

Ashlee Phillips

Arts Programming Overview + Teaching Artist(s) Bio

The programming that I provide is intended to empower participants and foster positive mental health through dialogue, self-expression, and art-making. By the end of each workshop, participants will have a creative object or art piece to share with their family and friends. My art-making workshops use materials that participants will likely have access to at home – demonstrating that art is an accessible method of self-expression. Mental health and self-care are major themes in my approach to the artistic process. My workshop series “Mental Health Minute” is an 8-week workshop series that takes a holistic, artistic approach to mental health and healing techniques. Incorporating the teachings of local therapists, holistic healers, and yoga instructors, each session weaves together hands-on art activities like painting, collage, and drawing to create a safe space for participants to process their emotions and learn different emotional and spiritual healing techniques. This workshop series has an ideal maximum of 10 participants but there is room for adaptability. See supporting materials for a sample workshop outline.

Artist Bio

Ashlee Phillips is a passionate Social Art Activist and Cultural Curator that implements her organizational and leadership skills to assist others in the learning of social justice by building cultural and creative equity. A native of Louisville’s Smoketown neighborhood, Ashlee has grown from her humble roots and branched out into collaborations with major art institutions like the Speed Art Museum to bring forth her vision of multi-disciplinary art that impacts her community.

In 2021, Ashlee launched a photography project entitled, “Creatives You Meet Along the Way: A West End Love Story In The Making”, which celebrated a diverse group of creatives from the 9 neighborhoods of Louisville’s West End. Ashlee was then honored to become a Community Connections Artist in Residence with the Speed Art Museum. This allowed Ashlee to offer free mental health workshops throughout the community, through her “Mental Health Minute” series. Her work with the Speed Art Museum culminated in an installation entitled, “Can I Grow: The Metamorphosis of The Black Woman”, which recreated a multi-generational Black “living room” where visitors could experience the trauma, healing, and growth process of a young Black woman.

Currently, Ashlee is a mentor of the inaugural cohort for the Black Film Institute at Simmons College of Kentucky, an HBCU. Going forward, Ashlee hopes to create work that goes beyond the bounds of disciplinary definition, into iconic and institutional impact that shifts the trajectory of her people.

In my workshops, I often collaborate with mental health professionals and holistic healers. See bio below.

Tiffany Harris is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with 10 years of experience as a therapist. She holds a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy and is passionate about relationship health. She received her Master of Social Work from the University of Louisville in 2013 and is currently pursuing her doctorate degree from Spalding University. She is Co-owner of Transcend Counseling Services, a private practice providing clinical services to individuals and families as well as the Vice President of Operations at Maryhurst, a non-profit residential organization. She also serves as a clinical supervisor. Tiffany's clinical training includes Eye Movement Desensitization Therapy (EMDR), Trauma-Focused CBT, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and other evidence-based treatments. She is passionate about providing mental health services in marginalized communities and removing the stigma of mental health.

Artistic Content of Programming

I lead art-programming that results in a personally crafted, tangible object that each participant can take home and feel proud of. My arts-programming encourages the use of everyday objects that can be found in most homes. The goal is for participants to create a physical object that represents themselves and honors their own voices. Self-love and the power to imagine one's best-self is a major takeaway from hands-on art activities throughout my programming. The outcomes of my programming are measured through participant engagement and willingness to open up, group "check-ins" and "check-outs", participant feedback, and attendance.

Educational Content of Programming

My workshop sessions and arts programming provides participants with increased knowledge surrounding positive mental health, social-emotional skills, self-care, fostering self-identification and pride, and processing emotions. I focus on holistic health and well-being in ways that are often not accessible in school or traditional educational settings. The educational outcomes of my programming are measured through checking-in and checking-out with participants on a community white-board, shared dialogue with participants, and observing the physical manifestations of change – for example: completion of hands-on art activities, increased participation in group conversation, self-assuredness in posture, more confidence in delivery and communication, etc.

Process for hiring, training, and evaluating my performance/effectiveness.

The process for training myself looks like my continual personal development as an artist and activist. Being active in my artistic practice through residencies and professional development allows me to keep in touch with best practices and incorporate elements of learned skills into my programming. Currently, I am involved in the inaugural cohort for the Black Film Institute at Simmons College of Kentucky, an HBCU. In 2022, I was honored to become a Community Connections Artist in Residence with the Speed Art Museum. Through these opportunities, I was able to hone-in on my artistic crafts with guidance from established museum and arts professionals. Being connected to my community and Black Artists

networks in Louisville and throughout the region keeps me up to date on new approaches, methods, and ideas surrounding community-focused programming.

I evaluate my performance and effectiveness through the above-mentioned methods. Effectiveness of my programming is measured through keeping attendance, checking-in and checking-out with participants on a community white-board, listening to written and verbal feedback from participants, and observing the physical manifestations of change amongst participants— for example: completion of hands-on art activities, increased participation in group conversation, self-assuredness in posture, more confidence in delivery and communication, etc.

How are participants of all backgrounds and abilities included in programming?

I am a passionate Social Art Activist and Cultural Curator that implements her organizational and leadership skills to assist others in the learning of social justice by building cultural and creative equity. Knowledge of, closeness to, and embodiment of Black womanhood aids in taking an inclusive approach to not only minority issues, but also human issues. I prioritize simplicity of language to avoid language barriers and feelings of exclusion that can sometimes accompany arts experiences. My workshops require no prior experience or knowledge in order to participate. Inclusion is fostered by empowering individuals to realize their creative potential rather than grading their final product. I'm facilitating an experience for YOU (place-making). I prioritize consent in the facilitation of group conversation and break down the instructor/student dynamic by opening the floor for everyone to share.

How do I engage teachers and community center staff before, during, and after programming?

Community Center staff will be engaged by fostering an open line of communication and also inviting available staff to participate in programming when and if applicable. Before programming, a conversation will be had about goals and expectations. During programming, staff will be engaged through routine check-ins and the sharing of any positive or important observations regarding participants. After programming, community center staff could be given surveys about their thoughts and reflections on the programming and its execution, or meetings could be set up to discuss these reflections or feedback in person.

How do I engage participants in the creative and learning process?

For my programming, I engage participants in the creative and learning processes in a variety of ways. Dialogue plays a large role in disarming participants. By allowing participants to share personal stories, and create safe-space through sharing and finding similarities, barriers of entry are removed in terms of being able to express creatively and emotionally without fear of judgment. Fostering a comfortable

environment is a priority in terms of engaging participants. I also understand the power of representation as it relates to engaging participants. As a young Black woman who works predominantly with young Black youth, I recognize how powerful having that component of someone that looks, dresses, and speaks, like you can be in terms of engaging participants – especially youth.