

Reflection

Music ConnectsMarjorie Jacobs¹¹ Training Associate at Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston, United States of America**Abstract**

Psychiatric rehabilitation aims to promote health recovery from significant losses, both physical and psychological, that have derailed the lives of adults and young adults so that they can actively participate in rebuilding and recreating themselves. The population faces premature morbidity and experiences higher than average rates of chronic and life-threatening diseases, including diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and pulmonary diseases. When participants join any of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation programs, they take on the role of student, increasing their knowledge, skills, and supports to further their personal goals and recovery journeys.

Most of the mind-body, rehabilitation interventions I design and teach utilize music to boost mood and motivation, facilitate social connection, increase concentration, improve memory, create new memories, deepen respiration, promote movement, and elicit the relaxation response. In addition, I use seated and walking meditation (often combined with nature sounds, music, chanting, and/or singing) to cultivate attention, curiosity, awareness, acceptance, an expanded perspective, accurate perceptions, compassion, and optimism.

The poem *Music Connects* was inspired primarily by my 13-week intervention entitled *Developing Spirituality for Stress Resilience* that I recently taught spring semester 2017. I have been teaching and developing this course since 2007. The 17 participants were adults and young adults diagnosed with one or more of the following: trauma- and stressor related disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, and/or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Each class of *Developing Spirituality for Stress Resilience* encouraged its participants in class to engage in a variety of music-related activities to inspire hope, feel part of a community, and let their spirits soar by together listening to music, reading aloud song lyrics, reflecting upon and discussing the lyrics' relevance to their lives, and singing. *Music Connects* was written during the second week of the semester when there was quite a bit of resistance from four participants to singing aloud. After writing the poem, I shared it with everyone the following week. The results are found in the poem.

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

multilingual abstract | mmd.iammonline.com

Biographical Statement

Marjorie Jacobs (MA in Social Change with a CAGS in Integrative Holistic Health Studies) is a psychiatric rehabilitation practitioner at the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation where she designs and teaches promising group interventions to adults and young adults diagnosed with a serious mental illness (SMI). In her work that is informed by positive psychology and neuroscience, she incorporates the expressive arts (music listening, singing, dancing, writing, and poetry) and a mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral approach in the rehabilitation process with the goals of facilitating mental health recovery and stress resilience.

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Music Connects

How to feel the spirit?

Listening to sweet, sweet music –
its rhythm resuscitating,
lifting us from the deep
swamp’s sludge and weeds,
harmonies and lyrics
leading us to daylight –
Here Comes the Sun –
streaming, gleaming
untangling dark thoughts
as we slowly stretch
and move outside ourselves.

How to ignite the spirit?

Singing together sweet, sweet music,
scaling up our comfort zone,
voices ascending
to an indigo sky
glowing with moonlight,
shooting stars launching dreams
we dare to hold,
joy resonating
but not for everyone.

How to sing when you dread it?

Notice fear and embarrassment
tightening throat and chest,
negative thoughts looping.
Hear yourself blurt out
I hate singing
I can’t sing.
Touch the stinging
memory of yourself
a child in class
believing *everyone else can*
but not me.

At this moment
rather than sitting paralyzed
or panicked
STOP!

Breathe in...
breathe out...
over and over
until you mouth the words
others are singing
stringing words together in rhythm.
Pause to breathe
deeper and longer
until you find yourself
softly chanting
words rounding
humming the melody
losing your *self* in chorus.

A song breaking out,
your spirit rings.