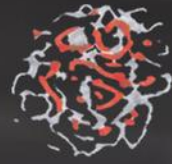


SYMPTOM  
SCORES



PRACTICE  
GUIDE



Symptom Scores: Sensing with the Trouble  
Exploring Symptoms Together through Creative Workshops  
~ Practice Guide

*I'm an artist, Processwork facilitator, and psychotherapist based in London. This guide accompanies my 2025 Processwork dissertation, 'Symptom Scores: Sensing with the Trouble, Exploring Symptoms Together through Creative Workshops ~ Contextual Essay.'*  
*It outlines the development of 'Symptom Scores' workshops I've been running since 2019, and provides an accessible overview for facilitators and researchers. It also offers practical tools for anyone curious about multisensory approaches across artistic, wellbeing, educational, and social contexts.*

*Savannah Theis, 2026*

#### Further information

If you'd like to learn more about the research inquiry and its outcomes, you can read the full dissertation here: [blog.savannahtheis.com/symptom-scores-documents](https://blog.savannahtheis.com/symptom-scores-documents)

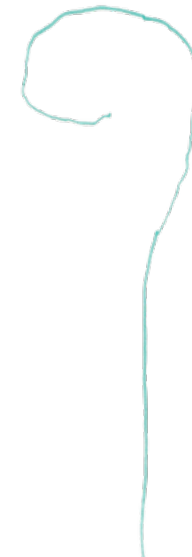
If you host your own workshops, I'd love to hear from you.

Please get in touch at [info@savannahtheis.com](mailto:info@savannahtheis.com) to share your insights and documentation.

[blog.savannahtheis.com](https://blog.savannahtheis.com)

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## Introduction

Symptom Scores, developed by Savannah Theis, is a creative workshop method that combines drawing, movement improvisation, and Processwork facilitation to explore the ‘dreaming information’ within body symptoms. Using multisensory tools, participants engage with symptoms as sources of insight, creativity, and meaning.

The process fosters collective, embodied sense-making, expanding how participants connect with their body experiences and social contexts. Rather than treating symptoms as individual problems, it opens imaginative and relational ways of engaging with challenges. Its varied applications contribute to interdisciplinary practices across the arts, wellbeing, and education.



Symptom Scores workshops have been offered across the UK, Europe, and online, in arts, wellbeing, education, and team settings. Participants engage in sensing, drawing, moving, and reflecting together, alternating between roles as performers and observers.

The workshop has three overlapping variations:

**Artistic Exploration:** Centres on movement research for choreography and performance. It invites creative experimentation, including group improvisation.

**Wellbeing Focus:** Explores embodied and communal effects of the practice, offering space to reflect on different ways we relate to our symptoms.

**Embodied Learning:** Engages body wisdom for intuitive guidance, learning, and problem solving. This informs new orientations and responses to personal and collective concerns.

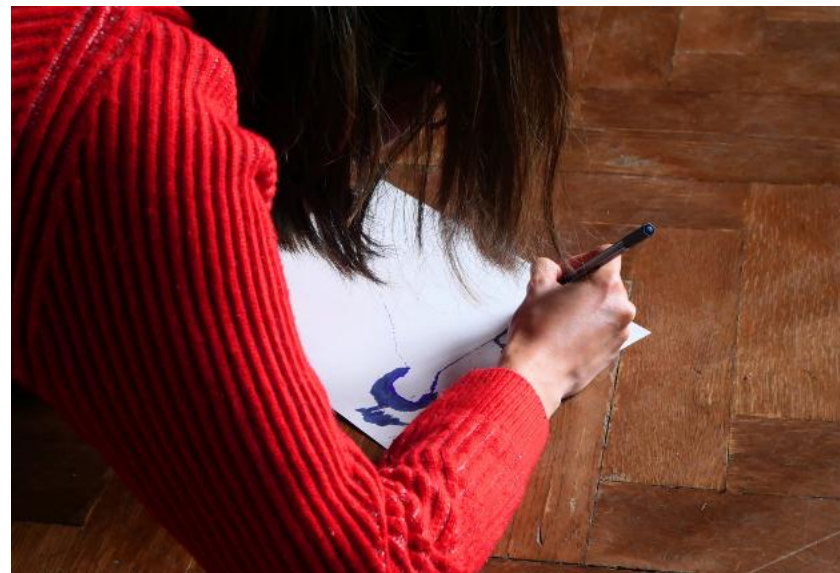


The core Symptom Scores process uses drawings of personal symptoms as visual cues to inspire improvised movement. Treating the symptom as ‘choreographer,’ participants take turns in moving in response to each other’s drawings and observing.

### Step-by-Step Process

The following steps for the **Embodied Learning** variation build on the basic Symptom Scores process, linking the exploration with personal and/or collective themes.

Inspired by dreamwork and divination practices, what emerges generates creative discovery and embodied insights.



3.



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## Workshop Overview

**Theme:** Choose a life, work, or world-related theme or question you'd like to gain a new perspective on - using gesture, drawing and writing.

**Warm-up:** Engage in a movement warm-up to prepare the body and mind.

**Symptom:** Tune into the sensory qualities of a noticeable physical symptom.

**Drawing:** Capture the symptom's qualities on paper as a visual 'score.'

**Movement:** Improvise solo movements responding to your own drawing's qualities.

**Pair work:** Alternate roles - one moves in response to their partner's drawing while the other observes. Then switch.

**Inhabit partner's movement:** Embody elements from your partner's movement that resonated. From this new orientation, relate back to your initial theme.

**Reflection:** Integrate insights via drawing, writing, gesture, and group discussion.

This sequence and its variations promote mutual support and creative sense-making, turning symptoms into shared, poetic explorations.



*The following facilitation tips draw on years of practice with participants, inviting curiosity and creativity when meeting the unknown. They're for facilitators and anyone curious about exploring Processwork and creative practice in new ways. My aim is to make Processwork tools more accessible and to foster experimentation. The project grew from combining methods across disciplines and seeing how they evolve in practice. By sharing what I've learned, I hope to contribute to a broader ecosystem of shared inquiry and creative learning.*



5.



**Ethics: Creating a container**

Because body-based exploration can be vulnerable and personal, it's important to create an inclusive, trauma-aware space. This involves being intentional about how each session begins and ends, and clearly outlining what participants can expect. If the context isn't therapeutic, naming this explicitly helps clarify purpose and manage expectations. Acknowledging participants' diverse histories and experiences helps build trust and awareness. Encouraging choice and following personal needs and boundaries supports safety and autonomy. When framing the process as open research, it's helpful to acknowledge there's risk involved and unexpected things may happen.

**Warm-up**

Offering a movement warm-up helps to connect with the body and prepare for exploration. This supports moving safely, builds familiarity with movement and one's surroundings, and eases the transition into embodied awareness.



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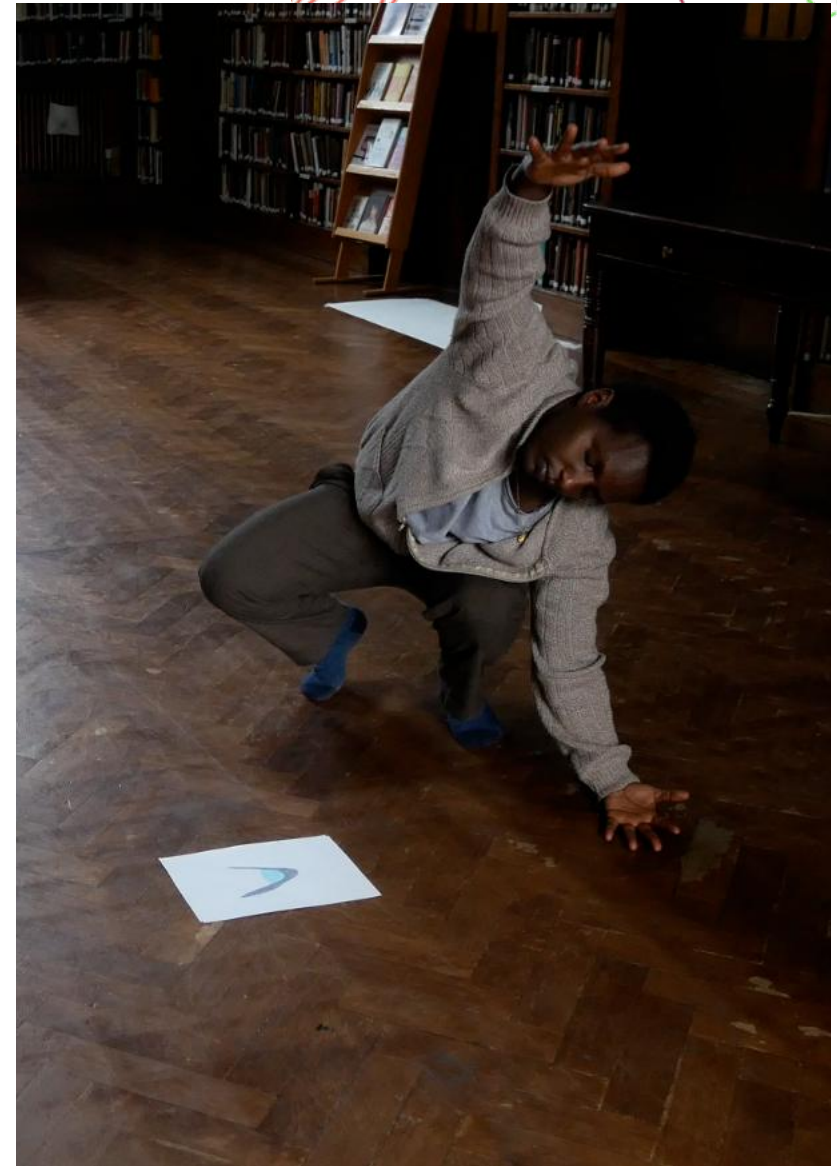
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### **Amplification**

Processwork tools help people engage with their unfolding 'dreaming process.' Amplification involves noticing sensations, movements, sounds, or images, following what feels most alive, and allowing this to expand naturally across sensory channels of awareness. Facilitation supports this by guiding attention to the body's feedback, encouraging trust in what emerges, and inviting participants to enter the dreaming experience more fully - embodying and shapeshifting with the imaginative process as it unfolds.

### **Feedback**

By tuning into what they sense in themselves and the group, the facilitator can track the unfolding process and be responsive. This might mean adjusting one's movements or tone of voice to support what is emerging or to invite new possibilities. Such responsiveness deepens exploration, supports participants when uncertainty arises, and encourages them to notice and trust their own embodied feedback. Noticing where a movement exploration feels like it's 'catching light' highlights positive feedback - signalling that the emerging dreaming process is gathering strength and deepening.



8.



## Edge work

In Processwork, ‘edges’ mark the boundary where our familiar selves - individual or collective - meet the unknown. While often uncomfortable, edges are generative and hold potential for new patterns to arise. Edge experiences might appear as uncertainty, resistance, abrupt shifts in a movement enquiry, or the impulse to adapt. Facilitating exploration at the edge involves inviting trust in the unexpected, returning to or staying with an experience longer, taking risks, and exploring resistance as potential sources of discovery.

## Group dynamics

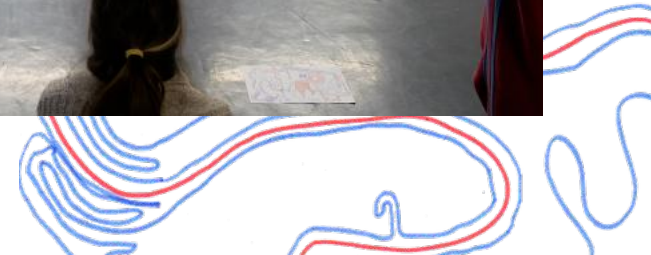
Naming potential group or relational dynamics arising in the process can help to affirm what is happening and keeps participants from feeling stuck in an experience. Inviting awareness of where they may be resisting or adapting, for example, can encourage curiosity and choice within the process. Reflecting on these experiences together afterwards can offer insights into both personal and collective patterns, fostering mutual learning.



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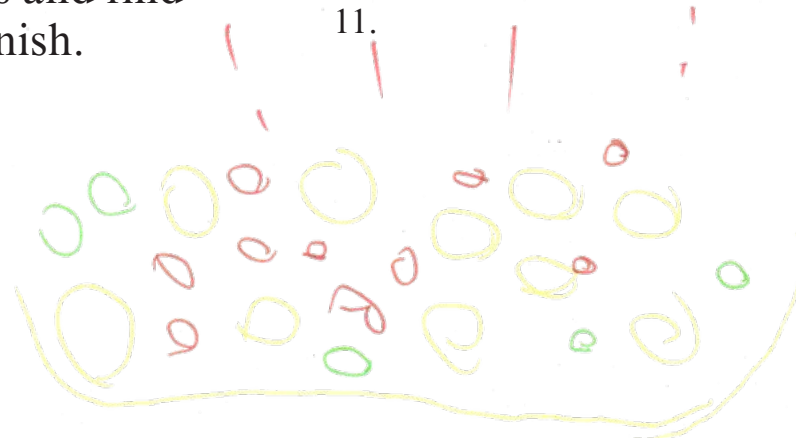


### Reflection and Closing

Reflection and closing practices help anchor participants' experiences and may include drawing, movement, writing, or group sharing. Engaging with creative mediums supports a gradual transition from nonverbal to verbal meaning-making. An intentional closing acknowledges the group's shared process and the varied ways participants relate to their symptoms. This also provides space for suggestions about what may be needed during or after the exploration, inviting participants to attend to their body's needs and find their own natural way to finish.



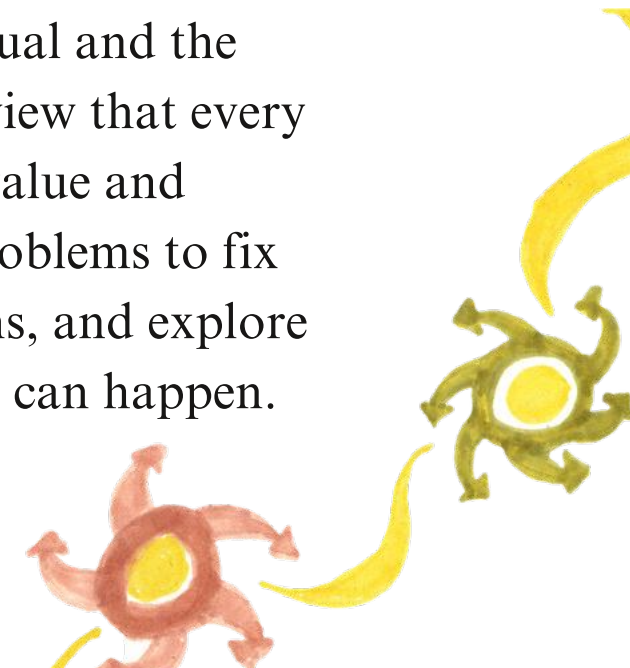
11.



## Processwork philosophy

Processwork views life as an unfolding ‘dreaming’ process, where even unexpected or painful experiences carry meaningful information about ourselves and our worlds. It grows from Jungian ideas about the conscious and unconscious, adding the insight that dreamlike patterns also show up in other ways, including body symptoms, relationships, and social tensions.

Informed by a systemic perspective, Processwork suggests that dreams, symptoms, and conflicts express deeper, often hidden aspects of both the individual and the collective field. It is guided by the principle of deep democracy - the view that every experience, voice, and feeling, including those we usually reject, has value and something to teach. From this perspective, symptoms are not only problems to fix but emerging messages inviting us to slow down, suspend assumptions, and explore edges of identity, where personal and collective discovery and change can happen.



## Scores and participatory practice

In the arts, scores are open-ended creative prompts that guide improvisation. Rather than prescribing exact movements or actions, they invite interpretation and experimentation. This practice draws on participatory art traditions grounded in a democratic ethos - valuing collaboration, shared creativity, and embodied knowledge.

When artists or dancers work with scores, they become both creators and interpreters. By exploring new ways of responding to prompts, they deepen their sensitivity, skill, and awareness, moving beyond usual habits and transforming performance into a dynamic, emergent process. This becomes not only a way of making art but also a practice of learning, connecting, and understanding through embodied experience.

In this spirit, the Symptom Scores workshops foster creative, collaborative exploration that invites reflection. Participants are encouraged to notice their embodied responses and consider how they create meaning and connect with others. Cultivating awareness - a sensitisation to inner and collective processes - the activity becomes a practice of attunement, responsiveness, and shared learning.

**Poetic inquiry**

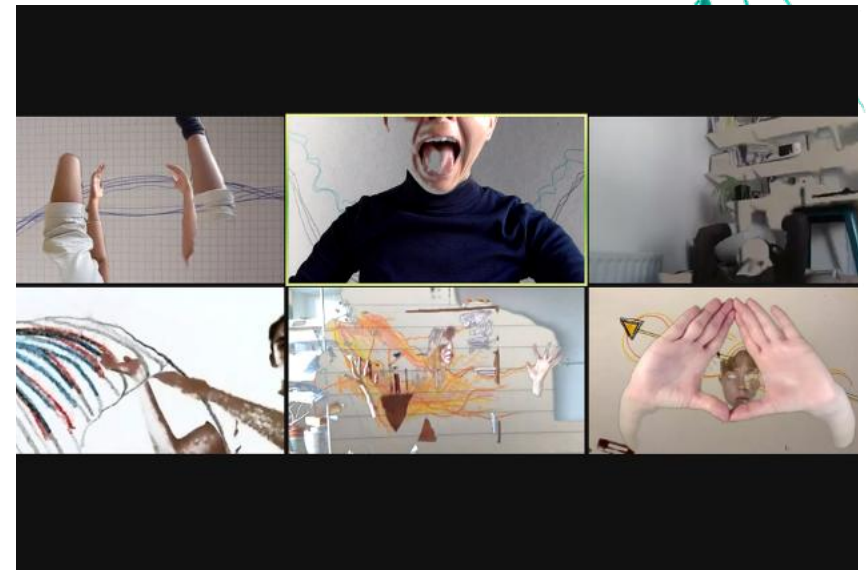
Symptom Scores workshops offer poetic ways to navigate troubling or unfamiliar experiences. Having others move in response to one's score helps create distance from personal preconceptions, allowing the experience to be seen and felt anew. This encourages curiosity and new ways of relating to the experience, often bringing relief and a renewed sense of meaning. While not aimed at cure, these shifts in understanding can sometimes change how symptoms are physically experienced.

**Multisensory exploration**

The process encourages curiosity and nonverbal communication to expand understanding, beyond the limitations of words. Its emphasis on emergent, multisensory experience keeps it open and accessible to diverse ways of knowing. In creative practice, responding to symptom drawings stimulates unexpected movement inquiries. When exploring a question or theme, the process engages the senses to reveal new perspectives and insights.



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## **Intuition and empathy**

Participants often embody hidden dimensions of the scores they interpret, drawing on their intuitive capacities. Both performing and observing can stir a deep sense of being witnessed and understood beyond words. The shared attention, commitment and care within this process nurture emotional release, empathy, and mutual discovery.

## **Reciprocity and shared practice**

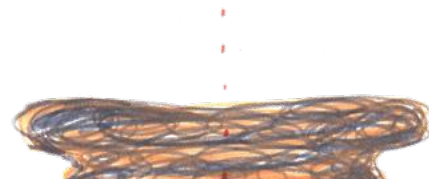
Symptom Scores is a collaborative, peer-supported practice that contrasts with conventional therapeutic or medical approaches to symptoms. Emphasising reciprocity and shared responsibility, it invites mutual curiosity and support. Participants are encouraged to trust their own perceptions, even without formal expertise. When the facilitator shares their vulnerability and openness to learning, the process deepens.



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## Collective learning

Group reflection on what emerges can reveal shared edges around powerful emotions or social taboos - such as anger - highlighting how cultural and collective norms shape what can be expressed, by whom, and how this manifests in the body. By connecting the energy of a symptom to broader social contexts, participants can identify systemic patterns and learn together. As a consciousness-raising process, this expands capacity for understanding, response, and choice.



16.



17.



**Dreaming process**

Processwork views unintended experiences as forms of ‘dreaming’ that carry valuable information. Disruptions to our intentions or sense of self are seen as signals from an underlying dreaming process seeking expression - emerging to expand and develop our narrow identities. This perspective does not excuse harm or place blame on individuals for their suffering. Rather, it invites a broader, more compassionate way of relating to ourselves and our troubles. When approached with curiosity, this exploration can open doors to creativity, deeper relationships, and new directions.

**Processwork**

Processwork, or Process-Oriented Psychology, was developed in the 1970s by Arnold Mindell and colleagues, drawing on Jungian psychology, systems theory, Taoism, physics, and earth-based spiritual traditions. As an evolving model, it emphasises facilitating awareness at individual, relational, and collective levels, with applications ranging from therapy and generative conflict work to organisational development and creative expression.

**Symptom**

A symptom is something felt or experienced indicating the existence of something, particularly something undesirable or at the edges of our awareness. Processwork views symptoms as meaningful messengers of dreaming information for personal and collective change. It deepens engagement with experiences as a complement to conventional healing methods.

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Folkerts, H. (2016) *Keeping Score: Notation, Embodiment, and Liveness, South as a State of Mind #7*, Spring-Summer, documenta and Museum Fridericianum. Available online: [https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/464\\_keeping\\_score\\_notation\\_embodiment\\_and\\_liveness](https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/464_keeping_score_notation_embodiment_and_liveness)

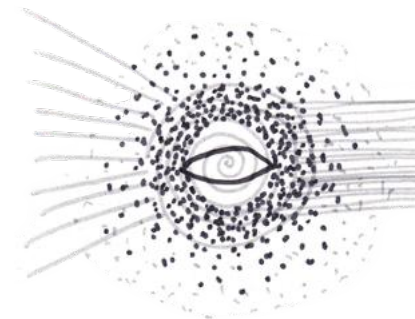
Mindell, A. [Amy]. (1995) “Moving the Dreaming Body: Movement in Process Oriented Psychology,” *Contact Quarterly*, 20(1), 56–62. Available online: <https://www.aamindell.net/articles>

Mindell, A. [Arnold]. (1985) *Working with the dreaming body*, Boston, Mass: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Theis, S. (2025) *Symptom Scores: Sensing with the Trouble, Exploring Symptoms Together through Creative Workshops ~ Contextual Essay*. Available online: <https://blog.savannahtheis.com/symptom-scores-documents>

1. Symptom Scores R&D Lab, London Performance Studios, London, 2022. Image credit: Maja Renn
2. Symptom Scores: movement research workshop, Rote Fabrik, Zürich, 2024. Image credit: Maja Renn
3. Symptom Scores: sensing with the trouble, Antiuniversity Now Festival, London, 2023. Image credit: Savannah Theis
4. Symptom Scores with team exploring a shared question, House of Annetta, London, 2023. Image credit: Savannah Theis
5. Symptom Scores: movement research workshop, Chisenhale Dance Space, London, 2024. Image credit: Cheniece Warner
6. Symptom Scores: movement research workshop, Rote Fabrik, Zürich, 2024. Image credit: Maja Renn
7. Symptom Scores: movement research workshop, Chisenhale Dance Space, London, 2024. Image credit: Cheniece Warner
8. Symptom Scores: sensing with the trouble, Antiuniversity Now Festival, London, 2023. Image credit: Savannah Theis
9. Moving Conditions workshop series, The Room, London, 2024. Image credit: Savannah Theis
10. Symptom Scores performance research, Early Career residency, Ugly Duck, London, 2023. Image credit: Savannah Theis
11. Symptom Scores workshop, Delfina Foundation, London, 2024. Image credit: Savannah Theis
12. Symptom Scores workshop, Derbyshire Artist Resident Programme, Derbyshire, 2022. Image credit: Savannah Theis
13. Symptom Scores on Zoom, online workshop series, 2021. Image credit: Savannah Theis
14. Symptom Scores workshop, Atelier Gouwstraat, Rotterdam, 2023. Image credit: Savannah Theis
15. Symptom Scores workshop series, London Performance Studios, London, 2022. Image credit: Savannah Theis
16. Symptom Scores R&D Lab, London Performance Studios, London, 2022. Image credit: Maja Renn
17. Symptom Scores workshop, Delfina Foundation, London, 2024. Image credit: Savannah Theis

The drawings in this guide are Symptom Scores created by workshop participants (2022–2025).



## Acknowledgements

*This project emerged from many community efforts, shared practices, and generous exchanges. I'm grateful to everyone who supported the work - especially my Processwork teachers, colleagues, and dissertation supervisor, Kate Jobe; the artists, friends, and family whose encouragement and invitations to collaborate strengthened my practice; and all the participants, whose experiences and insights profoundly shaped the process.*

