



**WE ARE A WORK OF ART**

# **HEALTH + WELLBEING INITIATIVE**

**WELCOME TOOLKIT**



**WE ARE A WORK OF ART**



# WELCOME

Cool Culture is a BIPOC-led social justice organization that uses arts and culture to strengthen family and community wellbeing. Each year we have historically partnered with over 50,000 families from across the five boroughs who reflect the diversity of our city and thousands of educators from 450+ schools and early education programs. We collaborate with hundreds of cultural workers from 90 museums, historical societies, botanical gardens and science centers. The Cool Culture team brings together people from all walks of life — families and children, educators and artists, museum staff and government officials — to build cross-cultural understanding and advocate for positive social change. Whether you are new to Cool Culture or a longtime member, we are honored to welcome you into a community of New Yorkers committed to creating a more just and equitable city through the arts.

We face today's evolving challenges and losses knowing that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately harms BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) families who frequently have inadequate access to quality schooling and healthcare, not to mention to the arts. Yet our communities also have a long and rich history of cultural traditions designed to support one another during times of hardship. We bring the joy!

This is the first in a series of five Wellbeing Toolkits that will be designed to support discussions about individual, family and community health and wellness, whether at home or while in schools, museums or other community spaces. Each Toolkit will be informed by conversations with the Cool Culture network of families, educators and our partners across New York City.

**LET'S GET STARTED!**

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## WHY ART?

Art is a human right. It is a means of self-expression evoking joy, pain, empathy, hope, and freedom. Through art we pass on knowledge about our lives, values, and traditions; transcend boundaries between and across our cultures; and increase our capacity for dialogue and understanding. Art is practiced by everyone. It is everywhere: in our homes and cultural institutions, on gallery walls and on the sides of buildings, in theaters and at block parties. Art is healing. It amplifies our individual and collective power, helping us to make meaning in our present and create our futures.

## WHY CULTURE?

Culture is fundamentally shared and continually changing. It comprises the arts, institutions, practices, languages, and ways of knowing that individuals, families, communities and societies value and choose to preserve for the future. Like the air we breathe it is often invisible, but guides our interactions, values and deepest held beliefs. It is strengthened when people from all backgrounds intentionally come together to define and act upon their collective ideals.

## WHY FAMILIES?

Families embody culture, imparting language, enacting daily practices and following traditions their children receive in both formal and informal ways. They are their children's teachers and advocates having goals that straddle the past, present and future. Families draw on their wealth of knowledge, insights, skills, and experiences to build a foundation for their children and future generations.



# PANDEMIC AS PORTAL



**THE TIME IS NOW**  
**IMAGINE ANOTHER WORLD**  
**AND FIGHT FOR IT**

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us.

Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.

And ready to fight for it.

**“Pandemic As Portal” by artist Kill Joy**

**The Pandemic is a Portal, Arundhati Roy**



# MEET THE TEAM

The pandemic is teaching us many things about what is needed to thrive in our homes, community, city — indeed the world. Some of the lessons have been deeply personal, others are reminders that our wellbeing is interconnected. A question our team has been thinking about, and one we want to pose to the Cool Culture community of families, educators, museum partners, artists, and others is: *What has the pandemic awakened in us?*



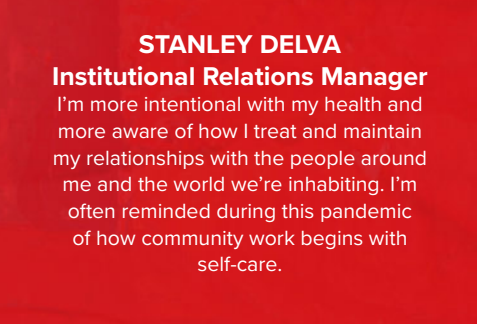
**I. MIKAEL AKATL**  
Events Producer

The pandemic has inspired me to learn to be comfortable with unpredictability. To stay grounded I try to connect to nature in simple ways, like playing sounds of ocean waves on my computer or walking through Prospect Park.



**CANDICE ANDERSON**  
Executive Director

Deep appreciation and gratitude for small moments: a favorite meal with family, a good read on the couch, a good laugh with neighbors, walks in the frigid New York City air while looking forward to spring.



**STANLEY DELVA**  
Institutional Relations Manager

I'm more intentional with my health and more aware of how I treat and maintain my relationships with the people around me and the world we're inhabiting. I'm often reminded during this pandemic of how community work begins with self-care.



**JON DIEP**  
Development Manager

The pandemic has reaffirmed to me that we are all connected. Our actions not only affect us, but the ones around us. Our health and wellbeing are directly linked to that of our community.



**ANNIE LEE**  
Director of Communications

I'm learning to give myself space to process grief. I've become more intentional about making time for joyful things like cooking with loved ones and writing snail mail.



**TRACEY GREENIDGE**  
Director of Development

As a wife and mom of two little ones, this pandemic has ignited a fighting spirit from deep within. I still find joy during life's most challenging moments, in dance-offs with my family, game nights, and stop motion movies produced by tiny fingers on my phone.



**KANIKA SRINIVASAN**  
Senior Director of  
Operations & Strategy

The importance of connection to loved ones, the meaningfulness of nurturing these relationships, and appreciation of the time we can spend together.



**SAM WENC**  
Program Manager

I [know I need to] stay grounded by listening to and playing music on my guitar.



**SUSAN WILCOX**  
Director of Programs

The pandemic has awakened in me the reminder that, for better or worse, we are one organism susceptible to the ways we abuse or nourish the earth - our sole home. The impact may be unequal, but not one of us is untouchable.







## HEALTH + WELLBEING INITIATIVE

**“In this exquisitely connected world, it’s never a question of ‘critical mass.’ It’s always about critical connections.”**

**— Grace Lee Boggs**

Many of us started 2022 with hopes for stronger communities, stable routines in our schools and homes, and face-to-face gatherings with our loved ones. But the pandemic has created disruptions that affect BIPOC communities and folks with limited incomes disproportionately, and for many reasons. Our communities, as a result of historical and ongoing racial inequity, have unequal access to education, health care, jobs, and general safety. We remain ever hopeful at Cool Culture because we believe in our collective power.

Cool Culture has launched **We Are A Work of Art Health + Wellbeing Initiative**, a series of family and community events and programs (virtual and in-person) that provide spaces of pause, reflection, creativity, learning, and action. Our vision is of brave conversations and spaces where we can name our concerns, but also share family traditions that sustain us during times of hardship and prosperity. We seek real talk about the social dynamics that harm our communities, and about the solutions we envision together. As a community, we’ll discuss what’s happening in our schools and neighborhoods to process how Covid-19 is affecting our lives. We also plan to offer calming and restorative routines for mind, body, and spirit and activate art-making that offer moments of healing and joy.

Join us as we use art to exchange stories with one another to uncover new, shared ways of healing and creating change that has roots in the wisdom of family traditions and ancestral knowledge. Together, let’s hold our collective wellbeing, our little ones, and our future generations in mind.



**The Health + Wellbeing Initiative** will bring us together to connect, create, imagine and act to invest in our individual and collective wellbeing, so that our community members come away with:

- **Deeper awareness of the current state of our wellbeing:** mind, body, spirit + civic engagement (and that of our family and communities).
- **Knowledge of the ancestral and indigenous wellness practices in our communities,** and our family traditions and practices as well as Western medical practices.
- **Awareness of the social dimensions of health** and the interdependent nature of our health + wellbeing.
- **Knowledge that health is a social justice issue** and how to access both indigenous and western health + wellbeing and civic engagement resources.
- **A vision of wellbeing for ourselves** (our family, our communities and our city) + an actionable first step to move towards this vision of the future.

## WE ARE A WORK OF ART INCLUDES...

### FAMILY & COMMUNITY WELLBEING EVENTS

(virtual and in-person) will connect families and offer restorative healing practices while viewing and making art together. BIPOC artists and health practitioners from our communities will lead family activities and be on hand to answer questions. Collaborating with our museum, garden and zoo partners, we'll have fun, family-friendly experiences that, in the tradition of Cool Culture, bring the cool!

### A CALL FOR POSTERS

invites you and your family to create art that expresses what wellbeing means to you and the social changes you wish to see. We'll curate these visual artifacts online and on social media channels. We will also select some to be printed for display at Family & Community Wellbeing Events, schools, early education centers and other community settings across the city. Each artist will have a wonderful keepsake!

### COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

offer an opportunity to be in conversation with a range of panelists: parents and other caregivers, educators, museum staff, artists, health professionals. Together, we will consider what this moment is teaching us about our wellbeing, about the role art and culture can play in our holistic healing, and about the social change needed in the aftermath of the pandemic. Breakout groups will provide intimate spaces to process ideas, identify strategies, and set goals related to wellbeing and social change.

### WELLBEING TOOLKITS

offer information, activities and resources to support you and your loved ones in centering Mind, Body, Spirit and Civic Wellbeing through arts and culture.

# HOW WE ARE DEFINING WELLBEING

**Holistic wellbeing is when our minds, bodies and spirits are strong and in balance. The concept of mind, body and spirit can be found in many cultures, three of which are featured here.**

Some Native American communities, such as the Lakota Plains people, have a **sacred hoop** (or medicine wheel) that is a symbol for health and healing. It is divided into four parts. Each part represents a cardinal direction (north, south, east, west) along with these other metaphorical meanings:

- **Stages of life:** birth (yellow), youth (red), adult or elder (black), death (white)
- **Seasons of the year:** spring (yellow), summer (red), fall (black), winter (white)
- **Aspects of life:** spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical
- **Elements of nature:** fire/sun, air, water, earth
- **Animals:** bear, wolf, buffalo and others
- **Ceremonial plants:** tobacco, sweet grass, sage, cedar



The Akan who come from Ghana, West Africa have a symbolic language called Adinkra. One of its symbols, **Dweninmmen**, an abstracted image of ram horns, represent strength (in mind, body, and soul), humility, wisdom, and learning.



**Yin yang** is the ancient Chinese concept of dualism or the idea that seemingly opposite or opposing forces may actually complement each other - that they are interconnected and interdependent. Yin and yang bring things into harmony to ensure a constant, dynamic balance of all things: two halves together make for wholeness. Yin is associated with cold, night and female, among other things, and Yang with hot, day and male.



## LEARN MORE:

*The Adinkra dictionary: A visual primer on the language of Adinkra by W. Bruce Willis*  
*Medicine Ways: Traditional Healers and Healing - National Library of Medicine*  
*What Is the Medicine Wheel – History and Meaning - Symbolsage.com*  
*ChineseAmericanMuseum.com*



## ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE & INSPIRE WELLNESS

**Throughout our We Are a Work of Art campaign, Cool Culture will provide family-friendly strategies for self- and family care, such as this Wellbeing Self-Check.**

## NOTES

[illegible]

## WELLBEING SELF CHECK

**Take 10 minutes to center your mind, body and spirit. As you and your family assess how you're each feeling at this moment, try going through this checklist.**

**The MIND relates to our thoughts, ideas and beliefs.**  
**Questions we might ask ourselves are:**

- ☐ Am I breathing deeply through and out of my nose?
- ☐ Is my family taking time to be still and take in their surroundings?
- ☐ How is my community engaging my attention?

The **BODY** relates to the physical. Some questions we might ask ourselves are:

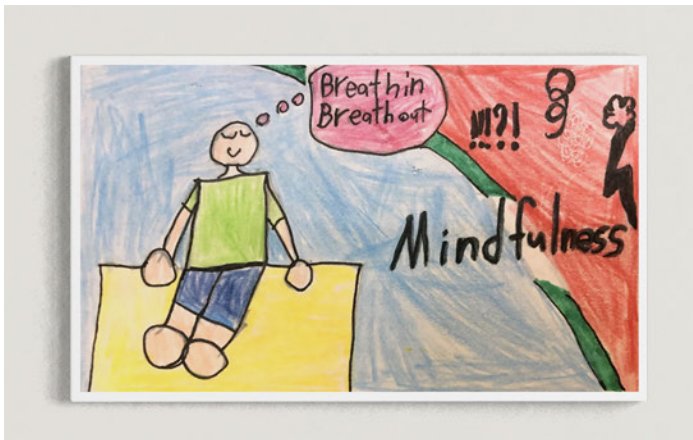
- ☐ Have I gotten enough sleep? Am I wearing comfortable clothes?
- ☐ Is my family drinking enough water and eating enough healthy foods?
- ☐ Does my community feel connected and safe when my family goes out to walk and play?

**The SPIRIT is often described as energy or cultivating connections to nature and the self. Questions we can ask ourselves are:**

- ☐ What is my energy level right now?
- ☐ What kinds of activities bring my family positive energy?
- ☐ Where in my home or my community can I find a space for stillness, meditation, or prayer?



## USING THE POWER OF ART TO RAISE AWARENESS & SPARK CHANGE



Source: Claudia Obata, NPR

Poster House, the first museum in the United States dedicated exclusively to posters, describes them as visual pieces of art that are both historical documents and methods of visual communication. Posters are created for a variety of purposes: for self-expression and to amplify self-care, to call for social change, encourage cross-cultural understanding and healing, and more.

For example, 8-year-old Daniel shares that meditation helps him stay relaxed and focused at home during the pandemic.

In 2020, we witnessed an explosion of art in the Black Lives Matter movement and later in activism to bring attention to anti-Asian violence. Whether the posters were professionally printed or made with markers on cardboard, the messages pushing for racial equity and solidarity were often inspirational, igniting people of all ages and backgrounds to join in. More recently, posters have connected health and wellbeing to racial equity.



Digital Poster, Black Lives Matter/Defund the Police, shown at Cooper Hewitt museum



Don't Let Racism Go Viral Poster, 2020, Kayan Cheung-Miaw, on view at Cooper Hewitt



# COOL CULTURE'S CALL FOR POSTERS

Cool Culture believes posters are a great medium to add to conversations about health and wellbeing. A goal of We Are a Work of Art is to help make the cultural knowledge and practices in BIPOC communities more visible to inspire self-care, family-care and community-care. **We invite you and your family to express your unique ideas in a poster about:**

- What health and wellbeing mean to you and your family
- Your family practices or rituals for health and wellbeing that you want others to learn
- Your concerns about health and wellbeing in the moment of a pandemic
- Your dreams for a world post-pandemic

We encourage you to use the Call for Posters as a family activity that brings together children of all ages, caregivers, cousins, elders, and others. **Your art work may be selected for print** as a set of postcards and posters for you, your school or child care center, and displayed in local NYC neighborhoods. The Call is open to educators too!

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR POSTER

- Take a photo of your poster art, if not made in a digital format (jpg, pdf, png formats).
- Email it to Cool Culture at [family@coolculture.org](mailto:family@coolculture.org) or submit it on this form: <https://bit.ly/CoolCulturePosterArt>
- Include your name, child's name and age, borough, name of school or child care center, and Family Pass ID number if you have one.



## POSTER MAKING TIPS

### Suggested Materials

- Paper or cardboard (you can recycle boxes)
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, paint & paint brushes
- Old magazines, fabric, tissue paper, glue (for a collage format)
- Digital tools: phone or tablet camera, drawing apps

### Brainstorming

- What issues are your family thinking about? What are some concerns you have and changes you want to see?
- What images or symbols come to mind to help illustrate your ideas about health and wellbeing?



# RESOURCES TO INSPIRE WELLBEING

Throughout **We Are a Work of Art, Cool Culture** will share resources identified by our network of families, educators, artists, museum partners, and other community leaders. These resources were chosen to direct you to support, information and opportunities for healing as needed.

## CHILD CARE & CAREGIVER SUPPORT

- **Baby Cafe** - A support group for breastfeeding mothers, hosted by NYCDOHMH Neighborhood Health Action Centers in Brownsville, East Harlem, and Tremont.  
[www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/neighborhood-health/neighborhood-health-action-centers.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/neighborhood-health/neighborhood-health-action-centers.page).
- **NYC Child Care Connect** - Learn about different types of free and low-cost childcare that is regulated by the NYC Health Department and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services.  
[www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/child-care.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/child-care.page).
- **Pre-K and 3-K Enrollment** - NYC Department of Education offers free universal pre-K for all children aged 4 years old, and a number of 3-K spots for children aged 3 years old. Get on admissions emails lists for more information here: [www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade).
- **Real Dads Club** - A weekly group for fathers and father figures to support each other in their relationships and in raising their children. Facilitated by nonprofit Real Dads Network. [www.realdadsnetwork.org](http://www.realdadsnetwork.org).

## HEALING & MEDICINE

- **COVID-19 Vaccine Information** - General vaccination information for children ages 5 years and up as well as information about vaccine requirements is available on the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's website. [www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page).
- **COVID-19 At-Home Tests** - Order four free sets of at-home COVID-19 tests for each household at [www.covidtests.gov](http://www.covidtests.gov). At-home testing is also available to all immunocompromised New Yorkers and those ages 65 and older by NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation. To schedule an in-home appointment, call 929- 298-9400 or visit [www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/get-tested/covid-19-testing.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/get-tested/covid-19-testing.page).
- **COVID-19 Testing** - Find a free local testing site run by the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation [www.nychealthandhospitals.org/covid-19-testing-sites](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/covid-19-testing-sites) or text: "COVID TEST" to 855-48.
- **NYC Care** - offers New Yorkers low- or no- cost health care through NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation. Call 646-NYC-CARE or visit [www.nyccare.nyc](http://www.nyccare.nyc)
- **NYC Mental Health for All** - includes the Early Childhood Mental Health Network that offers support to families worried about their children's emotions or behaviors, and designed for children from birth to age five and their families; as well as Family Counseling to help improve communication and build stronger relationships with bilingual therapists. Call 1-888-692-9355 or visit [mentalhealthforall.nyc.gov](http://mentalhealthforall.nyc.gov).



- **Healing Justice Mental Health Education** - Fireweed Collective offers mental health education and mutual aid through a Healing Justice lens. Their work seeks to disrupt the harm of systems of abuse and oppression, often reproduced by the mental health system, and they envision a world in which all communities get to self-determine the source of their care, medicine, and wellness. [fireweedcollective.org](http://fireweedcollective.org)
- **Inclusive Therapy Network** - A tool for finding social justice-oriented mental health providers who center the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. [www.inclusivetherapists.com/about](http://www.inclusivetherapists.com/about)
- **NYC Well** - A free and confidential connection to mental health and substance abuse support, available 24/7 via talk, text, and chat. <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>
- **Shape Up NYC** - Free group fitness programs across the five boroughs with indoor and outdoor locations along with family-friendly activities. Many are often adapted for both younger and older participants. [www.nycgovparks.org/events/shape-up-nyc](http://www.nycgovparks.org/events/shape-up-nyc)
- **SOMOS Community Care** - A network of over 2,500 providers in NYC who have come together to ensure better health care for Medicaid members. They have a tool for finding health care practitioners by specialty, in English, Spanish, and Chinese. <https://somoscc.wpengine.com/providers-map/>

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Contact Your City Councilmember** - Your local elected City Councilmember has an office with staff dedicated to help residents with a range of services, questions, and issues. Find your district by address here and get in touch: <https://council.nyc.gov/districts/>
- **Find Your Government Representative** - Contact local, city, and state officials who represent you to share your ideas and concerns and seek solutions. [www.mygovnyc.org](http://www.mygovnyc.org)
- **Public Libraries** - New York City's three public library systems provide a number of free resources and programming options that cater to local needs and foster a sense of community for all ages. [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org) (Serving the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island)  
[www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org)  
[www.bklynlibrary.org](http://www.bklynlibrary.org)

Look out for **Cool Culture's Toolkits around Mind, Body, Spirit and Civic Wellbeing** this spring with more in-depth resource lists and activities for families and educators.

As part of the **We Are A Work of Art Health + Wellbeing Initiative**, they will contain frameworks for assessing wellbeing while providing art-making activities that can inspire conversations around different states of wellbeing and healing.

## OTHER NYC RESOURCES

# GET THE CARE YOU NEED DURING COVID-19



### Have questions about COVID-19?

Call **311**. Operators can answer your questions and direct you to resources, including trained nursing staff who can help you decide if you need medical care.

Visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus) for information about prevention, symptoms and what to do if you are sick.



### Need a doctor?

NYC Health + Hospitals has free and low-cost medical care for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.

Visit [nychealthandhospitals.org](https://nychealthandhospitals.org) for more information and to search for a doctor, or call **844-NYC-4NYC** (844-692-4692) or **311**.



### Need COVID-19 testing?

NYC is offering free COVID-19 diagnostic tests at sites around the city.

Visit [nyc.gov/covidtest](https://nyc.gov/covidtest) or call **311** to find a site.



### Need to talk to someone about your mental health needs?

NYC Well has free resources and counselors available, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for brief counseling and referrals to care.

Call **888-NYC-WELL** (888-692-9355), text "**WELL**" to **65173**, or visit [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://nyc.gov/nycwell).

New York State's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline provides free support and referrals.

Call **844-863-9314**, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.



### Get care without fear!

Getting testing or care for COVID-19 is not a public benefit under the public charge rule.

For more information, call **311** or visit [nyc.gov/health/coronavirus](https://nyc.gov/health/coronavirus).

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.  
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**NYC**

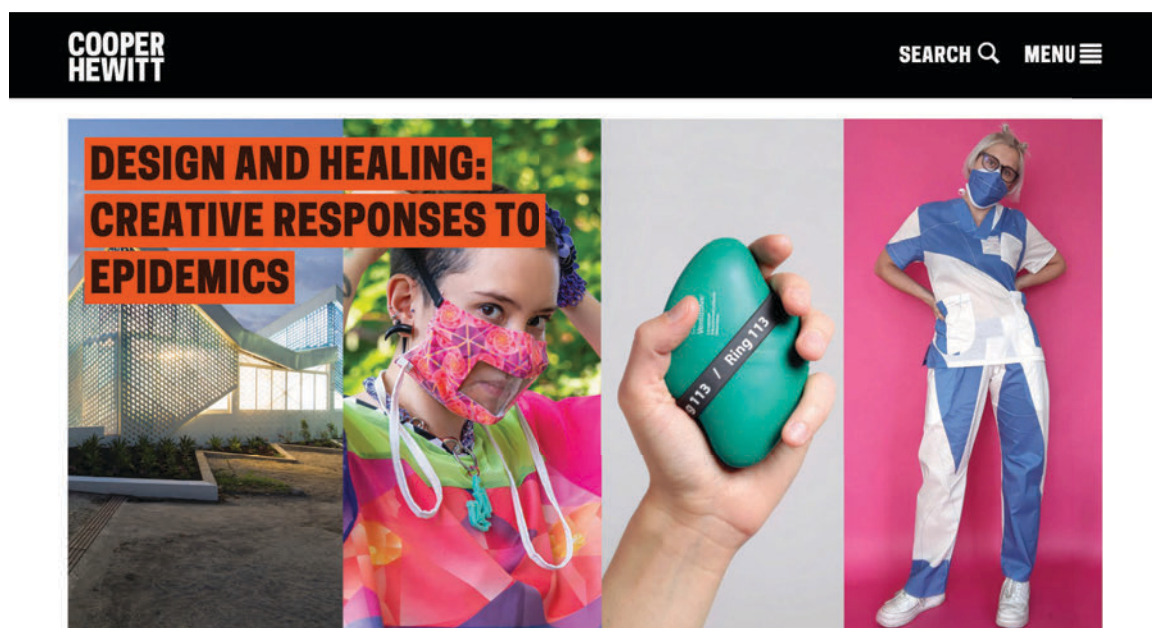


## FEATURED PARTNER

Which NYC cultural institutions are inspiring us to process our states of wellbeing and inspire action around mind, body, spirit or civic engagement right now? Cooper Hewitt has an exhibit on view through February 20th that provides visitors with a view into creative responses to epidemics. You can explore this exhibit, and activities at nearly 90 museums, gardens, and zoos for free with your Cool Culture Family Pass. You can view updated visitation guidelines on our Cultural Partner Visitation Portal: <https://bit.ly/VisitCoolCulturePartners>

### COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

**Design and Healing: Creative Responses to Epidemics**



How is art used to process world events and inspire action? What is design's role in times of crisis? This exhibition features the work of designers, artists, doctors, engineers, and neighbors who asked, "How can I help?" In response to the crisis, they created medical devices, PPE, mutual aid, infographics, posters, and architecture.

**Invite your child to reflect:** *Who have they seen in their community step in to help, to create, or to advocate during the pandemic? What did they do?*

# STAY CONNECTED

## JOIN US

Cool Culture partners with Title I elementary schools and early education centers to co-create programs and activities with families and educators.

Through a partnership with Cool Culture, families sign up through their school or child care center to utilize the Family Pass. The pass offers a range of arts and cultural activities through free access to nearly 90 museums, gardens and zoos — places like the Brooklyn Museum, El Museo del Barrio, the Central Park Zoo and much more!

Donate to support our work: [www.coolculture.org/donate](http://www.coolculture.org/donate)

## THANK YOU

Cool Culture's programs are made possible by generous donors like you. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, we rely on public and private donations to build capacity for over 50,000 families, educator partners, and museum staff to connect, create, and collectively evolve art and culture within and beyond institutions.

Funding for the We Are A Work of Art Health + Wellbeing Initiative is provided in part by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development.

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Candice Anderson (Executive Director), Mitzi Cohen, Jared Cooper, Cathy Elkie, Samantha Gilbert, Dr. Christopher John Godfrey, Rob Krulak, Risa Meyer, Edwina Meyers, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Ahmed Yearwood

Cool Culture envisions an equitable society that values, embraces and is enriched by all cultures. Our mission is to amplify the voices of families and to strengthen the power of historically marginalized communities through art and culture, both within cultural institutions and beyond.



80 Hanson Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
[www.coolculture.org](http://www.coolculture.org)

#WeAreAWorkofArt  
@CoolCulture

CONTACT US: [family@coolculture.org](mailto:family@coolculture.org)