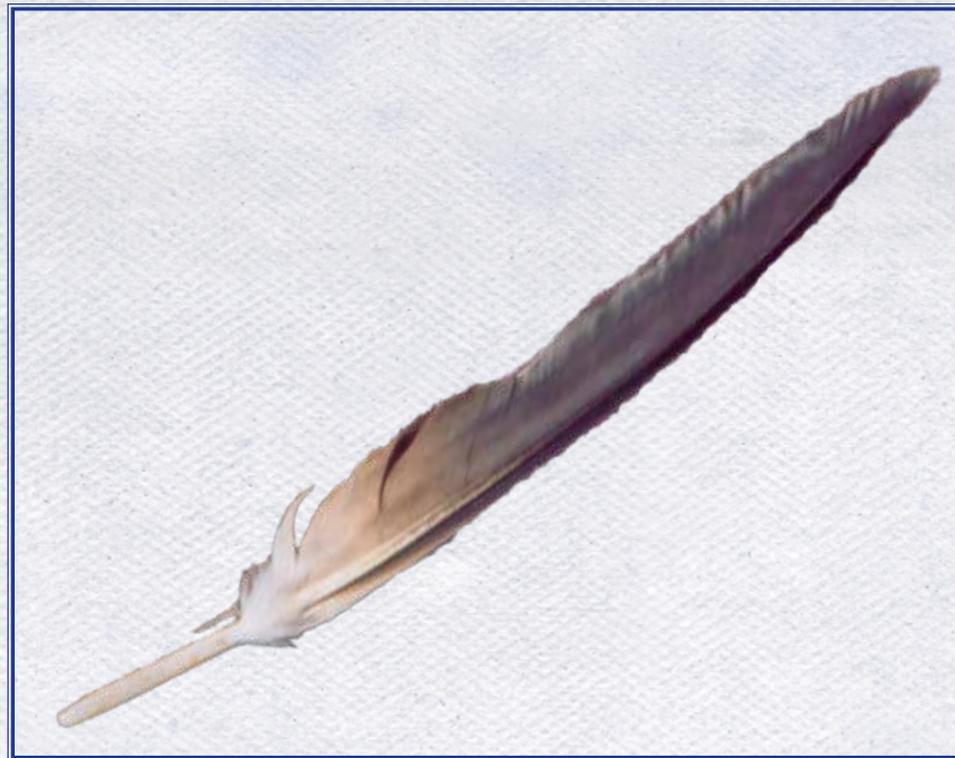


Take Flight to Family: Guided Imagery for Health and Healing



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Activity, Time and Materials

ACTIVITY:

Direct a guided imagery session rooted in the sharing of family holiday traditions and folklore. Use American Indian flute music as the vehicle for conducting a guided imagery session to positively impact the physical states of the participants, as well as to combat the emotional sense of loneliness. Guided imagery is documented to have a positive effect on physical and emotional states, such as heart rate, blood pressure, brain wave activity, and a sense of calm. This activity can be utilized in a group or individual setting.

TIME:

Seventy-five minutes over one session. (Forty minutes for the introduction, discussion, and sharing of pictures; thirty-five minutes in preparation for and conducting of the guided imagery session with American Indian flute music. The time will vary depending on the number of participants.)

MATERIALS:

- Family gathering pictures (Prior to meeting, ask participants to bring to the session one or two favorite pictures of family or loved ones. Encourage them to bring a picture taken during a family or holiday tradition, such as a wedding, a birthday, Christmas, or a family vacation. The person directing the activity plan also should bring one or two pictures.)
- Blueberries, junberries, and raspberries (Place the berries in bowls on the tables prior to the session.)
- Yellow flowers like sunflowers and daisies and/or violet-colored flowers like bluebells
- A good sound system to play a CD or digital recording
- The CD *Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music* by Dr. Linda Gourneau and Keith Bear
- The CD *On the Edge of the Wind: From the Mythic Landscape of the Dakotas* by Keith Bear
- The book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*

Note: Additional copies of both CDs mentioned herein can be obtained by contacting the North Dakota Council on the Arts. These CDs were specifically designed to optimize the physical and emotional impact of guided imagery by utilizing American Indian flute tunes with mid-to-low tonal range.

“THREE PLAGUES” (LONELINESS, BOREDOM, HELPLESSNESS):

This activity is designed to specifically address the sense of loneliness. Many elders in care facilities feel lonely. They have lost loved ones and friends. They often are removed from family and friends and do not see them as much as they would like to due to a variety of reasons. Yet they lack such obstacles and restrictions in their imaginations. Thus, the guided imagery session will allow the participants, in their imaginations and minds, to reconnect with loved ones. Loneliness and boredom is addressed by creating an opportunity for people to come together as a group and to share a common experience, family and holiday traditions, and family pictures. The sharing of pictures also encourages participants to open up to one another, to learn about one another, and to form friendships to further combat loneliness.

ASSOCIATED MEDICAL STUDIES:

Self-report survey results indicate that listening to music is a frequent source of positive emotions for older adults, and is related to issues of identity, belonging, and agency.

--Laukka, P. “Uses of Music and Psychological Well-being among the Elderly.” Journal of Happiness Studies 8, no. 2 (2007): 215-241.

A.M. Kumar et al. acknowledged the healing and relaxing effects of music therapy by way of release of neurotransmitters and neurohormones. They measured the concentrations of melatonin, norepinephrine, epinephrine, serotonin, and prolactin in the blood of male patients with Alzheimer’s disease in relation to a music therapy intervention. That intervention consisted of “30- to 40-minute sessions of music therapy 5 times per week for 4 weeks.” Their results recorded that “melatonin concentration in serum increased significantly after music therapy and was found to increase further at 6 weeks follow-up. A significant increase was found between baseline values and data recorded after the music therapy sessions, as well as at 6 weeks follow-up. Norepinephrine and epinephrine levels increased significantly after 4 weeks of music therapy, but returned to pre-therapy levels at 6 weeks follow-up. . . . Increased levels of melatonin following music therapy may have contributed to patients’ relaxed and calm moods.” [Abstract]

--Kumar, A.M., F. Tims, D.G. Cruess, M.J. Mintzer, G. Ironson, D. Lowenstein, R. Cattan, J.B. Fernandez, C. Eisdorfer, and M. Kumar. “Music Therapy Increases Serum Melatonin Levels in Patients with Alzheimer’s Disease.” Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine 5, no. 6 (November 1999): 49-57.

Cover photo: Eagle “breath feather” found at the front of the wing and used to steer the bird in flight. Eagles, which are considered sacred to American Indians, are said to bring messages and to help people.



Keith Bear started playing the flute when he worked as an orderly at the Flagstaff Medical Center in Arizona. As he recalls, "Some of the patients were immobile, bandaged, and ill. They were physically hurting, but I could see they were emotionally hurting, too. I had traded with a traditional man for a flute, so I took that flute and played for them. It was powerful. The flute brought tears and healing. It was then, I knew the power of the flute to heal and transform." (Image courtesy of Troyd Geist, North Dakota Council on the Arts.)

Activity Plan

SESSION I (75 MINUTES):

(Forty minutes for the introduction, discussion, and sharing of pictures; thirty-five minutes in preparation for and conducting of the guided imagery session with American Indian flute music.)

I. Prior to conducting this activity, the person directing it should read the related article, “Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music,” that is included in this toolkit in order to better understand the background and context of the guided imagery process. This activity can be conducted in either a group or individual setting. The person conducting this activity should explain that those in attendance will participate in a guided imagery session rooted in the sharing of family holiday traditions and folklore. The activity leader should read aloud from the following explanation:

Evidence from medical studies indicates that music has positive effects on a variety of physiologic functions and parameters, such as reduced anxiety, reduced cardiac complications, reduced blood pressure and heart rate, increased immune cell messengers, a drop in stress hormones, and a boost in natural opiates.

The awareness of sound and music’s impact on people is not new, however. For ages, religions have recognized the power and influence of sound and music on physical and psychological states. Indeed, sound and music is a

universal theme in every great spiritual and mystical belief system, and has been used in that context to intensify members’ communion with the divine. Such examples include Gregorian and Tibetan chants.

Imagery is the currency of dreams and daydreams, memories and reminiscences, plans, projections, and possibilities. It is the language of the arts, the emotions, and most importantly, of the deeper self. Imagery is a window to your inner world; a way of viewing your ideas, feelings, and interpretations. It is a means of transformation and liberation from unconscious distortions that may be directing your life and shaping your health.

Guided imagery combines imagery with voice, music, and sound to explore and address issues, whether these be physical, emotional, social, or otherwise. In so doing, the process helps one to accrue potential health benefits.

Note: This activity should be held in a space where people can talk comfortably with one another. The space should be comfortable, warm, quiet, intimate, and should produce a sense of tranquility. If possible, it should be held in a place where the lights can be dimmed when the guided imagery begins. For the conversational part of the plan, perhaps have the participants sit in a circle or around a table,

which will make it easier to converse and show pictures to others in the group. In small bowls on the table, provide blueberries, juneberries, and raspberries as snacks. Also place yellow and/or violet-colored flowers on the table. (These specific berries and flowers will later serve as visual cues during the guided imagery session.)

2. Then ask the following question:

- Have any of you ever experienced a sense of calm at a religious ceremony or while listening to music? (Participants may have examples to share from church or from other spiritual contexts. Engage them by asking them to share and describe those experiences.)

3. The person directing this activity now should explain that each person was encouraged to bring and share with the group a picture of a loved one or loved ones taken at a family or holiday gathering, such as a birthday or anniversary party, a wedding, a family vacation, the Fourth of July, Christmas, or Halloween. Explain that all cultures emphasize a gathering of friends and family in celebration of significant holidays and the important times in a person's life. Then read some examples of holiday observances in the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers*. The reading of examples is intended to help break the ice and to encourage participants to share information about the family and holiday pictures they've brought along with. The following are a few examples of what can be read aloud to the group:

- folklore item "2. The New Year's Mother" on page 196,

Chapter 8

- folklore item "14. Easter Notes" on page 199, Chapter 8
- folklore item "24. Jack-O-Lanterns" on page 208, Chapter 8
- folklore item "40. More 'Juleboking' Memories" on page 215, Chapter 8
- folklore item "51. Anniversary Surprise Party" on page 219, Chapter 8

4. After reading these examples and to engage the participants in conversation, the person directing the activity should share one or two of their own personal pictures with the group. Pass the pictures around, so that each person can look at them. The person directing the activity should become a part of the group by sitting down with the participants. (It would be easier to show and share pictures if everyone was sitting around a table or sitting in a circle. This more intimate seating arrangement will make it more natural for participants to share and converse, as opposed to being seated facing the front of the room as if in a lecture.) While the pictures are being passed around, tell the group who the person or people are in the pictures, during what celebration or family gathering the pictures were taken, and a little about how your family celebrated the occasion.

Then ask the others to share and talk briefly about the pictures they've brought along with them. Again, who are in the pictures? At what celebration or gathering were the pictures taken? How did you celebrate the occasion? Encourage the participants to pass their pictures around, so that everyone can take a look at them. Again,

sitting in a circle makes this easier and much more intimate. Once the pictures are back in the owner's hands, the next person who volunteers to share can begin.

Note: In such activities, it is important to stimulate as many of the five senses as possible to better connect the participants with the subject matter or activity at hand. For instance, the pictures can both be seen and be felt. Additionally, while reminiscing works well for people in the early stages of dementia who are trying to hang onto memories, it may be frustrating for those who are in the middle to late stages of the disease. It is in this way that stimulating the use of other senses, such as touch and sight, may help to better invoke the participants' memories. Or, for those individuals who may be in the middle to late stages of the disease, they can be encouraged to simply describe what they see in the pictures they've brought along with them with no pressure to remember any names or specifics. Again, the berries and flowers set on the table will provide visual, olfactory, and taste cues specifically connected to the upcoming guided imagery session.

5. The person leading this activity now should begin the guided imagery phase of the activity. It is important to have all electronic devices (such as cellphones, televisions, and radios) out of the room or turned off. Tell the participants to sit where and how they feel most comfortable and relaxed. Ask the participants to hold their pictures and to look at the people that are captured in them for a few moments. Inform the participants that a recording will be played and that they should relax and follow the narration.

Dim the lights. Then ask the participants to close their eyes and focus on their breathing. Guide them in this exercise by slowly saying, "Take a deep breath, drawing in through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. In through the nose, and out through the mouth. In through the nose, and out through the mouth."

Play Track 2, "Take Flight to Family," from the CD *Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music*. The track will run approximately twenty-three minutes. (Turn up the volume loud enough so that everyone can hear, but not so loud that it is disruptive to contemplative relaxation and imagining.)

6. At the conclusion of this phase of the activity plan, encourage but do not pressure the participants to share how the guided imagery and music made them feel and what they imagined. (Expressing what one imagines allows even people with forms of dementia to participate by taking the pressure off of activities that involve memory. Thus, more people are able to interact.) Remind them that they are welcome to stay and share in the snacks provided: the blueberries, juneberries, and raspberries.

Note: After this activity is complete, people usually do not want to lose what they have created with their imaging. They should be encouraged to use that "vision" when they are in a quiet space. Using American Indian flute music while doing so may help them more easily reach that space because of its soothing and melodic sound. The CD utilized in this activity plan features tunes in the

mid-to-low tonal ranges to maximize physiologic effects. While the capacity for imagery varies from person to person, every individual will experience the effects of guided imagery according to his or her own personal physiology. Dr. Gourneau expects that people who meditate regularly will have longer-lasting effects, while some may experience only short-term effects, and others may have physiological effects that occur only for the duration of the session. Regardless of the duration, any effect is beneficial.

Therefore, regular non-pressure, relaxed practice is encouraged. It is recommended that this guided imagery session and others like it be utilized periodically, perhaps weekly or monthly. Even simply listening to melodic, relaxing music of mid-to-low tonal range like that in many American Indian flute tunes, while focusing on breathing and imagining, can help to create a positive reaction. It is in this way that music can serve as the guide for ongoing imagery sessions. Once the guided imagery procedure is introduced, practiced, and mastered via the *Take Flight* CD, the imaginative and meditative process may continue without narration with the use of the purely instrumental CD, *On the Edge of the Wind: From the Mythic Landscape of the Dakotas*, which features sounds of nature with traditional flute music by Keith Bear.

OPTIONAL SUGGESTION:

If possible, utilizing a musician or musicians in live performance for such an activity is very much recommended. Physician Linda Gourneau and her son Brendan Gourneau, an American Indian traditional flute player, both have observed that utilizing live music, and having an actual heartbeat at the end of the flute, creates even greater benefits for the participants through guided imagery.

AUTHOR • DR. LINDA GOURNEAU:

Dr. Gourneau graduated from the University of North Dakota Medical School in 1989, completed her Family Practice residency in 1992, completed a Bush Leadership Fellowship in 2002 involving a self-designed study of Native American healing methods in North Dakota, and completed an Integrative Medicine fellowship directed by Andrew Weil, MD, at the University of Arizona School of Medicine in 2002. She was certified in Medical Acupuncture through the Helms Medical Institute and UCLA in 2005. In 2005, Dr. Gourneau also opened the Natural Journey Center for Integrative Medicine in Bismarck, North Dakota, which provides medical acupuncture, family medicine, and integrative therapies that include guided imagery.

AUTHOR • BRENDAN GOURNEAU:

Brendan is a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes, in northwest North Dakota. He also is a descendant of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota. Brendan has spent his entire life participating in Native American cultural activities. Through the North Dakota Council on the Arts' *Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program*, Brendan apprenticed in traditional American Indian flute music and flute-making with master musician and Mandan-Hidatsa traditionalist Keith Bear. Brendan performs for public schools and other programs throughout North Dakota. He has used flute-making and playing to help students who are blind feel more connected to their school community. Brendan helped to design and provide services to workshops facilitated by the Natural

Journey Center for Integrative Medicine, addressing mind, body, spirit, and emotional healthcare. Brendan has also provided the flute music for guided imagery sessions and workshops facilitated by the Natural Journey Center for Integrative Medicine.

AUTHOR • TROYD GEIST:

Troyd is the state folklorist with the North Dakota Council on the Arts who is charged with encouraging the preservation and continuation of folk and traditional arts, heritage, and culture. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Sociology/Anthropology from North Dakota State University, and has participated in and conducted projects involving the impact of folk art and folk traditions on personal health and well-being. Those efforts include traditional storytellers working with fetal alcohol research and prevention programs, Bell's palsy as viewed and treated in traditional cultures, familial Alzheimer's disease tracking using anthropological methods, and the use of culturally infused narrative and traditional music for guided imagery. He directed the original *Art for Life* pilot project in 2001-2003, which measured the effects of long-term folk arts and artist interaction on combating the negative impact of the "Three Plagues" (loneliness, boredom, and helplessness) that many residents in elder care facilities experience. Subsequently, he developed the *Art for Life Program*. With Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz, Troyd co-edited, co-compiled, and co-authored the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*.