

The Drum as a Rhythmic Teacher

Listening, touch, space, and time

The drum has many voices.

Different areas of the drum skin produce different qualities of sound — the centre and the edges, softer and firmer strikes, quieter and louder tones. Together they create a **sonic landscape**.

Some sounds feel grounding.

Some feel sharp or awakening.

Some travel deep into the body, while others remain closer to the surface.

Learning the drum is less about technique and more about **relationship**.

How We Strike the Drum

How the drum is struck matters.

A firmer strike creates a clearer, more defined sound.

A softer strike allows resonance to spread, linger, and bloom.

Neither is better. They simply do different things.

Rather than deciding in advance, we let the drum lead.

We listen.

We feel.

We wait.

The same drum will sound different in different places.

Acoustics and Space

Sound is never isolated.

It is always in relationship with:

- Walls
- Ceilings
- Air
- Bodies

Some spaces absorb sound, others reflect it.
Some feel warm and contained, others sharp or expansive.

This means the space itself becomes part of the instrument.

When working with sound, we are not only playing the drum —
we are playing the room.

Time, Tempo, and the Body

Around **60 beats per minute** sits close to a resting heart rate.
This tempo is instinctively organising for the nervous system.

It supports:

- Consistency
- Predictability
- Safety through repetition

You don't need to "get it right."
Feel it — visually and somatically.

Steady beats may sound simple, but they are not simplistic.
They provide a **somatic foundation**.

External Rhythm as Anchor

A steady rhythm acts as an external anchor.

It can feel like:

- A safety net
- A sense of home

External rhythm allows internal rhythms to settle without effort.

When rhythm is shared, time is no longer imposed or remembered —
it is **felt**, and held collectively.

Exploring Activation Safely

Changing tempo introduces energy and mild challenge.

Slower rhythms (around 30 BPM) can feel deeply grounding or heavy.
Faster rhythms (around 120 BPM) introduce activation and alertness.

When working with activation:

- Emphasise the beat
- Notice how it feels in the body
- Stay curious rather than analytical

After activation, returning to **60 BPM** supports regulation.

Silence and irregular beats can also be powerful.
They invite listening and responsiveness rather than control.

Rhythm Patterns and Regulation

Certain rhythmic structures feel familiar and holding.

Even time signatures often feel safe and predictable.
They can support people who feel:

- Erratic
- Ungrounded
- Scattered
- Untethered

At the same time, too much rigidity can feel controlling.

Some people become stuck in their heads, overly managed, or struggle to let go. For them, gentle shifts — such as introducing an unfamiliar rhythm or irregularity — can expand capacity without overwhelm.

The aim is not to disrupt, but to **meet people where they are**.

Meeting the System and Restoring Regulation

Rhythm work is relational.

We meet the nervous system as it is, then gently introduce what it needs — sometimes steadiness, sometimes variation, sometimes rest.

Introducing the opposite gently can support:

- Regulation
- Flexibility
- Increased tolerance

This expands a person's rhythmic range rather than fixing them into one mode.

Holding Rhythm

At the heart of this work is **holding rhythm**.

Not forcing it.

Not performing it.

Not perfecting it.

Holding rhythm so others can find themselves within it.

This is the practitioner's role:

to stay present, steady, and responsive, so regulation becomes possible.