

# Tour Well for Tour Managers

tips and techniques  
for designing tours to  
promote positive mental  
health and wellbeing

Image by Michael Bourchier

## WHAT IS TOUR WELL FOR TOUR MANAGERS?

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**Tour Well for Tour Managers consists of practical suggestions, evidence-based tips, and real life examples for designing and delivering tours that promote positive mental health for the whole company.**

**Taking a production on the road is exciting and adventurous – producing a show for new audiences, building relationships with venues, and offering employment opportunities to talented performing arts workers. However, pressures from tight schedules, constrained budgets, marketing and communications challenges and team conflict can take their toll.**

**Tour Well for Tour Managers has been designed to share ideas to help the whole company thrive. Whether your tour is short or long, regional or metropolitan, we hope you find Tour Well for Tour Managers helpful.**

**For more information on any of the topics in Tour Well for Tour Managers, visit [artsontour.com.au](http://artsontour.com.au) and [artswellbeingcollective.com.au](http://artswellbeingcollective.com.au)**

## IS TOUR WELL FOR TOUR MANAGERS FOR ME?

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If you're planning a tour, yes, Tour Well for Tour Managers is for you! You might work in an arts organisation, offer touring services or work independently – no matter your role, if you have a role in designing and delivering tours, Tour Well for Tour Managers is for you.

If you're about to head off on tour, and you're looking for information to promote positive mental health for yourself, check out Tour Well.

Tour Well for Tour Managers is not a comprehensive guide to every issue you may need to consider when designing and delivering tours, and it does not take the place of support and information from peak bodies, occupational health and safety practices, legal or medical advice, or your workplace policies and procedures.

It is expected that every company complies with the relevant awards and legislative requirements, and properly communicates rigorous and relevant policies and procedures to all members of the touring party. Visit [worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics](http://worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics) for more information.

## WHO DEVELOPED TOUR WELL FOR TOUR MANAGERS?

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Tour Well for Tour Managers is a resource of the Arts Wellbeing Collective (Arts Centre Melbourne) and Arts on Tour.

### **Arts Centre Melbourne and Arts Wellbeing Collective**

Arts Centre Melbourne is Australia's largest and busiest performing arts centre, whose purpose is to enrich the lives of Victorians – culturally, educationally, socially and economically and to provide leadership in the promotion and development of the performing arts (Victorian Arts Centre Act 1979).

The Arts Wellbeing Collective is led by Arts Centre Melbourne, and comprises a consortium of arts and cultural organisations whose shared vision is to effect better mental health and wellbeing for performing arts workers; working together to create and share resources, workshops and initiatives that enable the performing arts to thrive.

Arts Centre Melbourne and the Arts Wellbeing Collective acknowledge the support and input of the Arts Wellbeing Collective Advisory Group, and the Arts Wellbeing Collective member organisations, particularly One Fell Swoop Circus, Regional Arts Victoria, The Australian Ballet, and the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres.

### **Arts on Tour**

Arts on Tour is one of Australia's most prolific performing arts touring organisations, widely recognised for leading on best practice in touring. Arts on Tour's overarching purpose is to bring culturally distinctive and resonant arts experiences to audiences and communities across the country, and to deliver a program of events and initiatives that build the sector's touring capacity.

In working with Arts Wellbeing Collective on this resource, Arts on Tour acknowledges the support and input of project partners Bangarra Dance Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, CDP Theatre Producers, Critical Stages Touring, Monkey Baa Theatre Company, Performing Lines and Sydney Dance Company.

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**We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, visit and perform, and pay our respect to their Elders, past, present and future.**

# INTRODUCTION

Working in the arts and tour management is incredibly rewarding, but it can be challenging. An intensive working environment, long travel days, and separation from friends and family can leave company members vulnerable to stress and poor mental health. We know from contemporary research, anecdotes, and company discussions that the cost of poor mental health can be significant.

As a producer (and we use this word to refer to anyone who is involved in the design and delivery of tours), you are in a unique position to actively contribute to the positive mental health of the touring party through simple choices that can be made at every phase of the tour planning and delivery.

It might feel overwhelming, but don't underestimate the value and impact of a lot of small changes.

Designing tours to promote positive mental health and wellbeing has the added benefits of:

- Reducing the risk of burnout, exhaustion, and company conflict
- Greater artistic outcomes from a team that is flourishing
- More positive experiences from venues, presenters and programmers, who are reaping the benefits of working with a happy, healthy team
- A more positive experience for you, the producer, to hopefully reduce work stress so you prioritise your own mental health during all phases of the tour
- Ensuring the team finish the tour with energy, and are keen to work with you and your company again!

We can all play a role in promoting positive mental health so that our artistic endeavours inspire, our industry is well, and our practitioners thrive.

## What is mental health?

The phrase 'mental health' is often misunderstood. You might hear it used as a substitute for mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is "a state of well-being in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community".

Mental health is not merely the absence of a mental health condition, but about being mentally healthy in the way we think, feel and develop relationships.

It can be helpful to think of mental health as being on a continuum:



Your mental health is not fixed. It is normal to move up and down the continuum throughout the course of your life, or even the day.

You might be feeling pretty good after receiving funding to support an upcoming tour, but then get really stressed out after a difficult contract negotiation with a presenter. This is a normal response to a situation that most people would find stressful, and the stress resolves when the situation resolves.

Something becomes a mental health problem when the feelings are of such long duration and high intensity that they start to impact on your ability to function in everyday life.

**Read more at [headsup.org.au/your-mental-health/what-is-good-mental-health](https://headsup.org.au/your-mental-health/what-is-good-mental-health)**

Sometimes when we think about supporting mental health while on tour, we tend to think about what we would have in place should someone present with a mental health problem.

The good news is that you can take an integrated approach to positive mental health that simultaneously prevents issues and reduces the negative impacts of touring, embraces and promotes the positive aspects of touring, and manages mental health problems should they arise, regardless of cause.

Tour Well for Tour Managers is divided into three sections, pre-tour, on tour and post-tour, with suggestions for **prevention, promotion and management** in each, allowing you to select the tips and techniques that are most relevant to your touring context, whether it be short- or long-term, regional, rural, metropolitan or internationally, or any other kind!

### PREVENT

Prevent mental health problems on tour through increasing awareness of mental health, encouraging choices and actions that enhance wellbeing, and minimising practices that might be harmful.

### PROMOTE

Promote the positive aspects of touring - look for ways to positively engage the company, build a sense of community and collegiality. Essentially - you want to find ways to do more of the good, more!

### MANAGE

Manage mental health problems in an effective, compassionate and meaningful way. For example, access to professional support, and clear policies and procedures on what to do if someone becomes unwell.

Aim for incorporating a few ideas from all three sections at all three stages. An integrated approach helps ensure your efforts are more effective, connected, and focussed on meaningful and sustainable positive change.

**Explore the benefits of an integrated approach at [utas.edu.au/work-health-wellbeing](https://utas.edu.au/work-health-wellbeing) and learn more about creating mentally healthy workplaces at [worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics](https://worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics)**

# THINKING ABOUT YOUR TOUR...

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If you're reading this tool kit, it's likely you have extensive knowledge of touring, the performing arts, and other contexts and experiences that contribute to effective touring. Let's start with your knowledge, as this is what the tool kit builds on - it certainly doesn't replace it!

Considering these questions early can help to frame your decision making around what's important for your next tour, and what initiatives you might prioritise.

Depending on your time frames and the way in which you design tours, you could even raise these questions with your Company Manager, Executive Producer, and other stakeholders for discussion and consideration.



If you had infinite time, money, and resources dedicated to implementing initiatives that promote positive mental health and wellbeing for the whole company, what would you love to do?

This might seem ridiculously blue sky, but it's a great way of challenging yourself to get creative!

You never know, many of the things might be entirely possible!



Fast forward to the end of tour, and imagine you're telling a peer/colleague/friend about the tour.

What would you like to be able to say?

What would you like your company to say about the tour experience if they're talking to their peers/colleagues/friends?

What would you like your funding body/investors/sponsors to say about the tour?



If you've designed tours before, or been on tour yourself, what were some of the things that went well?

Why did they go well?

What would you like to improve?

Are there any specific challenges with this upcoming tour that you're concerned or nervous about? Who might have experienced these challenges before? Could you seek advice from them?

**Tip:** Check in with the Arts Wellbeing Collective or Arts on Tour teams - they can often connect you with someone who has 'been there, done that'!



**What if...**

**We have limited budget.**

Simply look for the sun symbol, located in the top left hand corner of the suggestion, indicating **free or low cost ideas**.

Remember too, the costs of poor mental health and wellbeing are often hidden. It might show up as absenteeism, presenteeism, or company or creative conflict. It's always difficult to measure the savings associated with prevention, but it is clear to see the benefit.

Be mindful that promoting positive mental health and wellbeing on tour is most likely saving you significant amounts of money.

**If I offer one thing, the company will feel entitled and ask for more.**

Be honest with your company. Explain your constraints, and the offer that is made within those constraints. Aim to under promise and over deliver. Even offering a few simple supports can be very powerful for company trust and moral.

# DESIGN WELL: PRE-TOUR

We are fortunate to often work with long lead times on tours, which means you might be able to start positive mental health messaging some 24 months in advance of the actual tour! This allows for the promotion of positive mental health at every phase of the tour, and can influence the budget, itinerary, training, grants and contracts.

A useful approach can be to review each production element through a mental health lens – the same way that you do with accessibility, diversity, physical safety, and many more – and simply ask:

- What will be the impact of this on the company's mental health?
- Can I design it in a way that promotes positive mental health?

## PREVENT

 Demonstrate organisational commitment to positive mental health by allowing time for the organisation's CEO/Artistic Director/General Manager to speak to the company about the value of mental health, physical safety and wellbeing, and the company's commitment to promoting positive mental health on tour.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Create a statement that outlines your organisation's commitment to positive mental health and include it in venue contracts, employment contracts, tour briefs, sponsor deals, and grant applications.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Create and share 'Plan Bs' – contingency in the budget, or response plans in case of illness/injury/bereavement. This might involve allocating budget for an additional tech/performer/swing, or cancelling a particular show or season. Communicate your Plan Bs to the company, and should you have to bring one into play, ensure the person affected is not made to feel guilty if they are the reason a Plan B is utilised.

- Communicating your Plan B can also help address 'Show Must Go On' mentality, where the company may feel that they have to perform, even if they are unwell – having a contingency plan helps reduce pressure on the company, helping to keep them well, and less likely to need the Plan B!

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Ensure the appropriate team members are trained in how to handle concerns and complaints, and what might be an appropriate course of action; and can easily articulate how and when to escalate concerns.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Brainstorm psychosocial factors as well as physical OHS factors when completing your risk assessment to help identify areas of the company and/or tour that may need additional support. Consider:

- Specific requirements of individuals on tour. This may include awareness of particular needs arising from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse company, LGBTQIA+ company members, gender identity, company members living with mental health conditions, disability, or access requirements, and individual work style preferences. Note that some team members may feel more vulnerable in towns or cities that are less diverse.
- Experience of touring personnel and company
- Length of tour
- Pace of itinerary and placement of breaks
- Profile of locations visited (including perception of safety, diversity of community, available services)
- Subject matter of performance
- Technical requirements of production
- Time to bump in/bump out
- Venue experience with touring companies and support available
- Venue locations and types

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Undertake Mental Health First Aid training. Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person who is developing a mental health problem, or who is in a mental health crisis.

Like physical first aid, mental health first aid is given until the person receives professional help or until the crisis resolves.

Mental Health First Aid is appropriate for all adults, and particularly recommended for leadership teams, and touring Company Managers and Stage Managers.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DESIGN WELL: PRE-TOUR

## PROMOTE

 Spend time unpacking the purpose and goals of the tour, and include a goal around maintaining and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. By developing the purpose and goals collaboratively with the company, you will all share a clear vision of what is trying to be achieved.

- Maybe the show is a great box office success, and the critical reviews are all positive, but if the whole team is completely burnt out and never want to tour again, would it really be deemed a success?
- Connecting back to purpose - the 'why' - is a great way of promoting positive mental health, and particularly useful during challenging times.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Consider your organisational values - the core principles that inspire the work of the organisation - and note how they could manifest on tour. What do they mean in practice? Work through a 'values in action' exercise, and discuss what behaviours would show that these values are being lived on tour.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Ask each company member to share a quick note about their favourite thing about touring, or what they're looking forward to most. Collate the responses and share them during the tour briefing.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Select accommodation with wellbeing in mind. Preference those that have good reviews, and:

- Functional kitchen and/or access to food (restaurants, cafes, supermarkets)
- Access to computers, printers and basic office supplies; and reliable WiFi (or purchase a dongle for the company to utilise)
- Conference facilities or meeting rooms that could be used so that company management can work in those spaces, rather than their hotel room in order to better delineate work and personal time
- Gymnasium and/or pool
- Laundry facilities (if laundry facilities are not available in all rooms, ensure they are in at least a few rooms, and ask those allocated to those rooms if they would mind sharing facilities)
- Late checkout

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Hold a pre-tour briefing – a great building block for creating a positive touring culture prior to the company hitting the road. This may include:

- Providing an open, non-judgemental space for people to share specific needs and preferences, for example:
  - Does your energy come from people or alone time?
  - Are you a morning person or evening person?
  - What's your preferred method of communication?
- Clear explanation of who to speak with if mental health problems emerge while on tour.
- Discussion of how conflicts might be resolved on tour, and sharing methods for effective communication.
- Highlighting the importance of open communication and addressing small issues before they become large problems, and encourage proactive problem solving.
- Understanding stress, and encouraging everyone to self-evaluate how they personally manage stress. How do they recognise they're becoming stressed? How does it impact their work practice? What helps in the short term to mitigate the stress response, and what can they do to address the stressor and ideally lessen the impact in the future.
- Encouragement of company members to take responsibility for their behaviours and signal what they need from the rest of the company.
- Reinforce that even though the production and the tour is very important, ultimately it is just a job, and work needs to be kept in context with other aspects of life.
- Distribute and chat through Tour Well (available on the Arts Wellbeing Collective website).

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Schedule mindfully, with an awareness of the needs of cast and crew. Consider:

- Long travel days and managing overtime
- Scheduling and budgeting for a one-week break for approximately every three months of tour
- Scheduling at least two days off in a row per month
- Driver fatigue – is the driving all falling to one person? Mix up who drives so that patterns don't emerge, or ownership creeps in around radio stations, music choices, air conditioning etc.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DESIGN WELL: PRE-TOUR

## PROMOTE

 Plan a team building day for cast and crew during the rehearsal process so that the team can get to know each other and enjoy some social time.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Schedule a Family and Friends Day before heading off on tour, where company members can bring their family and friends to watch some of the rehearsal, learn about the production, be briefed about the tour, discuss communication and support strategies, and to meet each other.

Take the opportunity to communicate with family and friends who they can contact if they have a concern during the tour.

Make sure there is a broad definition of 'family and friends' to be as inclusive as possible!

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Give the company the opportunity to submit an 'accommodation wish list'.

Manage expectations to ensure it's a preference/'nice to have', not a guaranteed or requirement, but it might help you identify some simple key themes.

For example, perhaps dancers would appreciate rooms with baths, or those working predominantly indoors during the day might like a balcony to enjoy a connection to nature/sunlight on days off.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Create opportunities for travelling with additional freight (e.g. a larger tour truck), enabling the company to bring larger items that help promote positive mental health and wellbeing, for example bikes, musical instruments, yoga mats.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Allocate budget for visit(s) from the producer, director or a creative to visit the team while on tour. This is a great opportunity to connect with the tour 'on the ground', assist with bumping in/out, help address any issues, and just offer a fresh face for the company.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Schedule time for mental health and wellbeing on the daily schedule. For example, five minutes mindfulness or meditation during warm up, or a ten minute walk outside between shows.

You could even put mental health and wellbeing tips on the daily schedule to keep it 'front of mind'.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DESIGN WELL: PRE-TOUR

## MANAGE

 Take steps to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and help-seeking. This might include:

- Openly discussing mental health and wellbeing alongside physical health and safety.
- Sharing resources from the Arts Wellbeing Collective, or mental health promotion organisations such as Beyond Blue.
- Be clear about available support services, confidentiality and access.

Definitely    Maybe    Not for this tour

Determine the level and type of professional support that may be required for the tour.

Strategies may include:

- Engaging a psychologist to be on call for the duration of the tour. As a guide, two hours per company member per three months of tour is a good starting point.
- Include a list of support services in company toolkits – there is a handy list of support services on page 15.
- If your organisation has an Employee Assistance Program, share their details as well as ways of contacting them when 'on the road'.

Definitely    Maybe    Not for this tour

 Write up a simple plan of what happens if someone experiences mental health problems while on tour. This could include reporting (how and to whom), reasonable adjustments, impact on the show, and returning to tour. It can be useful to run through this process for a few different challenges - physical and mental - for example, what will you do if:

- The lead performer has an accident and breaks their leg
- The Stage Manager comes down with gastro
- The Company Manager burns out

Having your 'head out of the sand' when thinking about problems can help you prepare for - and mitigate - challenges before they happen.

Definitely    Maybe    Not for this tour

Depending on the size of the touring party, you may be able to instigate one-on-one conversations pre-tour.

This can give you an opportunity to ask your company members how you can best support them on tour. If this is difficult logistically, you could consider a short, optional, confidential questionnaire that covers:

- Touring experience, and any previous issues/triggers with touring
- Things that help with managing the challenges of touring
- Any issues with the content of the production that might be challenging
- Any family/cultural/financial/health issues that may cause you stress that the company could help with
- Any fears, phobias or difficulties (e.g. fear of flying, travel sickness) that might impact considerations for tour logistics

If a company member reports that they have experienced mental health problems in the past:

- Thank them for disclosing and reassure them of their privacy and confidentiality
- Don't pry – they are within their rights to limit disclosure
- Ask if they have a relapse prevention plan or mental health care plan in place with their GP or psychologist
- Ask if they are aware of triggers or areas of concern that might be present on tour
- Ask if they would like to log any medication with the Company Manager or similar, in case of emergency
- Ask if there is a partner, family member or friend they would consent the company making contact with if there was concern (this may be different to their next of kin)
- Confirm that they understand the supports available to them that may be on offer through the company
- If possible, ensure they are connected with an identified company member with Mental Health First Aid training
- Encourage them to engage in self-care as a preventative measure
- Ask if there is anything that the company can do to help them work well
- Offer a follow up meeting

# DELIVER WELL: ON TOUR

Once the touring company hits the road, you can still have a positive influence on their wellbeing, even if you're not on tour with them. The aim is to bridge the gap between the office and the road.

Through supporting healthy communication practices, promoting positive work/life balance and encouraging positive relationships between all touring company members, you can ensure all your great pre-tour work continues on tour.

## PREVENT

 Remind the company that 'we're all in this together' - encourage them to proactively share successes with you, as well as open and honest solutions-focussed sharing of problems - or even niggles that might become problems.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Schedule regular phone or video production meetings between touring crew and production personnel back in the office. Ask open-ended questions to allow for problems to be raised early, and encourage positive experiences to be shared too, not just challenges.

Try 'What is going well? Why is it going well?' (This might be to do with longer bump in times, extra crew, clear tech specs being sent to the venues in advance etc., and can help you replicate these success factors for future tours).

Share what's gone well with the venue - they'll appreciate the positive feedback!

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Organise occasional one-on-one phone check-ins from the producer to ensure all cast and crew members feel valued, supported and heard. Ask about what they've found helpful for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing. Reinforce that it is important for all touring company members to have some personal and private time, and that they should not feel guilty about taking that.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Role model healthy communication practices between your team and the touring team. Respect days off, encourage the setting of out of office messages after hours, and resist making contact on days off or after hours unless it's an emergency or previously arranged and agreed upon. Encourage the touring party to explore similar practices with each other.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Ensure the Company Manager or Stage Manager is well supported with regular, scheduled one-on-one checks ins. Often this person can become the 'go to' for the whole company, and will need extra support. They can also help identify issues early, allowing you to address them quickly. Ask open-ended questions, and try not to let the conversation fall into 'patterns'. Prompts include:

- What has been on your mind this week?
- What has the company and venue vibe been?
- Last time we spoke you said X was a challenge for you, how is that going?
- What has given the company energy?
- What has been a challenge?
- Have there been any interactions you'd like to discuss?
- What feedback do you have for me?
- What can I help you with between now and the next time we chat?

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Use show reports to help get an accurate representation of the company's mental health and wellbeing.

Acknowledge show reports generally, and respond specifically to individual cast/crew members if required.

Consider adding a 'vibe check', with a score out of five and space for commentary to give you a sense of what's going on, even when there's no actual identified issue to report.

Include venue issues in show reports so they can be officially logged, addressed internally, followed up, and readdressed if the company goes back to the same venue.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 If there is an issue on tour, such as within the company, with local venue teams, or the wider community, ensure that the complaint is heard, those involved are well supported, the complaints policy is followed, and appropriate action is taken.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DELIVER WELL: ON TOUR

## PROMOTE

 Send regular communications to the touring company promoting positive mental health. You could utilise text from Tour Well, and top and tail it with reminders of how to seek support.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Follow technical schedules and operations, and if it is clear that there is a day where the team will not get a break or opportunity to seek food, have nutritious food delivered to them.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Allow time in the schedule for regular touring company meetings, where issues can be raised, and successes celebrated.

Encourage the company to start with sharing a positive experience, or thanking another company member for something simple.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Distribute regular and thoughtful newsletters (don't worry if you're not into fancy design – it could just be an email!) to share:

- Positive feedback from audiences, presenters, participants of engagement activities, social media, creative teams
- Milestones (100th show, birthdays, furthest distance travelled – be creative!)

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Encourage and/or enable the company to engage in wellness practices together, such as going for walks in natural environments, doing a yoga class, or sharing healthy meal preparation.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Organise a special activity for the company. Preferably aim for something that captures:

- Positive community building
- Something to look forward to
- Organised for the company (no work for them!)
- Not associated with the tour (just for fun!)
- Optional and open invitation! Ensure there are some activities that are open to everyone, so no one 'falls through the cracks'

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 When liaising with venues, remind them of your organisation's commitment to positive mental health that was included in their venue contract. You could encourage them to:

- Welcome the company to the venue
- Instigate two-way inductions, not just venue to touring company
- Share their own values and culture statements
- Agree to positive ways of working, and how the teams will work together to support each other and realise the shared vision of the show
- Utilise a simple ice breaker activity for the two teams to get to know each other quickly before getting to work
- Share their top tips on local restaurants, bakeries, places of worship, or maybe sharing their favourite fun fact about the venue

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Create gifts/momentos for the venue teams that you visit to thank them for looking after the company. Perhaps a tea towel, magnet or mug for the green room, or poster signed by the company.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Create an 'offer board' in the green room or another shared space, where each company member writes an 'offer' to the rest of the company on a piece of paper with their name on it.

For example, 'I'm happy to go for a walk between shows', 'You're welcome to join me in my dressing room for meditation at the half hour call', 'If you need to debrief about TV show/book/film, I'm your go to', 'I'm celebrating [cultural festival/special day/event], you're welcome to join me or ask questions about it.'

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

If you are producing a long-running show, consider offering courses for the company that are not related to the tour (e.g. singing/dancing/acting/rigging), or achievement-based (e.g. with a certification outcome or similar), but just for fun!

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DELIVER WELL: ON TOUR

## PROMOTE

Organise care packages to be delivered to venues during the tour as a surprise. For example:

- Delicious healthy treats to have backstage
- Games – crossword books, Sudoku etc.
- Kitchen kit for each company member if the accommodation has minimal facilities
- Letters or notes from home (you could collate these at the Family and Friends Day)
- Voucher to a restaurant for a company dinner

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Support the scheduling of post-show cool downs and debriefs at the venue, not the bar or pub, and keep them time-limited, so discussions can be held, but everyone can take a reasonable break.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Organise a 'Tour Kringle' for each city (or on long-run metropolitan tours, perhaps each month). Each person is assigned a Tour Kringle (think Secret Santa style - each company member picks another company member's name out of a hat), and are responsible for delivering a 'random act of kindness' for that person. Keep the emphasis on fun and kindness - a positive note, a cup of coffee.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Give the Company Manager a 'Love Line' in the budget, which is to be used for that bit of extra love for a company. Small gestures and fun activities can help the touring company feel connected, engaged and valued. It's key that everyone is invited and feels included. Ideas include:

- Icy poles on a hot day, or coffee and pastries before an early media call or matinee
- Special company meal between shows ('bring a plate' if this is doable with kitchens etc.)

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Purchase a company puzzle that can be left somewhere communal, such as the green room. The aim is to complete the puzzle before the company leaves that city!

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Create a giant crossword or word find that can be stuck on a wall in the venue for company members to complete each day. Company members could also come up with daily riddles to solve.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

Utilise Opening and Closing Nights as opportunities for surprises – messages delivered backstage, a simple video to be played to the cast and crew, or something special to be left in the dressing rooms.

Try not to fall back on alcohol as a gift – consider:

- Bookmarks, books, notebooks or journals
- Keep cups or mugs, and themed cakes/cookies
- Plants (be mindful of whether they can travel if you're moving from venue to venue)
- Show mementos (programs, merchandise)

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Make up a sheet of car games before a travel day!

- **I Spy** - A classic. Be warned: nothing says spoilsport like selecting a target that zoomed past a mile back so players should make sure that the object is visible throughout their turn.
- **20 Questions** - Players pick a famous person and their fellow passengers have to guess who it is using only 20 questions. More ruthless players will opt for obscure personalities in order to prolong their turn but maybe opt for well-known figures to keep the game fresh.
- **The Memory Game** - One passenger says "I'm going out on a picnic and I'm bringing..." followed by whatever item comes to mind. The next player has to remember that item and add something else. Getting a part of the story wrong results in instant expulsion!
- **Car Movie Tennis** - 'serve' a performer's name, 'return' with a movie they were in, 'lob' with another performer from that same movie, 'backhand' with a movie THAT performer was in, and so on, until someone 'misses' with an incorrect answer or can't think of a response. For example: Elijah Wood / Lord of the Rings / Cate Blanchett / Blue Jasmine...
- **Fortunately/Unfortunately** - 'Fortunately, this will be my first time seeing the Grand Canyon' / 'Unfortunately, it was invaded by martians just last week' / 'Fortunately, I just finished my course in extra-terrestrial communications'...

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

# DELIVER WELL: ON TOUR

## MANAGE

Schedule visits by the Producer, Head of Production or member of the creative team to offer support and get a sense of how everyone is 'on the ground'.

There's great value in 'just because' visits that focus on genuinely checking in on the team, and reminding them how valued they are.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Sometimes small houses or cancelled performances can lead to low morale. Try:

- Keeping the company informed of steps being taken to boost sales, for example, marketing and communications strategies.
- Returning to the purpose and goals of the tour – usually there are more goals than simply, 'selling out every show'. Focus on other goals that are going well.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Not every touring company is going to gel perfectly and become the best of friends! Dynamics are complicated, and can become volatile during times of stress. The sooner issues are raised the easier they are to address. Try:

- Encouraging an open and communicative work environment where small issues are discussed in an appropriate, timely and solution-focused fashion before they fester and grow.
- Aim to address work-related issues in an appropriate place, such as in the green room or at a designated workspace in the hotel.
- Encourage honest and transparent communication to avoid a culture of gossip and hallway discussions.
- If required, bring in a mediator to facilitate appropriate discussion.
- Recognise that personality differences exist and that maybe not everyone in the company will get on all the time, but that doesn't mean they can't work well together.
- Remind the team of the communication expectations, shared values and expected behaviours that were discussed pre-tour.
- Be willing to have difficult conversations, to suggest solutions, and to follow up afterwards.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

If you are concerned that a company member is experiencing mental health problems, but they have not disclosed, consider the following steps as a guide:

- Offer a meeting with adequate time for discussion
- Reinforce the company's position of providing a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, including the focus on mental health and wellbeing
- Ensure privacy and confidentiality, and reassure them that they are under no legal obligation to disclose any personal information
- State what has been noticed, specifically relating to their work performance, in a non-judgemental, neutral and brief way
- Ask if they are ok, and if there is any assistance or workplace adjustment that could assist them in performing their role
- Offer the choice of seeking confidential support from an Employee Assistance Program or equivalent outside professional advice
- If they do not want to discuss anything, respect their position, but reiterate that all employees have access to workplace supports

If a company member reports that they are experiencing mental health problems:

- Ask if they feel they are in danger of harming themselves or others, and if their safety cannot be guaranteed, take them to hospital emergency, call 000, or call Lifeline 13 11 14, and contact their nominated support person
- Thank them for disclosing and ensure their privacy and confidentiality
- Don't pry – they are within their rights to limit disclosure
- Encourage them to make an appointment with their GP and/or psychologist, or a local GP if they are away from home
- Encourage them to speak to supportive partners, family members or friend
- Ask them if there are any particular areas of work that are raising concern, and what supports they need within the work place to work well
- Ask if they need a reduction in tasks, or some time off work, to seek treatment and support
- Ensure they are connected with a Mental Health First Aider if possible
- Confirm that they understand the supports available to them
- Develop a plan with them, and a timeline to put the plan in place
- Plan a follow-up meeting

# END WELL: POST-TOUR

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Time to finish well – making sure everyone ends the tour with energy (not collapsing in a heap!) and is looking forward to working with you and your company again. It's also a great opportunity to see what worked, and to express your sincere thanks and gratitude to the touring company for all their hard work.

## PREVENT

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 Share tools and techniques to support the touring company with preparing for the end of the tour, financially and psychologically. See the final section of Tour Well for more information.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Communicate the end of tour before the end of tour. From a practical point of view, it is difficult to hold a touring company debrief after the tour has ended, so look to schedule your debrief in the last section of the tour, and see if you can attend, or at least phone in.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Hold individual exit meetings with touring company members. This allows you to both assess if additional support is required, and to hear feedback that can be considered for future tours. If the touring company are from across Australia, these meetings can be held by phone/video.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Recognise that, although it's great to be at home, it's ok and understandable to miss touring life. Acknowledge the transition phase for the company, and encourage them to seek help if they're struggling with the return to home life.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

## PROMOTE

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 Express your thanks and gratitude to the team through:

- Saying thank you
- Hand-written thank you cards
- Personal emails with genuine messages of what you appreciated about that person's contribution

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 If you have received feedback from the company during the exit interview/debrief process, let the whole company know how feedback will be actioned to improve the next tour.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Set up a simple way to share photos – perhaps a shared folder, or a closed group on social media.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

## DON'T FORGET...

Airplane safety briefings always remind us to 'fit your own oxygen mask before helping others', and we know we can't pour from an empty cup.

As the tour manager, you are juggling a lot of responsibilities, personalities, challenges, schedules, pressures, finances, marketing, legislation, expectations and much more.

It is essential that your mental health and wellbeing is not compromised because you're too busy looking after everyone else!

 Often we think of 'self-care' as indulgent - something we'll do when we have time. Or worse, we only do it if we've become unwell and have no choice but to prioritise it!

You can use your self-care for prevention - focus on getting plenty of sleep, maintaining exercise routines and eating well if you know you're heading into a busy time (like planning a tour, writing a major grant).

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Consider setting some personal goals for the tour. Is there something you'd like to focus on, learn, explore, test, or try? This can help reframe challenges during the tour, and see the challenge as a learning opportunity rather than an imposition.

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Rather than completing one tour and moving straight into the next one, take time out to:

- Celebrate a job well done.
- Complete acquittals – while not renowned for being the most exciting job, use it as an opportunity to relish all the positive feedback that was received, and the successes of the tour. Look at the opportunities for growth and improvement, and savour all that you've learnt from the process.
- If possible, delegate some post-tour tasks to give you some breathing space.
- Have your own debrief – what worked well? Why did it work well? What would you like to do differently next time?

Definitely  Maybe  Not for this tour

 Pat yourself on the back. You're doing an awesome job. Through your commitment, dedication and leadership in promoting positive mental health, you have made a huge difference not only to your company, but to our wonderful industry.

Definitely!  Definitely!  Definitely!

## HELPFUL CONTACTS

**Support Act Wellbeing Helpline**  
1800 959 500

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is a free, confidential service, available 24/7 to anyone who works in the performing arts who wishes to speak with a qualified professional for support, counselling or coaching on any aspect of their mental health and wellbeing.

**BeyondBlue:** 1300 22 4636 (24/7) or visit [beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au) to chat online (3pm to midnight) or join an online forum

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14 (24/7)

**Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467 (24/7)

**SANE Australia:** 1800 187 263 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

**QLife (LGBTQI):** 1800 184 527 (3pm to midnight)

**Mensline:** 1300 789 978 (24/7)

**Griefline:** 1300 845 745 (12pm to 3am)

**DirectLine:** 1800 888 236

**Gambling Help:** 1800 858 858 (24/7)

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 (24/7)

**Chookas and tour well!**  
[artswellbeingcollective.com.au](http://artswellbeingcollective.com.au)



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