

How to effectively plan, deliver, and evaluate mental skills training for and with dancers

8th May 2026 Schedule



Mental Skills Training (MST), also known as psychological skills training, is a psychoeducational approach that equips dancers with cognitive-behavioural techniques to enhance learning, performance, and overall wellbeing. When integrated into a holistic talent development pathway, MST provides dancers with transferable skills that support both their artistic growth and everyday life.

This interactive workshop is designed for anyone interested in evidence-based, pedagogically informed approaches to dancer development, whether you work or study in performance, education, or research settings. Drawing on the latest research, the CARES model (Cumming et al., 2022, Tidmarsh et al., 2022a), and Basic Psychological Needs Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), we will explore how MST can be effectively implemented in one-to-one and group settings. By the end of the session, participants will:

- Understand how MST programmes are planned, delivered, and evaluated using dancer-centred principles.
- Learn strategies that position dancers as active, autonomous, and respected partners in their own development.
- Discover how MST fosters engagement, self-reflection, goal-setting, and metacognitive skills.

The workshop will also provide opportunities to experiment with practical techniques such as grounding and imagery, ensuring attendees leave with actionable ideas for supporting dancers' mental skills development.

Delivery Team: Professor Jennifer Cumming, PhD CPsychol AFBPsS FHEA, Dr Grace Tidmarsh and Michelle Schachtler Dwarika

Venue: Performance Hub, Walsall Campus, University of Wolverhampton, WS1 3BD

Time	Session
09:30-10:00	Registration tea/coffee/welcome
10:00-11:00	Providing the foundation: An introduction to Mental Skills Training (MST)
11:00-11:30	Exploring grounding and imagery techniques
11:30-12:30	Planning with the end in mind: Monitoring, learning, and evaluating MST
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	Dancer-centred approaches to determining the who, what, where, when, and how of MST
14:30-15:30	Delivering MST using the CARES (Competence supportive; Autonomy supportive; Relatedness and interpersonal involvement; Engagement through communication; and Structure and group management) model
15:30-16:00	Break tea/coffee/networking
16:00-17:00	Putting theory into practice, wrap-up, & key takeaways