Personal Communication

Violins of Hope

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Abstract

Violins of Hope was inspired by a confluence of factors: (1) my recovery-oriented psychiatric rehabilitation work with adults and young adults, the majority of whom have been diagnosed with trauma- and stressor-related disorders, depression, anxiety, and/or psychotic disorders, (2) the Violins of Hope-Cleveland educational and music collaboration and (3) the research of Daniel Levitin (Behavioural Neuroscience Department of Psychology, McGill) and Anthony Jack (the Brain, Mind and Consciousness Laboratory, Case Western Reserve). The poem reflects my understanding of how music can trigger both unpleasant/pleasant memories and emotions and how mindfulness practice can facilitate the switching between social-empathic and analytic networks of the brain and activate the parasympathetic nervous system response. Mindfulness practice develops the mind of the curious and non-judgmental observer who can notice when he/she is getting emotional. Then with acceptance and self-compassion, he/she acts to focus on a slow, repetitive, rhythmic activity like breathing, singing, or mantra recitation in order to bring his/her body/mind back to calm, clarity, and harmony (homeostasis).

Keywords: ***recovery, rehabilitation, trauma –and stressor-related disorders, depression, anxiety, music therapy, mindfulness practice, singing, mantra recitation.***

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This reflection comes with mp3 files. The author suggests the readers to click "play" on the recommended order. Click on the blue "play" button to listen to the audio files.

Violins of Hope

The seeds of suffering reside
deep in our consciousness
familiar sounds and sights watering memories
passed down generation to generation.
In seconds we are flooded with emotions
listening to haunting melodies in minor keys
played on survivors' violins
inlaid with Stars of David.
Musicians' fingers on strings till love
resonating stories of hope.
We're weeping
with chills on our backs
goose bumps on our arms
when our brain pauses
switches to listen to the voice of mindfulness
our navigator
gently guiding us back
to silently sing and recite—
In: *I calm myself…*
Out: *I release……*
In: *I feel safe…*
Out: *I feel serene……*
over and over again –
the mind and body
returning to harmony
finally home.

Biographical Statement: Marjorie Lee Jacobs (MA in Social Change with a CAGS in Integrative Holistic Health Studies) is a psychiatric rehabilitation clinician at the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation where she designs and teaches promising group interventions for adults diagnosed with a serious mental illness based on the applications of mindfulness practice (meditation, music listening, singing, and dancing), positive psychology, and neuroscience with the goals of developing stress resilience and facilitating mental health recovery.

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