

CLAY CYCLE

a Material Methodology:
A Visual Presentation Exploring the
Material-rooted Pedagogical Curation
Methodology, and its Impact on an
Addiction Recovery

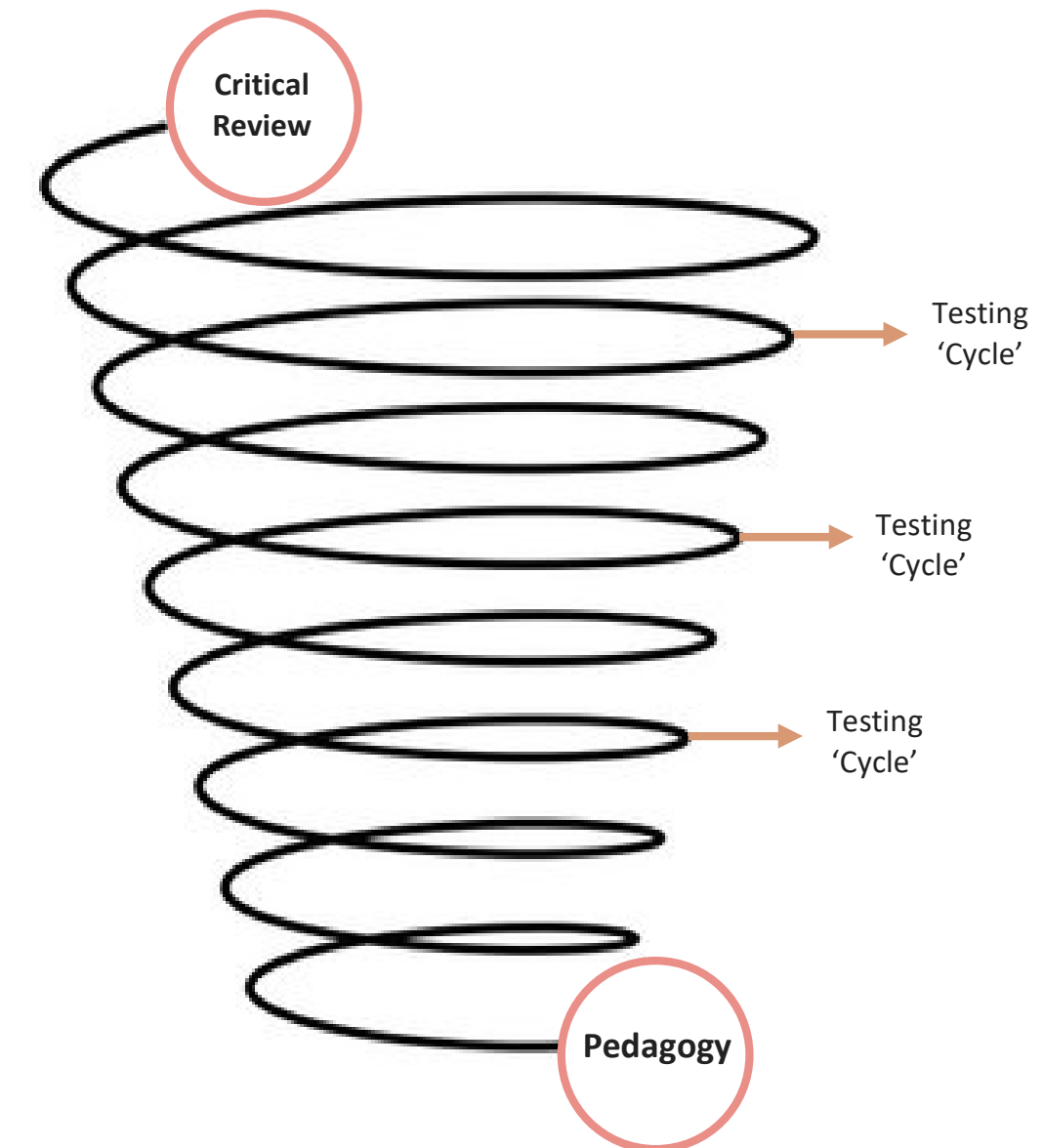
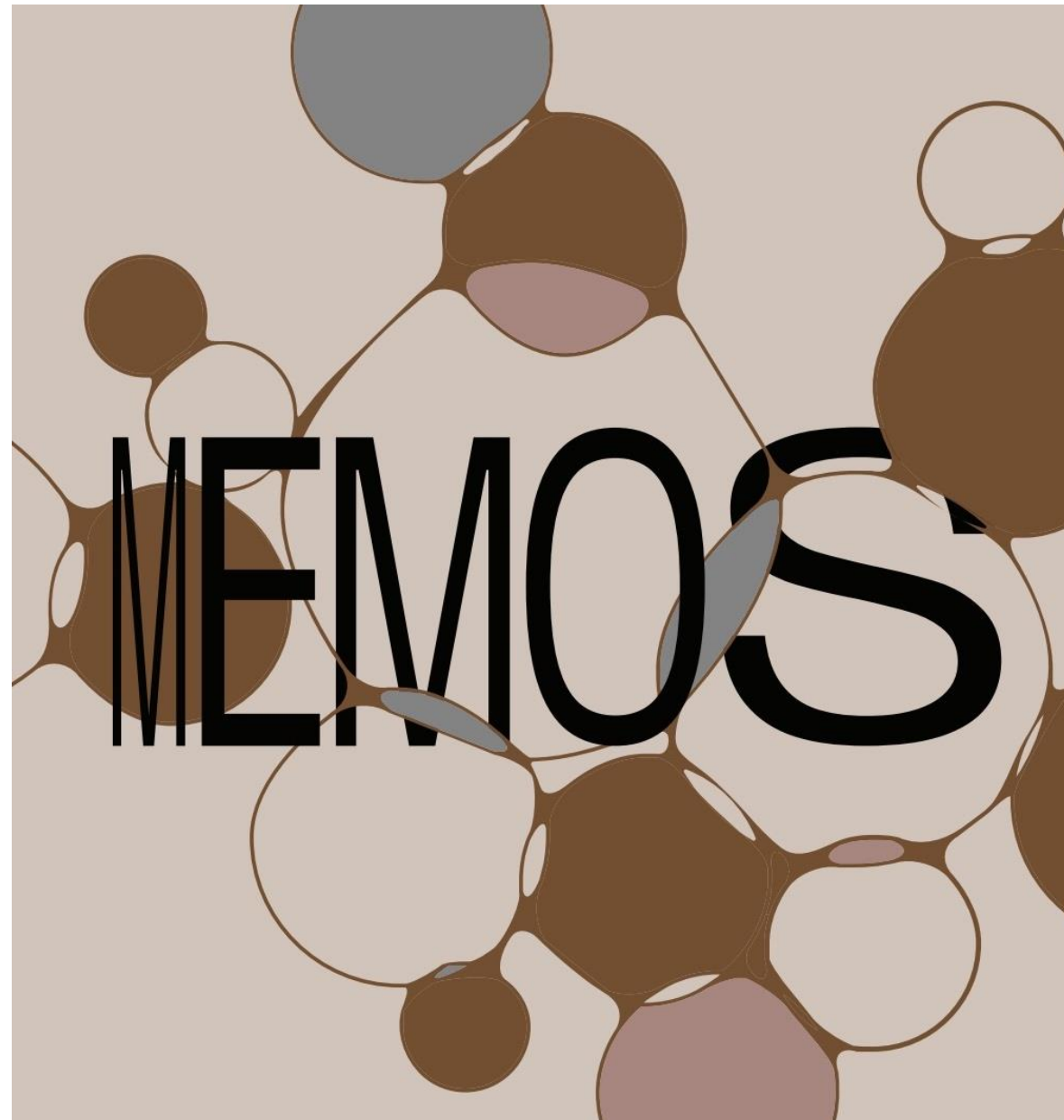


Dr. Dena Bagi

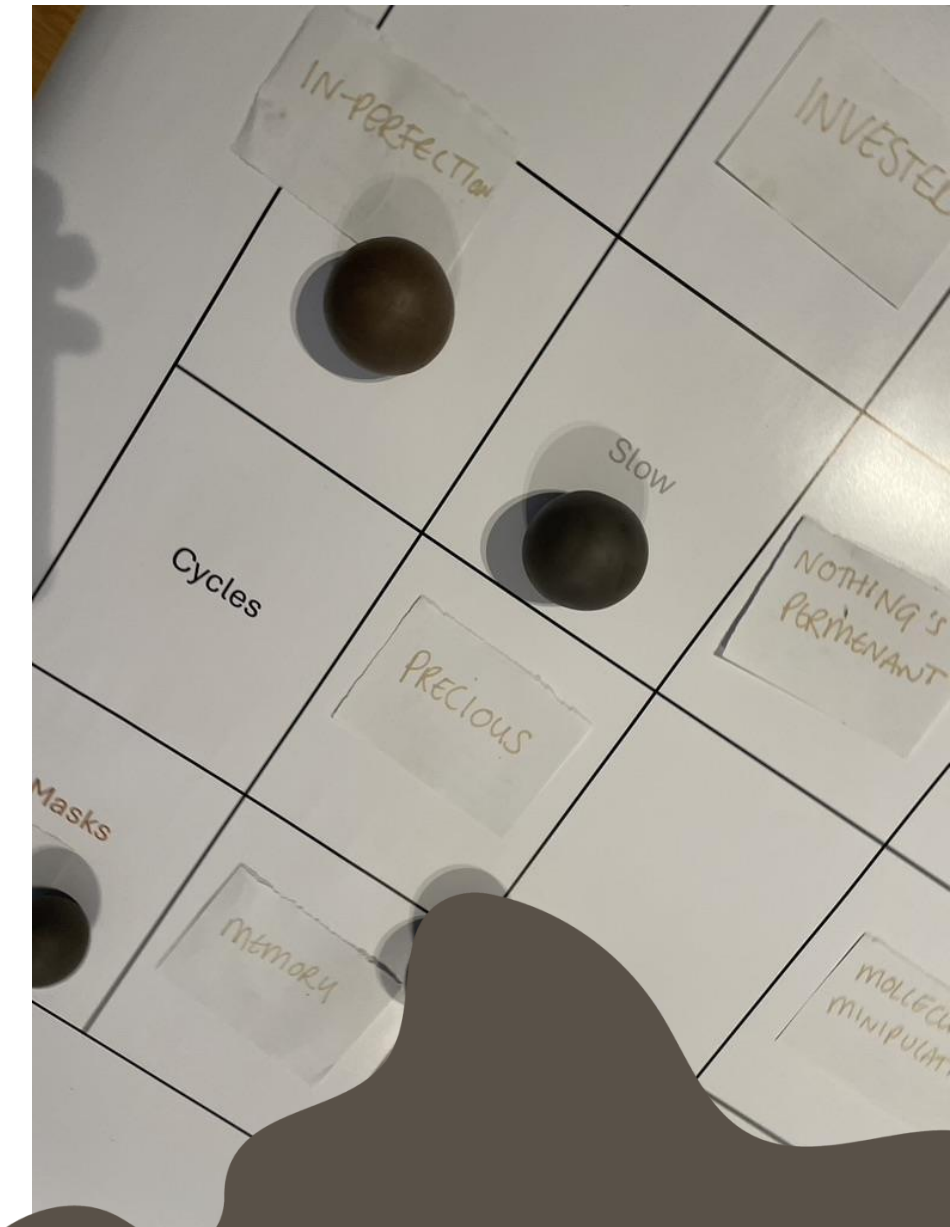


***Why Clay?
Why Pedagogy?
Why Recovery?***

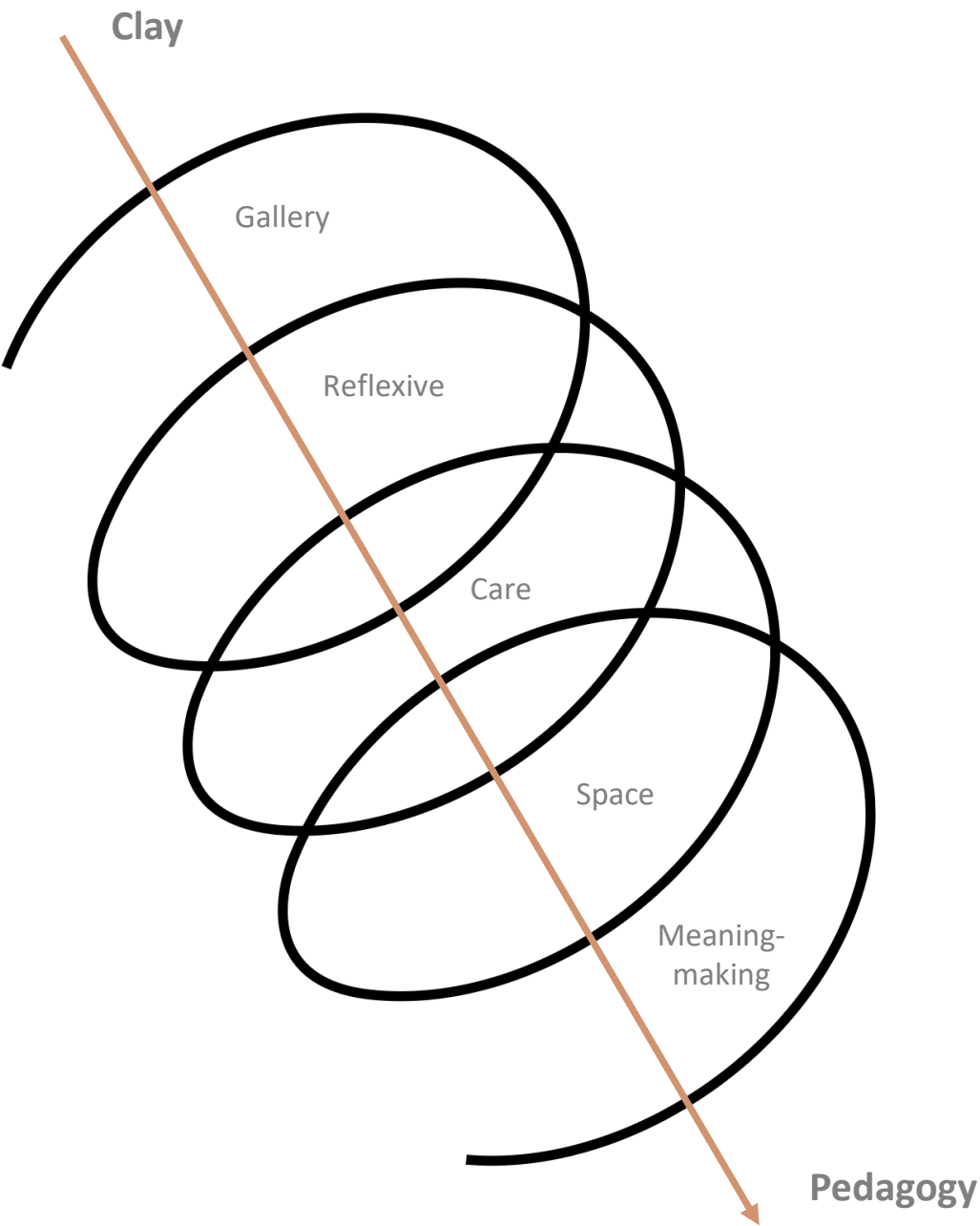
What is Clay Cycle?



Clay Cycle as a Tool for Democratic Learning

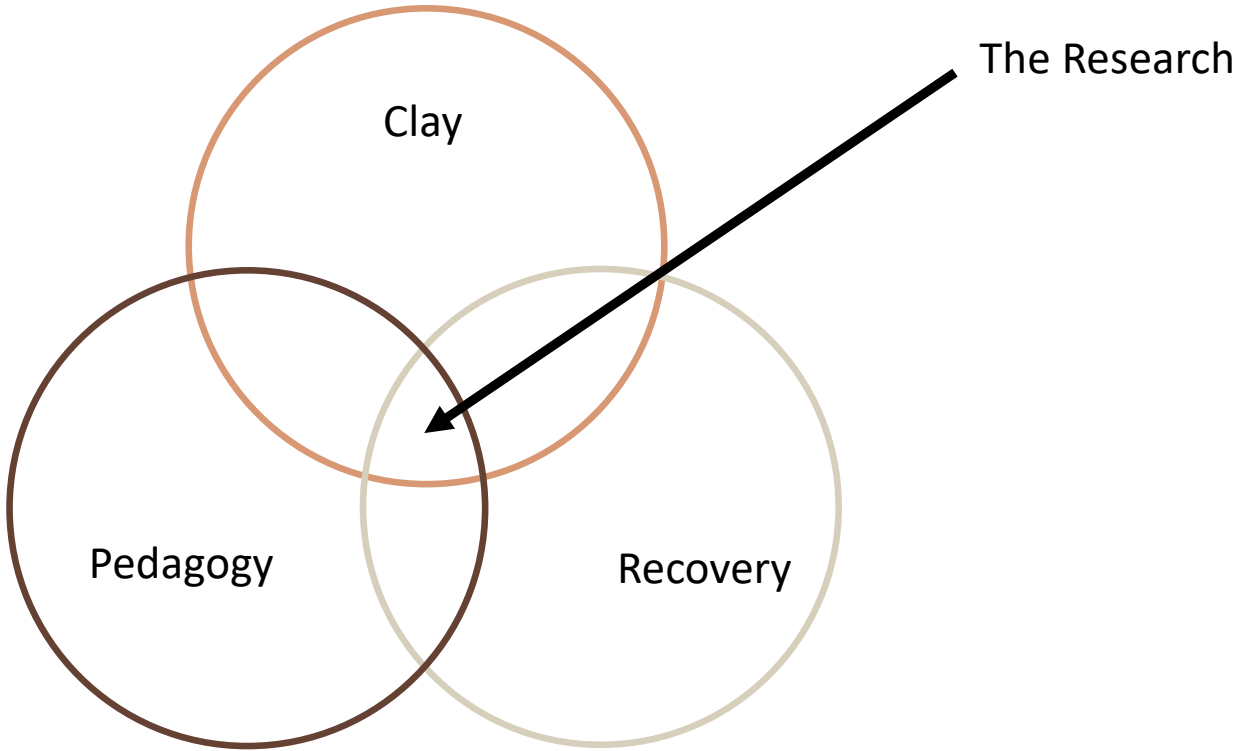


Clay Cycle: Material-Rooted Methodology in Gallery-Based Pedagogy



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Clay & Recovery: A Shared Journey

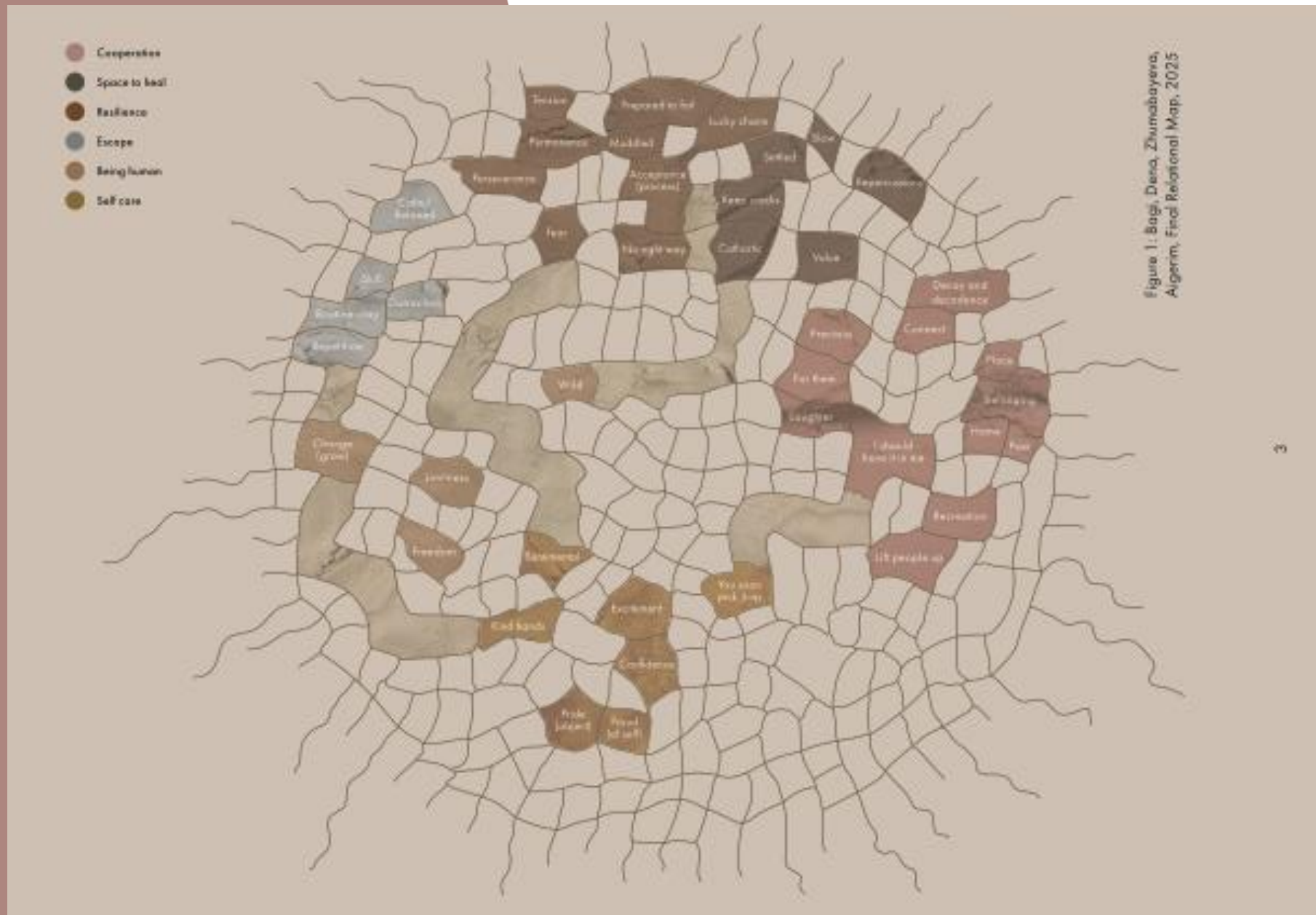


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Case Study – British Ceramics Biennial



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Being human

The **wildness** of clay was compared to the messiness of human nature (or the 'primal self'). Clay's wild nature, the difficulty in 'taming' it, and challenges of realising creative goals with it, were compared to the shared sense that the workshop's participants were '**wild**' and hard to control.

The **limitless** possibilities of clay were shared in the group, specifically in relation to its cyclical transformative form (liquid, plastic, dry). Clay's limitless ability to be re-born, or reworked, reflected the participants' non-linear strategies to **grow or change** in recovery (due to their 'wildness').

Participants felt freedom when being creative with clay. The material's limitless creative potential was communicated as an asset in it being able to speak to a participant's own growth in recovery.

Impact & Outcomes

Resilience

Manipulating 'volatile' clay encouraged participants to develop and practise their skills in **resilience**. The volatility of the material was exposed at multiple points during the Recast project when participants were forming and creating objects. The participants were asked to manipulate clay in each of its transformation states (liquid, plastic, dry) throughout the project. Each stage carries **risks** and challenges, linked to the volatility of keeping the material 'safe' or 'successful'.

Participants repeatedly communicated a sense of **acceptance** whilst attempting to 'tame' the volatile material. Their **readiness** for their creative intentions to **fail** whilst using clay was apparent, as they discussed feeling at ease with its unpredictability. Direct comparisons were made to the inevitability and unpredictability of certain aspects of their recovery journey and the importance of **letting go** and sitting with the uncertainties of clay.

Participants reflected on how the determination to 'just carry on' is needed when making with the material. They connected this observation to their recovery journeys at multiple points throughout the project.

The volatility of the material caused participants to feel confusion, disorientation, and fear. These feelings were linked to a questioning of their own ability to creatively manipulate clay in a manner deemed successful or not.

Firing clay leads to a state of **permanence**. They connected this to an individual's unbreakable and ever-lasting resilience. Through focusing on the 'foreverness' of clay as an object, participants discussed how the material could be used to make lucky charms as tokens of participants' strengths and resilient nature. This was discussed whilst participants created small, carryable objects during a workshop.

Imperfections within their creative outcomes were met with indifference and **acceptance** by the participants, reflecting that clay had '**no right way**' of being manipulated.

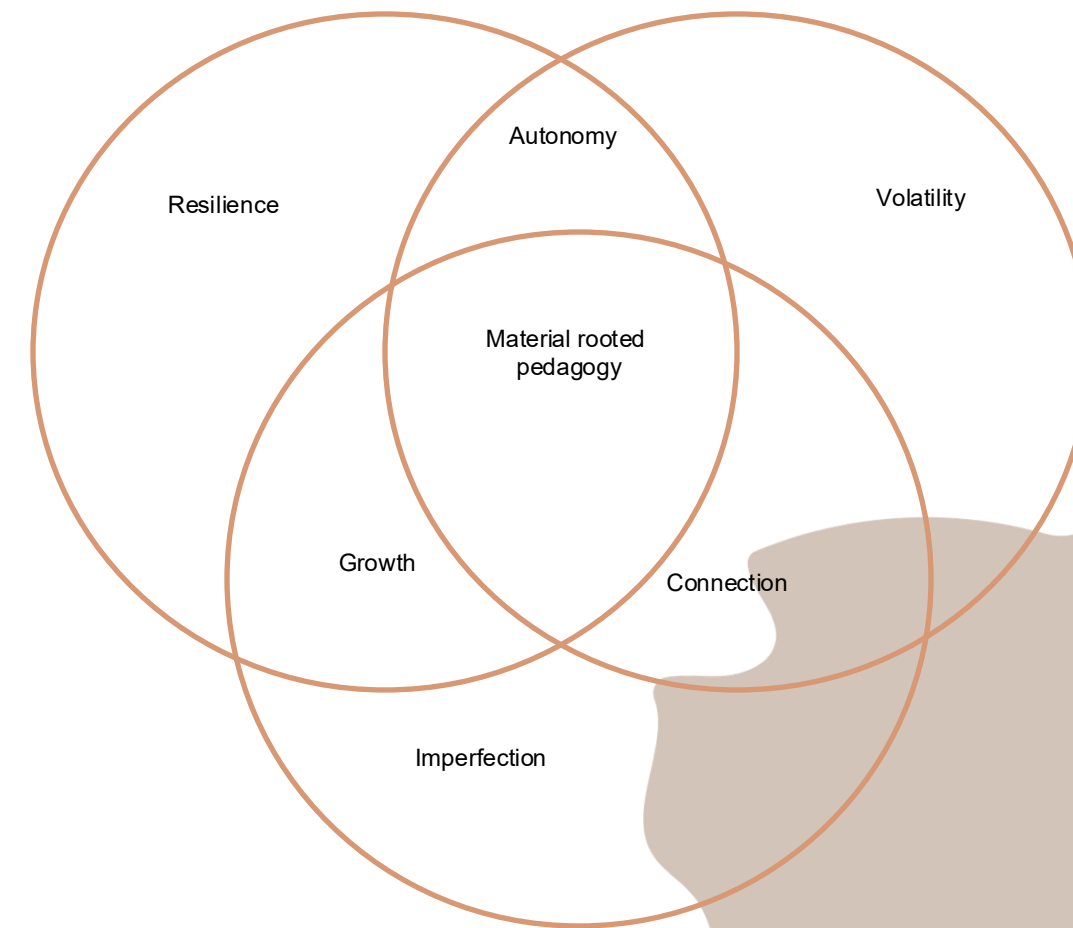
Co-operation

Co-operative making and camaraderie between participants was observed whilst everyone was working with the clay. This predominantly occurred when participants were discussing their sense of place (the emotional connections people develop with location, encompassing the meaning and value they attribute to it). At multiple points, references were made to Stoke-on-Trent being the home of the pottery industry. The city's history connected the group, suggesting a shared sense of **place**.

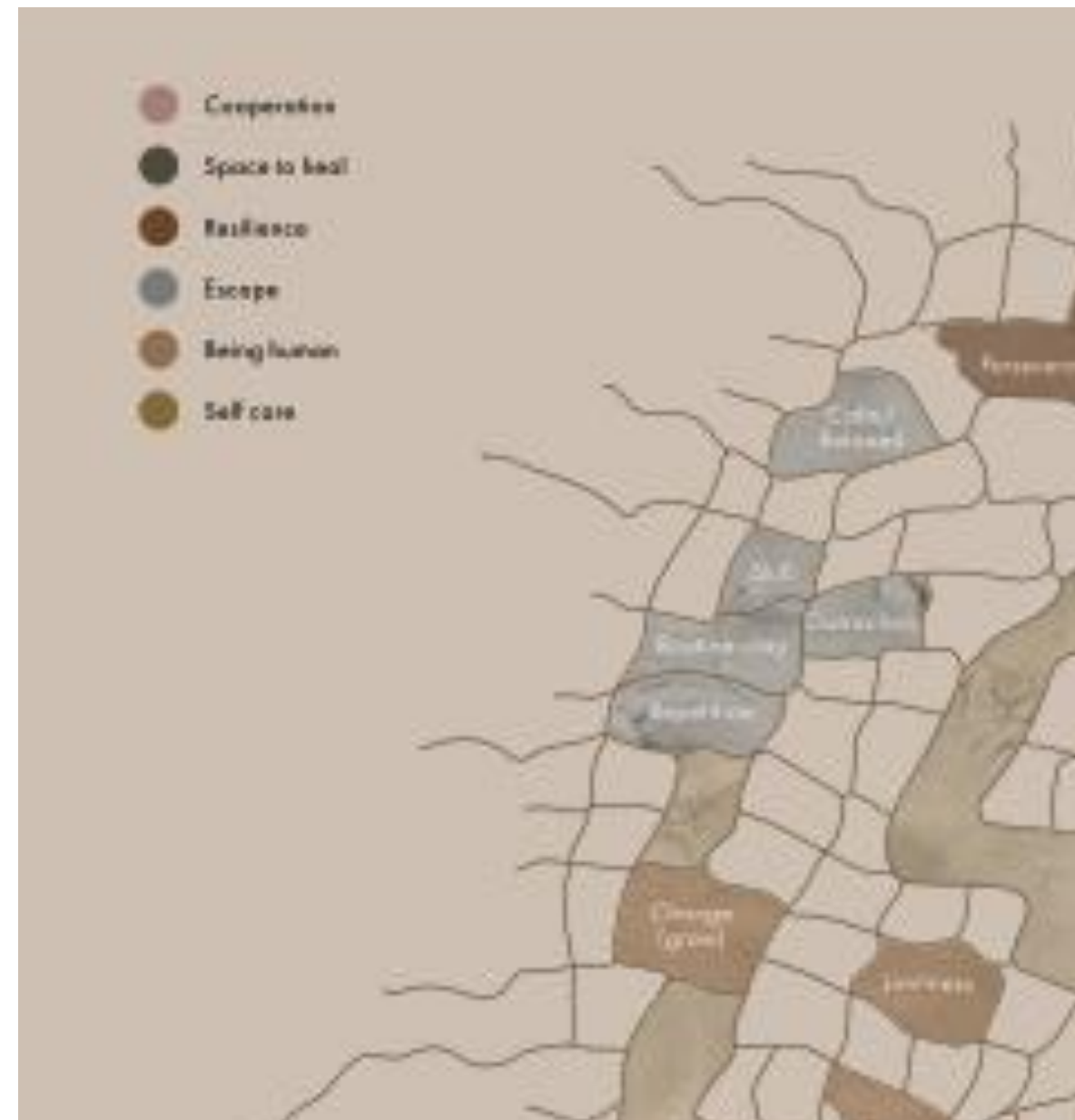
Participants discussed the dual identity of Stoke-on-Trent as one that merged its heritage as a 'tired' industrial city and its communities that made it a warm and welcoming place to live. During the workshops, participants spent extended periods reminiscing and sharing stories of the city, including of its ceramics-based industrial past. For example, childhood **memories** in and around the industry were often shared in the group. These conversations were light and full of **laughter**. They showed how participants were developing connections linked to their shared sense of **belonging**.

Clay offers both 'decay and decadence'. Participants contrasted the material's muddy raw state against its ability to create polished or high-end objects for our homes. They used these contrasting states as a metaphor to communicate the duality of their relationship with a post-industrial city that holds both traumatic memories yet hope for the future.

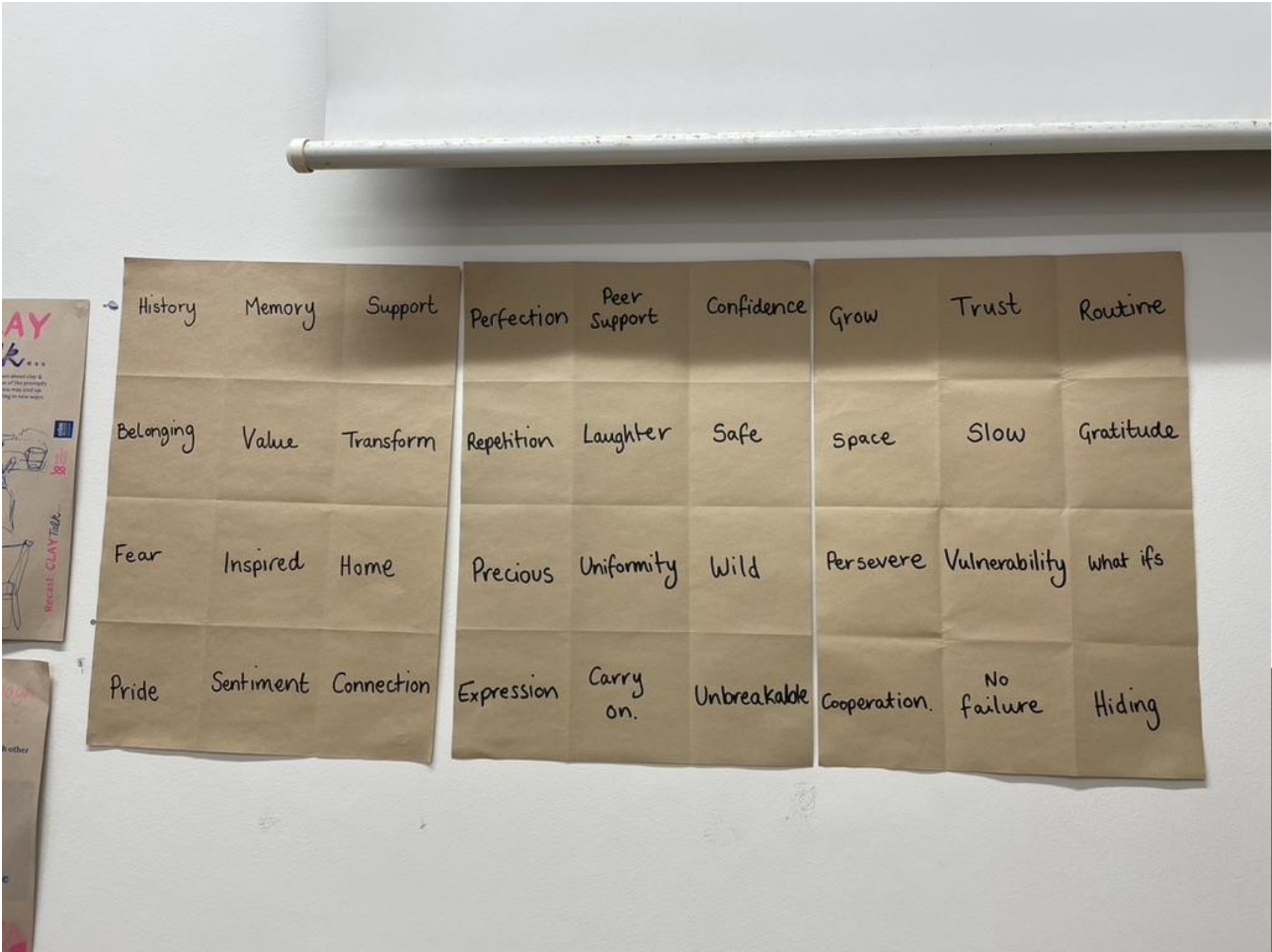
Belief that Stoke-on-Trent's residents should have an innate connection to the material was shared among the group's participants. Many participants believed they '**should have it in them**' to work clay successfully. They also reflected on clay's unique creative properties. Many participants felt their outcomes were successful or **precious**.



Impact & Outcomes



Reflexivity & Metacognition



Conclusion & Future Directions

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