

## Reflection

## Digesting Losses

Marjorie Jacobs<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston, United States of America

## Abstract

Psychiatric rehabilitation aims to promote health recovery from significant losses that have derailed the lives of adults and young adults in order for them to actively participate in rebuilding and recreating themselves. Most of the mind-body, rehabilitation interventions I design and teach utilize music to boost mood and motivation, meditation (sometimes combined with nature sounds) to elicit the relaxation response, and a variety of mindfulness practices to cultivate attention and awareness, acceptance, compassion, an expanded perspective, accurate perceptions, and optimism.

The poem *Digesting Losses* was inspired primarily by my 14-week, mindful eating intervention entitled *Eat, Drink & Be Merry the Mindful*. The participants were adults with a comorbidity of mental illness (trauma- and stressor related disorders, anxiety, depression, eating disorders,) and a physical health condition(s) (obesity, diabetes, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and/or metabolic syndrome). I wrote *Digesting Losses* in the first-person plural narrative to express the experiences of my students. The poem is about their engaging in walking meditation, singing, listening to upbeat music and later calming sounds (a gong and recorded ocean breakers), and mindful eating to help process and transform significant losses. The poem alludes to the connection between the gut microbiome and health.

**Keywords:** *recovery, trauma- and stressor-related disorders, depression, music/sound therapy, mindful eating.*

multilingual abstract | [mmd.iamonline.com](http://mmd.iamonline.com)

## Digesting Losses

We've swallowed losses  
some meandered through us  
without a trace the next day.  
But most wrenched our gut  
backed up  
burning our esophagus  
regurgitating acidic thoughts  
cycling between worries and *should have*s  
keeping us awake at night.

So, mornings we're ingesting *the tonic*:  
bright melodies with bouncy beats  
driving us to swing hips and sing  
and walking meditation mellowing  
our minds savoring acceptance.

Lunchtime in the classroom  
we're preparing for mindful eating  
listening to sounds of surf  
swelling and breaking  
attuning our breath to the waves  
noticing hunger undulating, dissipating...  
rippling *calm* and *content*...  
when the gong calls us to eat  
and we open our eyes.

In silence we observe  
our plates of salad greens  
crunchy carrots and red quinoa  
and smell the pomegranate vinaigrette  
joining our palms for this offering.

After singing gratitude  
we are chewing slowly  
putting utensils down between bites  
focusing on smell and taste  
saliva breaking everything down  
small pieces smoothed, satiated  
by the sweet understanding –  
*in time everything changes* –  
the digestion of letting go.

PRODUCTION NOTES: Address correspondence to:

Marjorie Jacobs | Address: BU Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, 940 Commonwealth Ave. West, Boston, MA 02215, 6173533562 | E-mail: [mljacobs@bu.edu](mailto:mljacobs@bu.edu) | COI statement: The authors declared that no financial support was given for the writing of this article. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

**Biographical Statement:** Marjorie 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, cognitive reframing, music listening, singing, dancing, and poetry), positive psychology, and neuroscience with the goals of developing stress resilience and facilitating mental health recovery.

<https://cpr.bu.edu/about/directory/marjorie-jacobs>