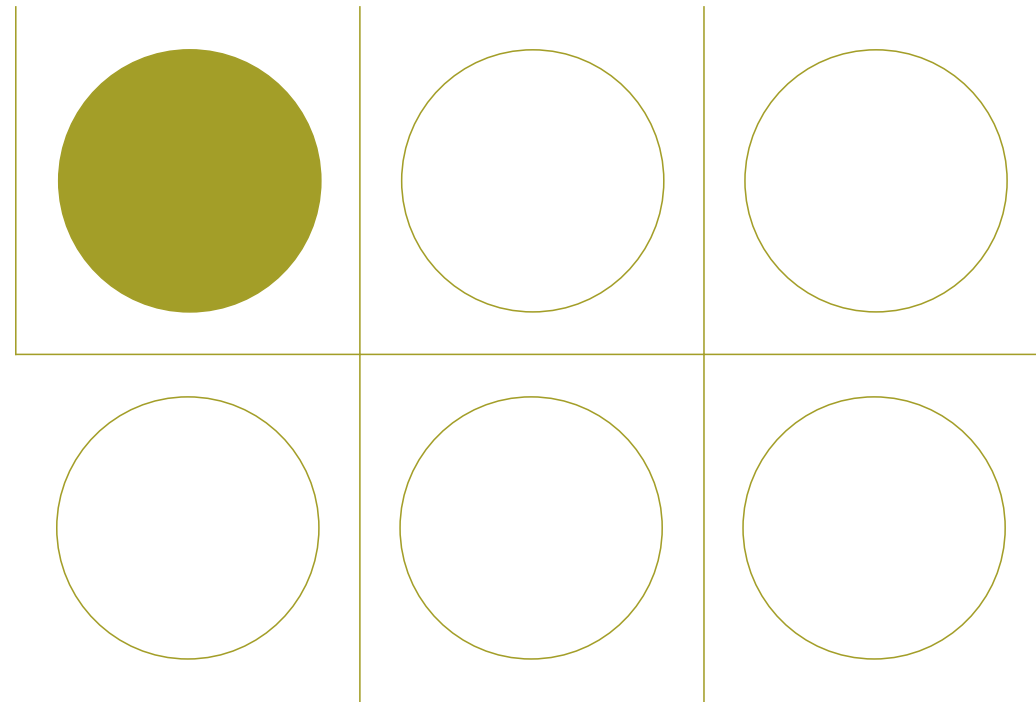


# Connection worksheet

Connect who you are with what you do to nurture your *purpose*

## Ask yourself:

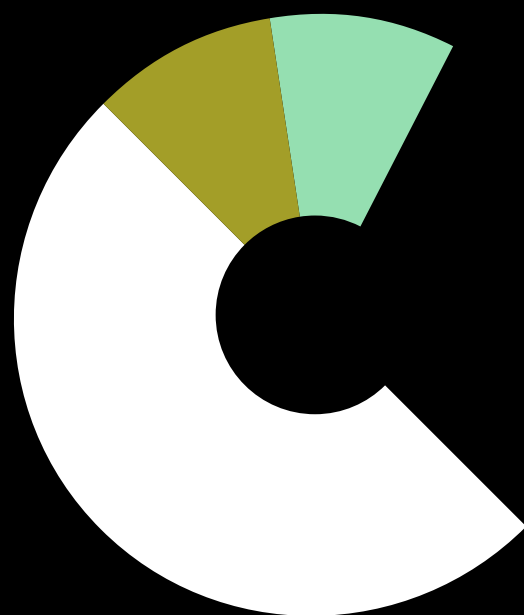
- What really matters to you?
- What does being successful mean to you?
- How do you stay connected to people who inspire and support your creativity?
- What does your ideal day and life look like?





# Wonder

Embracing wonder will help you sustain your output by giving you *inspiration*.



Nourishing  
INPUT

Wonder

## Breath of creativity

When you stop viewing the world with wonder, life can feel dull, tedious and mundane, with every day seeming just the same.

- The world is full of curiosities. We all know this feeling from travelling, when we look around and everything around us appears new and exciting, even the most mundane details.

- The challenge is to cultivate this sense of awe and discovery in our everyday lives. We need to start looking around in our everyday and find the unusual in the usual.

- The trick is to adopt a mindset that is open to discoveries, one that feels like opening a window to refresh your space. By airing your thoughts and discoveries, sharing and finding inspiration with others, we engage in an exploration that enriches our lives.
-



# Wonder worksheet

Explore the ordinary with curiosity to nurture your *inspiration*

## Ask yourself:

- What inspires you?
- What is the most interesting thing around you right now?
- How would you structure your day if you could plan it entirely around your creativity?
- What would you like to learn?





# Pause

Pausing in solitude and taking time for reflection will help you sustain your output by strengthening your *intuition*.



Nourishing  
INPUT

**Pause**



## Give time to yourself

When we don't take the time to pause, it's easy to miss what our inner self is trying to tell us. If we don't actively listen to ourselves, we are less sure of our feelings, and emotions, and our internal and external issues are more likely to feel uncertain and unresolved.

Remember, pausing is a productive act. Taking a break can allow you to return to your work rested, with new ideas and a reframed perspective, so there's no need for guilt.

Embrace solitude, ideally in nature, but even a brief moment alone can be immensely beneficial.

Pause to give space for the most important conversation of all – the one with yourself. In the stillness, bustling with activity like thinking, reflecting, sustaining, and healing, things start to make sense and we find our answers and understanding.



# Pause worksheet

Book in time for solitude and reflection to nurture your *intuition*

## Ask yourself:

- Do you do any activities alone, to allow some time for deep thinking and reflection?
- What is the last thing your intuition told you?
- What small habit has had a big positive influence on you?
- How could you be a little kinder to yourself right now?

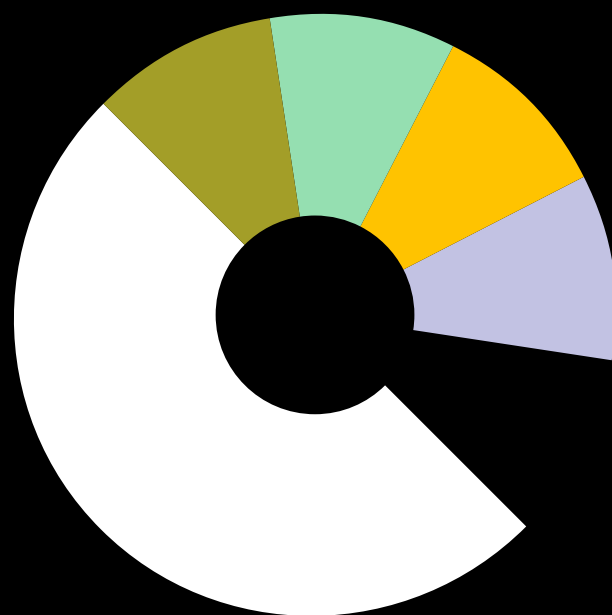
Handwriting practice area with 10 sets of horizontal lines. Each set consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. There are four black dots on the right side of the page, aligned with the middle dashed lines.

Handwriting practice area with four large geometric shapes. The top-left shape is a solid yellow diamond. The top-right shape is a dashed yellow square. The bottom-left shape is a dashed yellow square. The bottom-right shape is a dashed yellow diamond. There are four black dots on the left side of the page, aligned with the top-left corners of the shapes.



# Movement

Keeping your body and mind actively moving will help you sustain your output by strengthening your *resilience*.



Nourishing  
INPUT

Movement

## Move your mind and body

When we stop moving, we can get stuck in negative patterns of thinking, mulling things over and over. If we don't move our bodies, we're more likely to feel depressed, anxious and may even become physically ill.

Allow yourself to let go and enjoy the journey, instead of only focusing on the outcome. Be open to conversations that could change your perspectives and challenge your ways of thinking, doing and being.

Consider alternatives and options, adapting like water to your surroundings while moving forward. Without losing who you are at the core of course! Just as water remains resilient amidst changes, always staying true to its nature.

Sometimes, the solution isn't in thinking harder; it's in action. Get up. Go for a walk. Remain fluid in your mood and body, and the things you focus on begin to change.

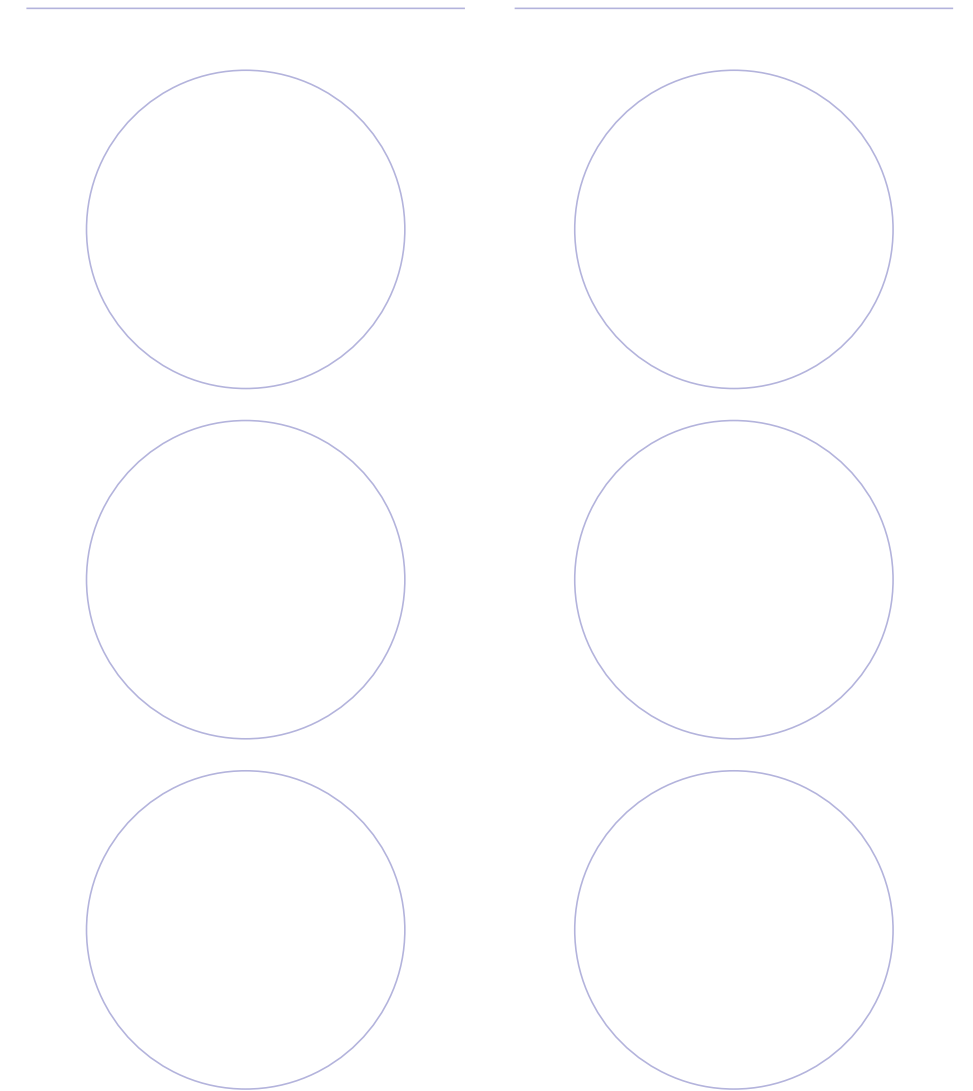
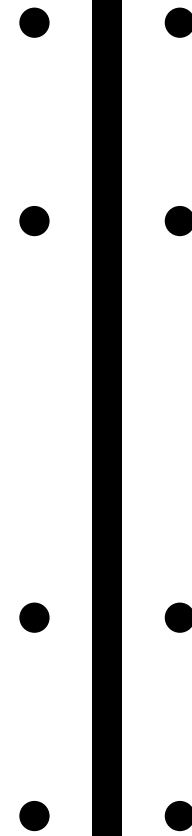
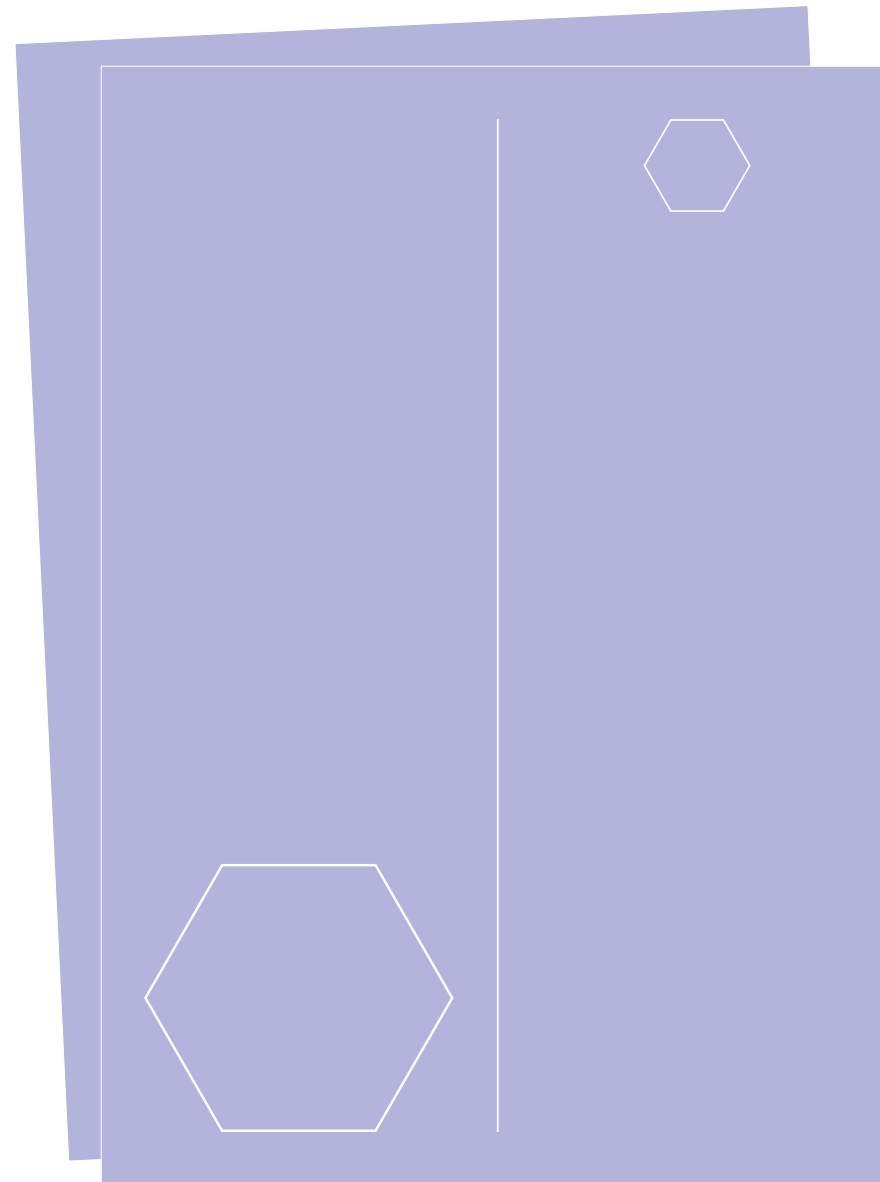


# Movement worksheet

Stay fluid and evolve with the process to nurture your *resilience*

## Ask yourself:

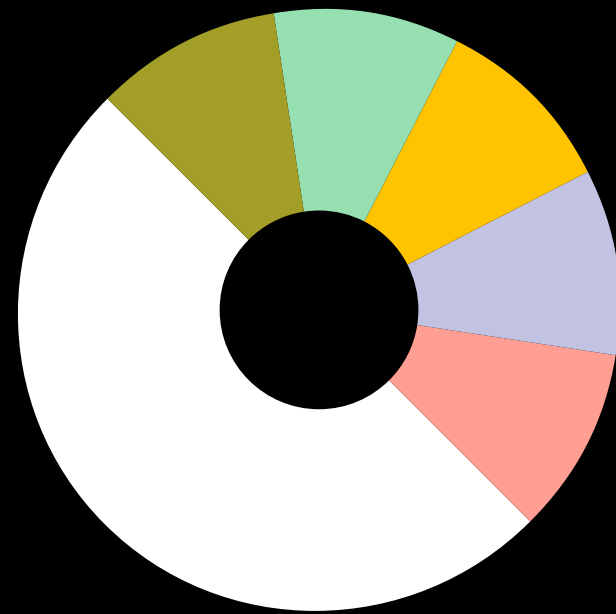
- Are there any negative phrases you repeatedly tell yourself?
- Do you allow both pleasant and painful thoughts and feelings to flow freely?
- What helps when you feel anxious or overwhelmed?
- Have you given your body time to move?





# Joy

Finding moments of energising joy will help you sustain your output by strengthening your *vitality*.



Nourishing  
INPUT

Joy

## Keep the fire going

Things can feel flat and deflated like you've lost the spark when you don't get excited about doing anything or even have the energy to start. We can also experience a serious internal fight with resistance, even though we would love to get on with doing and making.

In order to re-energise yourself, find a dedicated time to create purely for the joy of it, without the constraints of commercial goals or specific outcomes. This unbridled creativity is often where your most authentic and innovative ideas can flourish and this energy can feed into other endeavours.

Pay attention to moments that give you a feeling of energised focus. It can be found anywhere: in a daydream, in creating, in knowing just what to do, when you are carefree and entirely present.

Weave these micro-passions into your daily routine, enriching each day with small flares of joy.



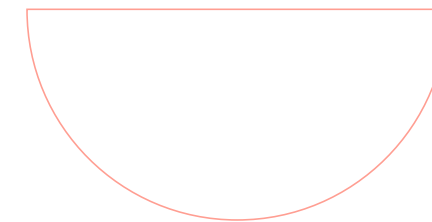
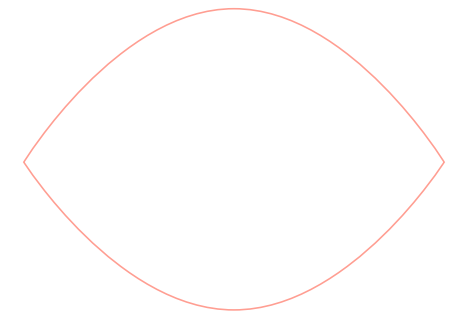
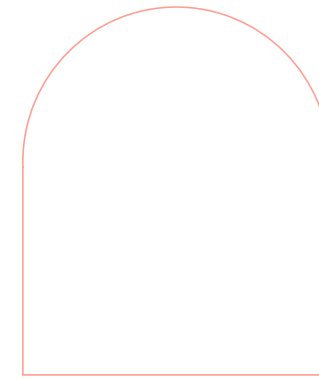
# Joy worksheet

Enjoy immersing yourself in an activity to nurture your *vitality*

## Ask yourself:

- How do you get into the flow?
- What were you doing when you last lost track of time?
- When did you create something purely for the joy of it?
- Where and when do you do your best thinking?

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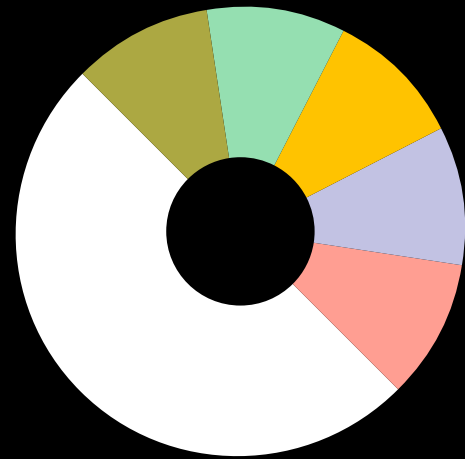


# Creative Ecosystem

A creative wellbeing model by Emmi Salonen

To sustain your creativity, balance your creative outputs with nourishing inputs.

This model is to encourage you to make the most of the resources you already have in you and around you – in your own personal, unique Creative Ecosystem.



## Nourish energising INPUTs:

### Connection

Connect who you are with what you do to nurture your **purpose**

Focus on what really matters to you and be guided by your core values. Be part of supporting and grounding networks.

### Wonder

Explore the ordinary with curiosity to nurture your **inspiration**

Find the unusual in the usual, take a second look. Embrace new experiences, do things that are unfamiliar.

### Pause

Book in time for solitude and reflection to nurture your **intuition**

Pause to recognise, cherish and cultivate your inner self. Listen to yourself, your true source of creative spirit is within you.

### Movement

Stay fluid and evolve with the process to nurture your **resilience**

Let go and enjoy the journey instead of only focusing on the outcome. Get back to being physical and move your mood.

### Joy

Enjoy immersing yourself fully in an activity to nurture your **vitality**

Find moments to lose yourself in, when you are carefree and entirely present. Build these passions into your day-to-day.

## Cultivate creative OUTPUTs:

Brief

Research

Ideation

Development

Creation



# Hello there, I'm Emmi



Emmi Salonen  
Studio Emmi

IG @StudioEmmi

Everything I do is underpinned by a simple but powerful idea: Positive Creativity. From the creative process to the final output, I believe design can bring people together, create sustainable choices and foster wellbeing.

**THE MODEL** I'm a founder of the Creative Ecosystem, a model that nurtures sustainable creative wellbeing and supports individuals and organisations through workshops, inspiring talks, events and 1-2-1 mentoring. I'm also an accredited Happiness Facilitator.

I used to think it was only hard work that leads to good creative output. I then learned the hard way that in order to keep producing creative work sustainably, I needed a healthy balance of inspiring sources of input.

The Creative Ecosystem model provides you with wisdom and ideas that will not only inspire you to develop and enjoy your creative practice, but will help you find meaningful connections in life – be it nourishing self-kindness or cultivating happier interactions with people and the environment.

CreativeEcosystem.org

**THE STUDIO** I set up Studio Emmi in 2005 to partner with clients and creatives who want to make a positive contribution to society and planet.

Whether it's engaging audiences through purpose-led brand identities, mentorship for creative wellbeing or making engaging spaces, I work with people to find the very best solutions through design.

I am author of the book 'Common Interest: Documents', and the Domestika course, 'Sustainable Visual Identities: Create Positive Impact'. I contribute to industry publications on topics ranging from typography to the importance of lifelong learning. I regularly give keynote talks and workshops on design and creative wellbeing internationally.

Born in Finland, I'm a strong advocate for a balanced life full of curiosity, growth and wonder. I studied graphic design in the UK at the University of Brighton. In 2001 I moved to northern Italy to work at Fabrica, Benetton Group's prestigious communication research studio for young designers. I then worked at Karlssonwilker in New York and Futerra sustainability agency as their UK Creative Director.

Emmi.co.uk





# Talks and workshops

## How Creative Ecosystem can benefit you:

- Reinvigorate creative energy
- Reconnect with purpose
- Build resilience
- Reduce stress
- Nourish inspiration

Emmi helps individuals and teams get back into their flow by bringing them on a journey to uncover the processes, practices, and rituals that fuel their creative energy across all areas of their lives.

Feedback from previous events can be found on the right. To find out how you can engage with the model and learn more, email Emmi at: [hello@emmi.co.uk](mailto:hello@emmi.co.uk)



**RGD Design Thinkers**  
Toronto, Canada.  
Main stage talk

“Emmi gave a buoyantly special talk on how important it is for us to take pause from work, connect with our personal values and joy are.”

– Cal Thompson / VP of Design, Headspace  
Attendee, Design Matters Tokyo, Japan

“Very much enjoyed Emmi's talk in Toronto. As someone who has had a couple of breakdowns, and is new to developing a proper work-life balance, I appreciated her candour and perspective.”

– Attendee, RGD DesignThinkers Toronto, Canada

### Talk highlights 2023:

RGD  
DesignThinkers  
Toronto, Canada

CEDIM Innovation  
Programs,  
Mexico

Design Matters  
Tokyo, Japan

DMJX  
Copenhagen,  
Denmark

Margate Festival  
of Design, UK



**Design Matters Tokyo, Japan.**  
Workshop (and keynote talk)

“I absolutely love Emmi's energy and calming force. Everything was so visually appealing and every workshop activity she had was so actionable. I am going through this utmost horrible chapter of burnout and her talk felt so refreshing. I'm constantly bombarded by thoughts to become better (and we are in a conference!) but you're giving me permission to take a break – and that's so precious.”

– Attendee, Design Matters Tokyo, Japan

### Workshop highlights 2023:

Design Matters  
Tokyo, Japan

All Flows Festival,  
Milton Keynes,  
UK

Design Matters  
Copenhagen,  
Denmark

Nottingham Trent  
University, UK

Manchester  
School  
of Art, UK



## Contact

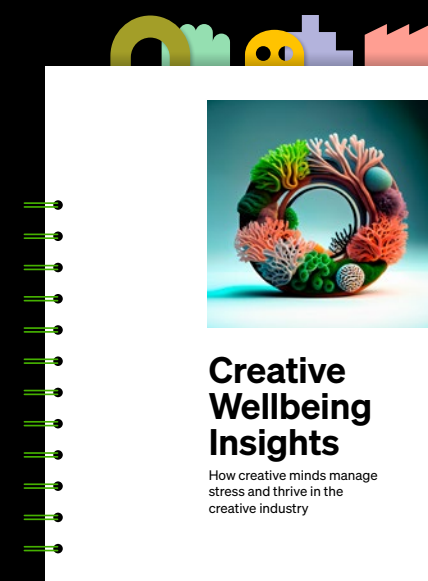
To learn more about the thinking behind the Creative Ecosystem model, to explore how it might work for you, your team or your university, or to explore a tailored partnership, please get in touch with Emmi.

[hello@emmi.co.uk](mailto:hello@emmi.co.uk)

[Emmi.co.uk](http://Emmi.co.uk)  
[CreativeEcosystem.org](http://CreativeEcosystem.org)

For latest news and events, follow

[IG @StudioEmmi](#)



Find Creative Wellbeing survey results [here](#) (pdf download)