

The Creative's Mind: Redefining Mental Performance in the Arts

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Abstract

The performing arts industry often glorifies perfection while overlooking the mental well-being of the artists behind the performance. This article explores the persistent stigma surrounding mental health in the performing arts and proposes The Creative's Mind, a mental performance coaching initiative designed to support performers through evidence-based psychological strategies and community outreach. By integrating Certified Mental Performance Consultants (CMPCs) into creative spaces, the initiative aims to bridge the gap between artistic expression and mental resilience. This article also examines the financial and social frameworks necessary for sustainable implementation, highlighting the importance of transforming awareness into action within the creative industry.

Introduction

Being a performer is often comparable to hiding behind a protective veil—one that conceals imperfections and flaws from the scrutiny of society's expectations. In contrast, vulnerability is encouraged and even praised, offering performers the opportunity to remove that veil and reveal their humanity—not just their art. While the intent behind vulnerability is to invite compassion, there always seems to be a subtle hesitation to shatter that pristine image. Perhaps this hesitation is unconscious, or perhaps it stems from the fear that once the veil is lifted, the ability to maintain the façade is lost.

The problem lies in the fact that performers—whether models, singers, actors, dancers, or musicians—face a unique set of mental health challenges that are often ignored and heavily stigmatized. Despite how widespread this issue is, there remains a noticeable lack of attention given to performers' mental well-being. Too often, they are forced to neglect their own mental health for the sake of staying booked in an intensely competitive industry.

Beyond that, the constant pressure to be perfect and relentless public scrutiny can all take a heavy toll. The culmination of these factors can become unbearable—and when that pressure finally leads to a performer's downfall through dangerous coping mechanisms, only then does society express concern. The art is glorified, while the artist is overlooked.

Despite growing awareness, many performers still face intense stigma when addressing mental health, driven by perfectionism, fear of career impact, and a lack of structural support. This article explores *why* mental health stigma persists within the performing arts and *how* systemic, cultural, and industry-level changes can foster a more supportive environment for performer well-being. By uncovering these hidden struggles, the goal is to advocate for a shift from glorifying performance to valuing the performer.

In the performing world, perfection becomes both a standard and a shield. Society and industry expectations push models, singers, actors, dancers, and musicians to embody confidence and control, leaving little room for emotional vulnerability. As a result, many silently battle mental health challenges, fearing that honesty about their struggles could cost them credibility, success, or even their careers.

Vulnerability is often seen as unprofessional, a threat to the flawless image that performers are expected to project. For example, models are hired to appear confident and unbothered—so admitting to anxiety, depression, or an eating disorder can be perceived as weakness. Similarly, fear of career consequences fuels stigma across the industry. Sharing mental health struggles can lead to being labeled “unstable,” sparking rumors, doubts about reliability, or even job loss. Each field carries its own stigma: models face body image issues dismissed as “part of the job,” musicians battle addiction and emotional volatility that are normalized, dancers confront perfectionism and body scrutiny, while actors’ instability is often romanticized as artistic depth. In the end, many performers feel isolated, forced to endure exhaustion without a safe space to be human beneath the spotlight.

Mental health stigma in the performing arts persists largely because of the enormous profit the industry generates. When physical injuries or crippling anxiety threaten consistent income, they are often hidden or ignored to maintain productivity at all costs. This loyalty to profit prevents the industry from evolving into a more supportive environment. Combined with societal expectations and relentless pressure, stigma becomes almost inevitable. While systemic change is slow, innovative solutions and interventions can accelerate progress.

Beyond repeating familiar ideas like “raising awareness,” we must move toward tangible action. Awareness is only one part of the solution—not the end goal. To address ongoing stigma, I propose a mental performance coaching initiative called The Creative Minds. This program would offer coaching to performers at both professional and academic levels, led by Certified Mental Performance Consultants (CMPCs)². These consultants would collaborate with performing arts schools, modeling agencies, and dance programs to present their services, which would also be available to individual performers.

The Creative’s Mind is more than a mental performance coaching initiative—it is also a community movement addressing stigma from both clinical and non-clinical perspectives. The non-clinical side includes using digital platforms to educate younger audiences about mental performance and stigma, producing podcasts that feature artists discussing their creative journeys

and mental health, and hosting live panel discussions with performers and audience participation. True change begins with innovative action.

While these community efforts are crucial, the core focus lies in how CMPCs (Certified Mental Performance Consultants) work with performers. Mental performance coaching helps develop essential mental skills—such as concentration, confidence, emotional control, and resilience—to enhance performance under pressure. These skills are strengthened through visualization, positive self-talk, and stress management techniques. For example, a performer struggling with performance anxiety might work with a CMPC to develop coping skills, pre-show routines, and early warning strategies.

Through monthly group sessions, psychoeducation workshops, one-on-one coaching, community events, and staff training, mental performance coaching integrates evidence-based methods from the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) into the creative process. This bridges the gap between artistic expression and mental well-being, normalizing conversations about mental health while providing practical, research-backed support. While performers can share their stories, CMPCs bring the clinical tools to transform awareness into sustainable change.¹

Comparing this proposal to existing models reveals a key difference. Most mental performance frameworks, such as Hardwood and Steptoe 5Csⁱⁱ model—commitment, communication, concentration, control, and confidence—are tailored toward athletes. While these concepts overlap with performance psychology, The Creative's Mind applies them specifically to artists, addressing the unique emotional and professional challenges performers face.

A solid financial plan is essential for bringing this vision to life. Funding would involve securing small business grants, partnering with nonprofits, schools, and community organizations, and using funds for outreach, events, and credentialed clinicians. The long-term goal is to evolve from donations toward self-generated income, ultimately becoming a sustainable private coaching practice. The purpose isn't profit—it's sustainability, collaboration, and social impact.

In the performing arts, there are endless classes to perfect movement, voice, and stage presence, but few dedicated to strengthening the mind behind the performance. Mental performance coaching remains an underused yet vital resource that can elevate artistry in ways technique alone cannot. The pressure to succeed, maintain fame, and meet impossible expectations is immense, and acknowledging the mental cost is the first step toward change.

Performers are imperfect. They experience anxiety, depression, and doubt. They are human, deserving of the same compassion as anyone else. Stigma may not disappear overnight, and the system may resist change, but progress begins with each conversation, each program, and each performer brave enough to take off the mask. The future of the creative industry depends on how we care for the people who bring it to life. Initiatives like The Creative's Mind represent more than a service. It is a shift towards valuing the person behind the performance. When we start treating mental health with the same dedication we give to talent, we create an industry where performers can thrive, not just survive.

References

ⁱ Association for Applied Sport Psychology, “What Is a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC)?” accessed October 30, 2025, <https://appliedsportpsych.org/cmpec>.

ⁱⁱ Chris Harwood and Karl Steptoe, “To Excel in Sport, Take Care of Your 5Cs!,” *Frontiers for Young Minds* 10 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/frym.2022.753333>.