



Palliative Institute

Guided Imagery and Music Approaches for Palliative and Grief Care

March 12, 2026

Presented & Facilitated by: Sheila Killoran, Education Lead,
Covenant Health Palliative Institute

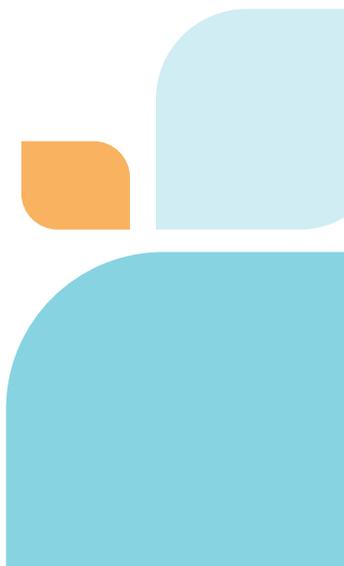
Host: Christy Roulstone, Covenant Health Palliative Institute



Reminders

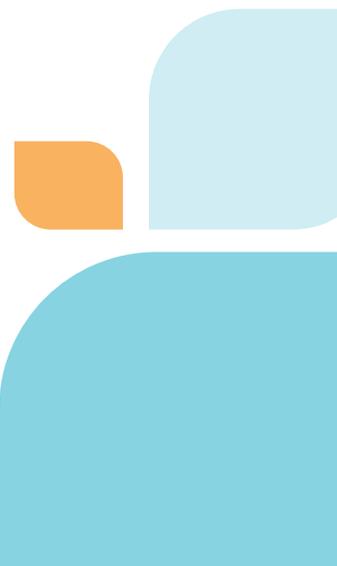
- This session is being recorded.
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Land Acknowledgement



Learning Goals

- Explore various visualization, guided imagery, and music techniques for use in clinical practice
- Understand the role of music and imagination for wellbeing
- Gain awareness of advanced practice considerations and contraindications
- Engage in a music imagery intervention and self-reflection



Outline

Background - Bonny Method

Psychosocial Spiritual needs

Applications & Contraindications

Experiential

Discussion



- Psychosocial spiritual supports
- Patient-centered
- Flexible & brief
- Anticipatory grief

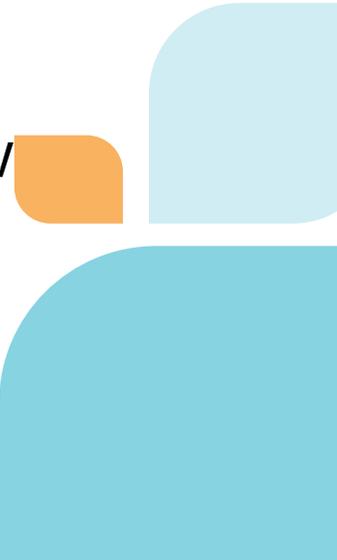
Pérez-Eizaguirre & Vergara-Moragues (2021)

Depending on their physical abilities, energy, and wishes, and goals patients may participate in music therapy by:

Making

- Playing instruments
- Singing - use of voice
- Song writing
- Improvisation
- Movement to music
- Creative arts to music
- Song choice

Responding

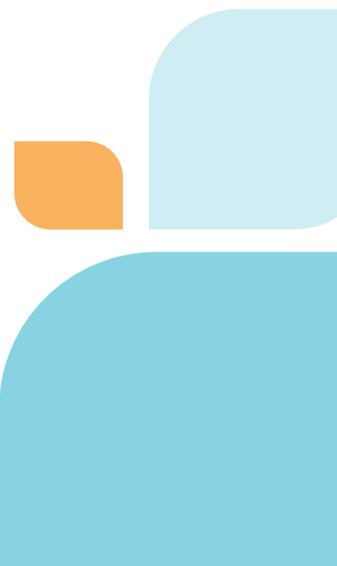
- Guided Imagery and Music
 - Music relaxation
 - Listening to music
 - Lyric analysis
 - Verbal processing
 - Reminiscence and life review
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The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM)

- Music-centered psychotherapy to explore inner experiences and imagery (Bonny, 2002).

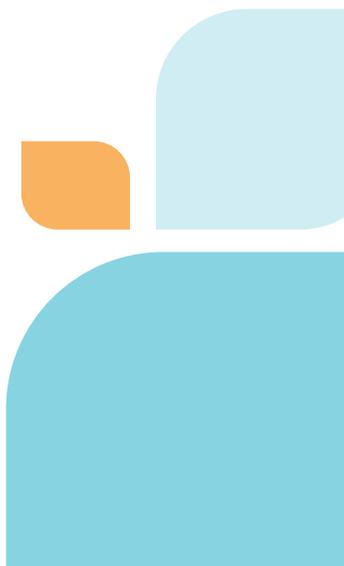
Specifically programmed music is used to facilitate a dynamic exploration of consciousness and inner experiences in support of physical and psychological transformation and well-being.

- Facilitated by a trained BMGIM guide
- Client centered, sensitive to cultural/ spiritual needs



BMGIM Fellows & Training Programs

- GIM Advanced Training: Capilano University, BC
- Fellow: Association for Imagery and Music (AMI)
 - <https://ami-bonnymethod.org/>
 - Journal of the Association for Music and Imagery
 - Find a practitioner
- European Association of Music and Imagery (EAMI)
 - <https://www.music-and-imagery.eu/>



Stages of Session

- Pre-talk
- Induction
- Linking image
- Music travel
- Postalk – Mandala

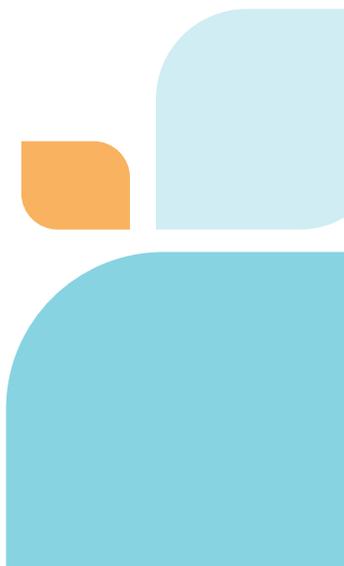


Video



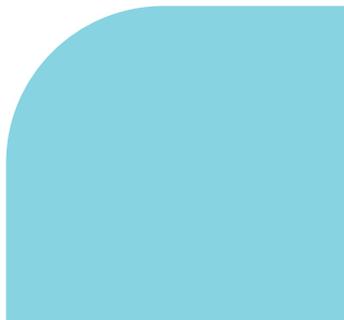
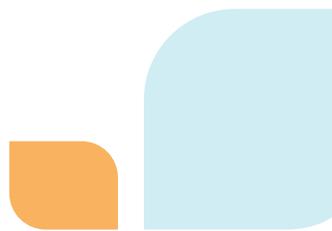
What is an image?

- Visual
- Kinesthetic
- Olfactory
- Memory
- Transpersonal
- "Sense" of knowing



Music

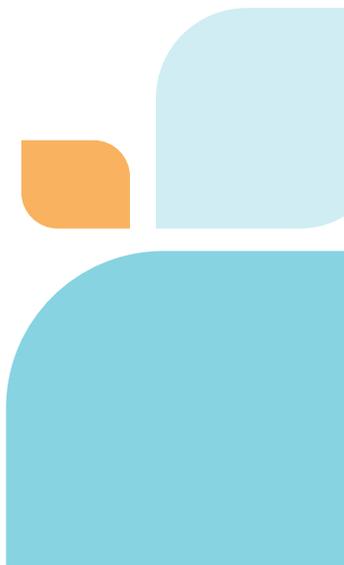
- Traditional Bonny Method GIM, Classical Music
- Specifically sequenced music
- Current adaptations range of music
- Spiritually/personally/culturally significant



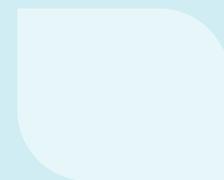
Goals

- Reduce anxiety & pain
- Transcend adversity and suffering
- Explore feelings associated with illness, loss, & fears of dying
- Strengthen internal resources & coping

Marr (1999); Cadrin (2006).

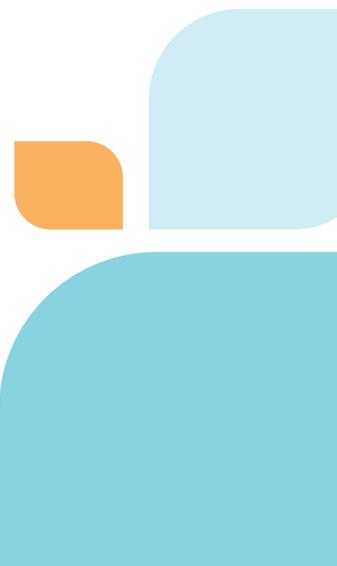


Psychosocial Spiritual Needs



Anticipatory Grief

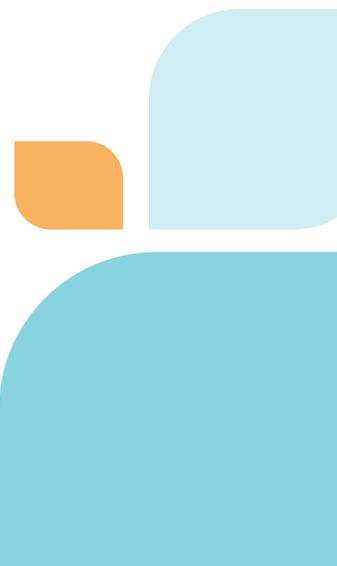
- The experience and symptoms of loss before a death occurs.
- Symptoms: sleep disturbance, fatigue, confusion, separation anxiety, fear, shock stress, guilt and death anxiety (Khanipour-Kencha, 2022; Marroquin, 2016)



Flourishing at End Of Life

- special opportunities for potential moral growth,
- consolidating one's life narrative,
- cultivating virtue, and
- deepening one's close social relationships.

Symonds (2024)



What is the palliative patient's experience of participating in BMGIM?

- 6 inpatients in Palliative Care Tertiary Unit, Montreal
- Ages 52-74, Mean age 60 years
- ESAS-r
- Qualitative Phenomenological inquiry
- Focused interviews after receiving 1-2 GIM sessions

Killoran, S. (2023) Facing death through music: Palliative patients' experience of guided imagery and music. *Journal of the Association for Music and Imagery*, 20, 27-50.



Deep Relaxation

"[The music] was bringing calmness into my lungs, relaxing me, making my breathing easier" - Pauline

"A time where I don't have to think about it...the mind relaxation went through my whole body! Relaxation for an hour"
- Daniel



Facing Death - St. Pierre

"We can accept death more easily through the music." - Thérèse

"He shows me that He's waiting for me." - Aimée



Support and wellbeing

“That place is perfect medicine for me! ... Amazing! [It’s] surprising you can give medicine to your own self!”

- Josette



Empowerment

"It's (imagery) something you can take away back with you. At 2 o'clock in the morning, you can just lie there. You don't have to open a book or turn on the light. You can take it with you or keep coming back to it."

- Brenda



Applications



Contraindications for BMGIM

- Patients must be free from confusion, dementia, or impaired cognitive function (Marr, 1999)
- Free from active psychosis, (Burns, 2001; Martin, 1993),
- Have the concentration and emotional energy to engage in the process (Marr, 1999),
- Able to report their experience verbally
- Not be actively dying, (Cadrin, 2006),



Adaptations - BMGIM

- Shorten elements of session
- Language of session
- Supportive music
- Fatigue and timing of session
- Post-talk next session, or leave supplies to work later



Adaptations- music and imagery

- Alternatives to “breath in” - breeze blowing,
- Warm blanket
- Language appropriate to patient needs
- Avoid Jacobsen’s tense/release if contraindicated



Adaptations - Imagery Script over Music

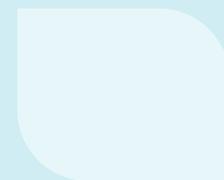
- Imagery
 - Pre-written script
 - Person's image to create the scene (re-tell)
- Music
 - Pleasant/preferred by the person
 - Not too relaxing ("Spa" music) with some gentle movement to invoke imagery
 - Sounds appropriate to scene ie: ocean waves for ocean scene
 - Grief- music may be emotional-take cues from person



**What examples of music and imagery
have you used?**



Experiential



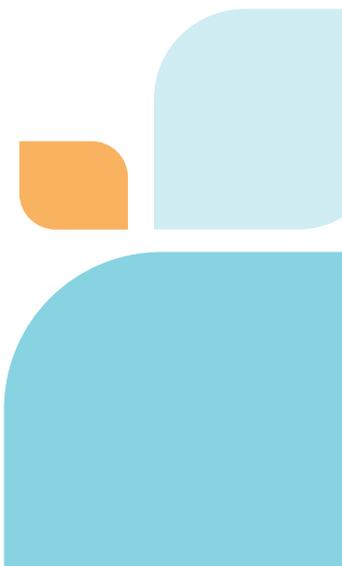


Vaughan Williams(1872-1958) "Rhosymedre" Prelude founded on a Welsh hymn tune

Discussion

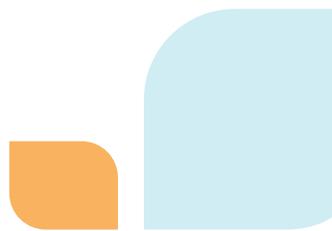
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Literature Review

- Cardiac Rehabilitation (Short, 2021); Medical Populations (McKinney & Grocke, 2018).
- Creative and accessible psychosocial intervention (O'Callaghan, 2013, Okamoto, 2005)
- Case studies in GIM in palliative care show potential for reduction in death anxiety (Cadrin, 2006, Marr, 1999)
- Qualitative research measuring grief and spirituality (Khanipour-Kenecha, 2002)
- Music therapy for spiritual and quality of life support (Cadrin, 2006, Marr, 1999, Killoran 2023)
- Supporting the pre-loss experience of caregivers (Clements-Corte, 2018)



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Evaluation



<https://redcap.albertahealthservices.ca/surveys/?s=CN7PETL3R7LFXCLY>

Upcoming Session

Session #6: Member Sharing

Date: April 9th, 2026

Facilitator: Sheila Killoran, MA, MTA, FAMI, Certified Music Therapist,
Education Lead, Covenant Health

Thank You!

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