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*"A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work"*

**PRAYERFUL MEDITATION AND BREATH RELAXATION THROUGH  
SPIRITUAL –ORIENTED MUSIC CONTEMPLATION:  
A A RELEVANT TOOL FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND EDUCATORS**

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**Presented at:  
NACSW Convention 2005  
October, 2005  
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Abstract

Working with clients calls for careful attention to their state of mind, their emotional level of functioning, body-awareness, and their level of performance. The process of social work intervention should not undermine the client's potential for self-discovery, self-fulfilment and productivity or their quest for spiritual insights and development. Three approaches which hold promise for unlocking the body's channel of intrapersonal dialogue and intrinsic communication include: 1) Breath Relaxation, (BR) 2) Worker Prompted, Client-Directed Mindfulness Meditation (MM) and the use of 3) Spiritually-Oriented, Music-Based Lyrical Themes (SOMBLT). The article provides a guide to the use of these approaches with clients. This article speaks to the need for such creative and uniquely supportive approaches for clients. It presents an account of clients and their response to these combined modalities of (BR), (SOMBLT) and (CDMM) used at the Brentwood Recovery Home. Implications are directed toward social workers in their quest to provide clients with appropriate spiritual incentives.

## Introduction

Minimal empirical attention has been directed to the combined application of 1) Breath Relaxation, (BR) 2) Worker Prompted, Client-Directed Mindfulness Meditation (CDMM) and the use of 3) Spiritually-Oriented, Music-Based Lyrical Themes(SOMBLT) as a means of spiritual personal growth and development for clients. The social work profession is currently undergoing a resurgence of interest regarding the issue of spirituality in social work as a valid area of investigation (Canda, 2002; Hugen, 1994; Marty, 2001; Rice, 2002; Tratter, 1989). For instance, a national survey of hospice social workers indicated conflict and role ambiguity for respondents because they were ill prepared to deal with issues of spirituality and provided recommendations for the education of social workers in this regard (Wesley, Tunney, & Duncan, 2004).

Meditation and mindfulness, not only in social work practice with clients, but also with social workers and social work educators themselves, has been shown to help individuals develop moment-to-moment awareness and learn how to respond to stress in more rewarding ways (Beuermann-King, Kitchen, & Bindseil, 2004; Biot-Gordon, 2004). In concert with Gaynor (2002) who has advocated deep relaxation and breath exercises, a refreshing perspective is provided here for social workers and educators as a viable tool to implement with clients especially when they feel drained, and run-down. Cornett (1998) explored the relevance of spirituality to the clinical process and described how to integrate issues of spirituality into every day practice by demonstrating a natural compatibility between spirituality and a constructivist approach to practice, regardless of what the personal religious beliefs and practices of a worker. Mindfulness Meditation (MM) is a soul-felt process which encompasses a mind/body/spirit approach to therapeutic intervention which allows a person to dwell in an inner way to the language of the body as experienced in breath relaxation/music/meditation. This paper presents Client-Directed Mindfulness Meditation (CDMM) as a tool to help clients in their own quest toward personal fulfilment by incorporating an “inner reflective awareness” of their own inner gift of agape (Tillich, 1954) or “self-reflective, artistic, accurate empathy” (SR-AAE). By nurturing their own

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

faith journey, with love and compassion, clients can be a beacon of light and hope to themselves and to those close to them particularly, those who are often *without* hope. The word love is used here in Tillich's (1954) ontological sense, where "*life is being in actuality and love is the moving power of life*" (p, 25). Using BSMFE in practice can bridge the gap between worker and client making intervention more practical and effective and also, through a spiritual 'love' in the agape sense of the term, assist clients to learn what life really is about. According to Tillich (1962), agape [the depth of love] involves an active engagement in the inner self of another in order to affirm the person's humanness.

Montello (2002) maintained that our own creative abilities may have been hampered and undermined in our earlier upbringing where we may have maintained an ambivalent relationship with music. This may have further impeded our access to the powerful life force which music holds. The three phases of (BR), (SOMBLT) and (CDMM) helps to free such blockage. According to Montello (2002), this particular emphasis on music provides an avenue for self-healing which is deeply intuitive, creative, spiritually arousing and '*fun*'. It encourages us to find and 'sing the song of our soul' on a daily basis, as we enjoy increasing states of well-being.

Dealing discretely with clients requires that social workers attend, listen, and respond to the *light* as well as the *darkness* and *vulnerability* in their lives. In effect, by sensitively assisting clients to examine their own thoughts, feelings, behaviours and experiences and thus, enable them to renew their own creative energy. Empathy requires the ability of a worker to enter into the feeling world of the client (Carkuff, 1969; Carkuff & Berenson 1977; Carkuff & Pierce, 1977; Carkuff & Anthony, 1979; Egan, 1986, 1990, 2002; and Rogers, 1980).

By plunging into the depths of their own inner truth, to uncover a sense of heaviness, burden and strife, clients are able to re-surface with a sense of awe, peace, joy, gratitude, exuberance and fulfillment and to once again give memory to their loftiest dreams and aspirations. Tillich acknowledged the 'existential emptiness of modernism' and proposed the ideals of 'agape' [unconditional love] and 'grace' [unconditional acceptance in the

Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

Rogerian modality] (Rogers, 1980) in a novel way to fill the void as well as to provide room for a ‘dramatic renewal’ through the ‘affirmation of love’. This calls us to a challenge of ‘collective responsibility’ to assist in making life meaningful, relevant and fulfilling for others. Agape or *therapeutic empathy* as well as “*self-reflective, advanced artistic accurate empathy*” (SR-AAAE) provides such an enriching avenue through which workers can accurately and sensitively attend in a musical vein to the inner dialogue of clients who are often yearning for an inward transformation. A *A caring heart* and a *A loving imagination* on the part of the work can go a long way in terms of providing a genuine, authentic presence to clients. (Keith-Lucas, 1972; Miley, O’Melia & DuBois, 2001). SR-AAE or acceptance of self and of others is closely paralleled to the highest form of love or ‘agape’ (Marty, 2001) which enters the dark, repulsive ravishes of the human condition in order to elevate it to a place of dignity, value and respect (Tillich, 1962). Egan, (2002) suggested transcending problems in living or issues at work by tapping unused potential and by taking advantage of new possibilities.

According to Tillich (1962), agape, unconditional acceptance or empathy, involves an active engagement in the inner self of another in order to affirm the person's humanness. The creative imagination allows for the artistic use of empathy by means of the worker internalizing the message of the client producing in a novel fashion a song which reflects the inner being of the worker. The worker’s artistic intervention is paramount in accessing the client’s emotional sphere of fear and helplessness thus, encouraging further self-disclosure and in the process, affective growth and learning (Aigen, 1993; Egan, 1986, 2002; Prochet-Munro, 1993; Prochet-Munro, 1995) and subsequently, shattering the walls that constrain the client from naming their own pain (Priestley, 1975). (CDMM) prompts clients by creating a positive mind frame, an optimistic level of affect and a productive soul journey that is integrally connect to the client’s “inner” and “outer” world.

As social workers dare to challenge clients toward self-disclosure, self-exploration and self-actualization, they must do this with care and diligence. SR-AAAE, through song, music, poetry, drama or prose, complemented with CDMM and BR, offers a pathway by which spiritual, sensory dimensions can unfold and can be helpful to social work

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

practitioners, educators and researchers in developing and expanding their own uniqueness delivery of service intervention. Campbell (1989) has referred to the powerfully-inspiring and the deeply reaching power of music, light sound and tone as a means of enlarging one's journey. According to Crandall (1986), music has a 'self-transformational' quality which can help us become aware of our inner nature on a daily basis. Montello (2002) has raised music as a path to healing creativity and radiant wholeness by using sound to '*root out*' and transform painful emotional states as well as to deal with painful physical injury. She believed that we have an innate ability to use music and sound to bypass the defences of the 'conscious mind' and move directly into the emotional/soul center where true healing can occur. In his review of Montello's work on the five levels of consciousness, Langone (2003) noted, when we listen to music that is uplifting and emotionally moving, the body reacts by releasing endorphins, our body's natural painkillers and as a result, this can be a powerful distraction from our intense focus on pounding pain rhythms. Gaynor (2002) further encouraged a mind-body-spirit approach to wellness to improved health and the quality of life through sound and deep relaxation exercises. He also encouraged his patients to breathe slowly, deeply and imagine infinite healing.

Khalsa identified the importance of breathing and meditation (Khalsa & Stauth, 2001). In twenty-five years of medical practice he adapted and refined the use of kundalini yoga, combined with meditation, as a modality which he refers to as Medical Meditation which he maintains is one of the newest and most cutting-edge advances in the field of integrative medicine (Khalsa & Stauth, 2001). According to Khalsa, Medical Meditation uses advanced meditations, which entail unique attributes such as: 1) specific breathing patterns; 2) special postures and movements, including exact positioning of the hands and fingers; 3) particular mantras, consisting of distinct, vibratory sounds; and 4) a unique mental focus. These various attributes fully involve the mind, body, and spirit of the mediator. The combination of all of these attributes exerts a synergistic effect, and endows Medical Meditation with far more power than standard meditation, which often involves simply relaxing. Consistent with the interventions of Medical Meditation, Sound Meditation (Gaynor, 1999) and Positive Psychology (Egan, 2002), (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) can

### Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

alleviate distress and affliction as well as promote wellness. By being gentle and honest with their own processes, clients can face and confront the inner battles which storm within them in the ups and down's of their lives

Often times, people will listen to *music* and do not pay attention to the lyrics. By carefully listening to the words of a song, this meditative-focus model allows clients to identify more accurately with their thoughts, feelings behaviours and experiences in relation to their life situation. It provides a catalyst for clients who yearn for a deeper sense of spiritual fulfilment in their own lives and who want to inspire others by the “living actions” of their own spirituality. It also offers clients who more frequently than not need space in the hecticness of their lives to find a rightful avenue: 1) to bask in quiet moments of reflection, 2) to indulge in peaceful instances of listening to soft, gentle music, and 3) to acquaint themselves more frequently to soul focused meditation techniques. MM can be done within a ten or fifteen minute break period and can be the impetus for breaking away from ‘self defeating binds’ and ‘bow-beating behaviours’ which confront clients. In this way, they reap the benefits of engaging in these creative moments of solitude and self-absorption, maximizing the potential of the energy they have available for themselves and the expanding possibilities that this new found freedom can have in their relation to those close to them.

#### (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) with Clients

In more precise terms, (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) entails the ability of the clients to establish a quiet space within themselves and their body awareness, taking time to notice if anything inside them needs listening to at the moment (Gendlin, 1981; McMahon & Campbell, 1993). The music and lyrics, with their accompanied *Etiology and Concepts*, *Reflective Themes* and *Key Topical Words and Phrases from the Song* (see Figure 1) provide an avenue for clients to identify with what might be standing between them and feeling good at the moment. It is an invitation in an “owning way”, for them to move more closely with what their body is trying to tell them. Combined with the consciousness of one's breathing, a client can come to a place of inner tranquillity where something inevitably surfaces which will invariably assist them to change.

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

According to McMahon (1993), this is important because, sometimes, external issues that disturb us remain the same. But if we carry them inside in a way that allows them to change and even surprise us with fresh meaning, that makes a real difference in how we feel. An unobtrusive approach for social workers who are using MM with clients is that it allows them to attend to the stressful events in the lives of their clients, in their workplace, or to heed more frightening painful feelings which require a listening ear. As McMahon (1993) maintained: "When I can hold my hurt feelings in a gentle way, the story underneath them breaks through." (p. 9). He goes on further to explain how Gendlin (1981) coined the term of "felt-sense" to describe not only emotions or feelings and physiological sensations an individual can "own" by consciously pointing out to their presence, but the body sense for a "more" that is always an intrinsic part of anything such individuals might feel." (p. 13). Thus, individuals who walk through the combined use of (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) process can begin to understand, internalize, and respond in a significant way to their own inner truth as it relates to the *music* and the *lyrics* they hear. They can respond to their 'musical child within' and feel the vibration of unconditional love 'well' through their inner being where the rhythmic flow, emotion and movement is both effortless and natural (Montello, 2002; Schnebly-Black, 1997).

### The Body's Call To Respond To Its Own Inner Truth

The role of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) is to provide a medium for social workers to reduce stress in their clients and where they can become energized by releasing the pressure which builds up in the body's armament, consciously or unconsciously, against the perils and hazards of the workplace. This is best done when clients can find alternative ways by which they can be more "*present*" and true to themselves and to the important people in their lives. For instance, many of the troubles and unsettled issues related to any problem stem from a client's inability to listen to, be in or dwell inside the negative feelings that arise as a result of unresolved conflicts that may consume them. They become separated more often than not from their bodies as a way of coping with pain. Since many adults around them do not know how to 'be' with their own pain, they are incapable of helping the grieving person to be with theirs (McMahon, 1993; McMahon & Campbell, 2003). This is

#### Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

why it is so difficult for some individuals to get back on track in the mainstream of society, as few people know how to be with a grieving person in an unobtrusive manner. (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) provides the internal assistance and succour. McMahon holds that we are talking here not merely of cognitive resolution of an issue but of a body-felt process of problem-solving which brings about a completely different change that one might expect through a mere cerebral or antiseptic approach to "fixing things". By being fully present to the memory, symbol and experience which arises as a result of a Meditative focus, a client invariably finds themselves caught up into an awareness that "flows beyond past, present and future" (McMahon & Campbell, 2004, p. 93).

Meditative Breath Relaxation reduces anxiety when dealing with palliative care patients and clients who have experienced the loss of a loved one (Toy, 1994). It entails "being there" for a client in an inner-reflective and facilitative way and capturing the substance of the client's verbal and non-verbal communication. Meditative Relaxation entails the worker's ability to move clients through various mind, body and soul processes for the purpose of enhanced growth and development and assist them in the manner in which such individuals experience their world at the cognitive, affective, behavioural and experiential level. (BR), (SOMBLT) and (CDMM) reflect the worker's ability through 1) the power of music and song, 2) the client-directed worker promptings, and 3) the inner dialogue of the client to further engage the client in the inner processes of the mind, the interior dimension of the body and the internal dimension of the soul. It utilizes the client's "inner workings" of the body, and enables clients, through the worker to internalizing their message, fosters client's sense of competence, efficacy, and responsibility in achieving their own goals (Gallant, & Holosko, 2000)

Meditative Relaxation Assumptions maintain that a relaxation framework combined with background music and worker-prompted, client-directed suggestions provides an effective venue to assist clients in putting a sense of meaning to their inner world of experience. (BR) can 1) alleviate stress and affliction, 2) promote wellness, 3) challenge inner battles and conflicts, 4) improve posture, 5) rejuvenate mental focus, and 6) increase motivation, incentive and enthusiasm. (BR) 1) sets the pace for music-relaxation meditation,

#### Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

2) removes the boggling distractions of the mind, 3) provides us with an avenue to listen to the “language of the heart”, and 4) reduces distractions with the outside world. Music-Oriented (CDMM) provides an opportunity to allow music to speak to one’s inner disposition, and allows one to connect to one’s own inner language of the heart.

It provides an opportunity to allow music to speak to one’s inner disposition. It allows the message of the guide to draw forth relevant hidden messages and veiled secrets. It also permits one to connect to one’s own inner truth by listening to their own messages and internal dialogue. In effect music-oriented (CDMM) 1) impresses new ideas for enhanced self-discovery, and greater self-actualization, 2) allows the message of the guide to draw forth relevant hidden messages and veiled secrets. The suggestive communications of the guide increase one’s capacity through a deepened sense of comfort and security. It pays close attention to the body’s chakras and the solar plexus [the whole central portion of the body].

(CDMM) allows our “whole being” to absorb the music, the self-directed message of the guide and one’s own inner voice of truth, beauty and inner solitude. Music-oriented (CDMM) increases contentment, enhances self-worth and self-confidence, makes one more self-reliant, and predisposes one to good health and mental stability. It also reinforces one’s personal beliefs and values. It forwards the relaxation phase into one’s daily life and work. It makes us more loving towards ourselves and more lovable towards others. (CDMM) magnifies the sense of unity and connectedness with our higher power, makes us more humble in appreciating the splendor of our bodies and the grandeur of the universe, and makes everything that we do easier, less troublesome, less monotonous and more enjoyable. Through this process, one can come to this place whenever and as often as one wishes, continued practice makes the pensive, self-reflective exercise more and more effortless, one can experience an “eternal moment” of bliss where there seems to be not past or future but simply one indefinable PRESENT. (CDMM) can make one feel safe and “spiritually fit”, one can feel “better than ever” and “better in every way”, one can feel refreshed, revitalized and rejuvenated.

#### Using (BR) (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) With Clients

This paper presents an account of a series of client interviewing sessions using, at the Brentwood Recovery home in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. During a four year time period, 22 clients dealing with the loss of a loved one, participated in a study using the above three modalities to facilitate the process of music, breath relaxation and mindfulness mediation. The knowledge-building evidence-based practice work of Gallant, Holosko, & Gorey, 1998; Gallant, Holosko, Gorey and Lesiuk (1997), Gallant and Charbonneau, 1994); Gallant, Gallant, Gorey, Holosko, and Siegel (1998), Gallant, Holosko, and Siegel (1997) and Gallant & Siegel, (1995) has provided the impetus for exploring and expanding the combined use of (SOMBLT), focusing and mindfulness meditation as essential components of intervention. Advancing this process further, we were interested in combining the use of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) anchored in self-reflective themes as part of the intervention with clients dealing with grief thus providing them with an avenue for inner reflection and rejuvenation.

(BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) have been time-tested as a systematic means for achieving inner peace and tranquillity. MM has been proven to be helpful in deepening the felt-sense of ones inner journey. (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) are a powerful tools for inner dialogue and metenoia (change of heart). The use of these dimensions can enhance self-directive empathy and judicious self-exploration. In addition, a unique means of journal writing provides additional impetus to the therapeutic journey.

#### Interventions Used

One of the primary interventions used and the one emphasized in this paper is the medium of (CDMM) The following provides a word for word description of the script used by the worker with the client following the use of the (SOMBLT) and the parallel use of breath relaxation (BR).

The following expert provides the script used by the social worker in guiding the client through Music-Oriented, (CDMM).

The purpose of this meditative prompting process using 1) instrumental music, 2) the inner directed voice of the worker, your inward vibrations of the heart is to help you foster a deeper level of awareness within yourself and provide more fulfillment in your life. Using this method on a daily basis will assist you in gaining more self-awareness, self-worth and self-confidence. It will also strengthen your level of self-

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

determination and personal decision-making. You may use this process as a means of expanding your horizons and increasing your sense of hope and individual accomplishment. Feel free to come time and time again to this rich source of reinforcement in your daily life on a regular basis.

Identify yourself with the gentleness of my promptings, the soothing sway of the music and your own inner voice. Identify with your own inner truth and beauty in an inner language of the heart. Absorb the promptings, the music and your own inner messages as you delve into your own creative body-soul-spirit. Create your own music in your heart and embrace the inner communication which comes to you. Trust the darkness, entering into the deep of it all, and how it will bring you to the light of your own certainty, of your own splendour and of your own decency and integrity. Sit back and remain calm and quiet breathing inward and outward, inward and outward, inward and outward – relishing in every breath of life that you inhale and every breath that you exhale. YES! YES! OH, YES! RISING, RISING, FALLING, FALLING. Be conscious of the preciousness of the air you breathe and the expansive beauty inside and outside of you. Listen to the promptings, the vibrancy of the music and your own still voice from within. Stay calm and peaceful, calm and peaceful, quiet and undisturbed, still and serene. Idly listen to the promptings; sluggishly take note of the splendour of the music and the magical quality of your own inner voice. Nonchalantly and almost absent-mindedly listen with rigor and intensity to your own promptings of the heart. Allow yourself to be unreservedly and outrightly tranquil and undisturbed; fully satisfied and at ease with your own inner self. “I am more serene, more quiet, more subdued and more at peace with myself.”

“I am using this soothing process as a pathway to my deep being, into the depth of my soul, into the language of the heart, to create a memorable symbol, a song of my own making and a recognition of my own beauty in the world. I am becoming a more beautiful person each and every day. I will relax. I will relax and go to sleep. RISING, RISING – FALLING, FALLING. I will breathe deeply and slowly so that this process of spirit penetrates profoundly into my inner journey of the soul. So this process will penetrate the very fibers of my mind and soul. Listening to the music, your voice and my own inner promptings of the spirit is very consoling, reassuring and vivifying. Listening to the music, your voice and my own inner promptings of the spirit is very soothing to me. I feel delighted. I am fascinated. It fascinates me, it intrigues me. And as I listen I become more and more relaxed. As I listen I become more and more relaxed. I am very peaceful and very calm. I am very peaceful and very calm. I am at peace with myself, and the world at large. I am at peace with myself and the world at large. I will listen. I will listen very carefully. I will listen very carefully. I like this solitude, this solitary journey into my own truth.”

Whether I am slumber state or bright eyed and alert, I will pay careful attention so that I may absorb, so that I may allow these thoughts and ideas to penetrate in and through me for my inner growth and self advancement. I enjoy listening to the gentle

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

sway of the music, like ocean waves, to the soothing ness of the voice and to my own inner promptings. It relaxes me more and more all the time that I listen. It calms me, it reduces the mind boggling jumble of the brain, and it eases the turmoil in my body. Yes the more frequently I direct my attention to this process, I feel safe, more secure, more reliable. It makes me enter the twilight zone, the land of slumber. It makes me dozy and lethargic, deeply enthralled by my own inner journey of the spirit. And I am more tranquil, more serene, more restful and more quiet within. I marvel inwardly at flow of the music, the sensitivity of the voice and my own murmurs of the heart. I marvel and rejoice. I am hearing these sensational whispers of harmony and accord with great interest and enthusiasm. Yes! Yes! Yes! I am totally absorbed and riveted by this inward process of the heart. I will follow these promptings. I will follow these suggestions. I enjoy how engrossed I am this phenomenon. I enjoy this happening very much. I enjoy this soulful event very much. I feel an intensity of spirit, fully engrossed in the beauty of the moment, wrapped up in an unconceivable symphony of the heart. And I will follow through on this inner journey. I will not stop here. I will put these suggestions into effect in my daily life and with those close to me. Yes! Yes! Yes! In this way I will become more fruitful, more engaging and more considerate. Yes! Yes! Yes! In this way I will become more and more fruitful, more engaging and more considerate. I will be more and more proficient in all my undertakings. I will emphasize this positive thinking in my everyday life without hesitation. I am beginning to feel more whole and more wholesome. I like the real me.

I feel more unified and integrated. I am united with Mother Earth and Father Sky. My breath is rising from the earth and rising to the sky. My breath is falling from the heavens and plunging to the earth. I am united with Mother Earth and Father Sky. My breath is rising from the earth and rising to the sky. My breath is falling from the heavens and plunging to the earth. My breath is falling from the heavens and plunging to the earth. RISING, RISING, FALLING, FALLING. RISING, RISING, FALLING, FALLING. RISING, RISING, FALLING, FALLING. I will work from the strength within myself in unison with my higher power. I feel a sense of relatedness with the whole human race. I am at peace with myself. I am at peace with the world. I am at peace with those around me. I wish all people to be well, happy and peaceful. I wish myself to be well, happy and peaceful. I am stirred to think good things, I am moved to feel good feelings and I am stimulated to do good things. Yes! Yes! Oh Yes! I am stirred to think good things, I am moved to feel good feelings and I am stimulated to do good things. I will allow the music, the voice and my own inner promptings to become more effective and productive in my daily life. I am becoming more whole and alive. The future is looking bright and the present feels safe and secure. I feel so safe and secure. I feel reassured and delighted in my new found freedom.

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

One! Slowly and gently, I am going to draw you out of this peaceful place. I am going to draw you out of this slumber sleep. I am going to bring you back to consciousness and out of your journey of self-discovery. I am going to bring you back to consciousness and out of your journey of self-discovery. Two! You are taking you time to balance your two worlds, softly and calmly in awe and wonderment at what has transpired for you. Coming up slowly now. Three! At the clasp of my hand you will come awake, bright and cherry, in solemn amazement. You will open your eyes. Be widely alert and rejuvenated. Refreshed and unburdened. You will have a healthy outlook on things in you and in your life. You will feel more determined than ever to carry through on the findings of your inner journey thus being one with God and the universe, one with yourself and all of creation. You will feel more attuned to your surrounding, more at one with all of reality. At the clasp of my hands you will open your eyes. You will feel the way the feel when you are deeply at one with your real self. Four! You coming out of your slumber now faster and more speedily, prepared to embrace the outside world. Five! (Worker clasps his hands) Bright eyed and dazzling. Bright eyed and dazzling. Feeling fully refreshed and rejuvenated, vibrant and alive

### Procedure

This process involved choosing a series of selective interviews over a four year period with 22 clients who were dealing with a life-threatening or who has lost someone close to them. The participants were provided with the experience of 1) Breath Relaxation, (BR) 2) Worker Prompted, Client-Directed Mindfulness Meditation (CDMM) and 3) Spiritually-Oriented, Music-Based Lyrical Themes (SOMBLT). The format for each session was comprised of 1) the introduction of therapeutic lyrical theme and concept based upon the client present life situation. For example, using selective interviewing sessions, one concept dealt with the divergent aspects of *peace* and *turmoil* in life as evidenced in the song “*Among the Wildwood Trees*”. A second concept identified the elements of *trust* and *weariness* at the oftentimes immensity life’s problems as revealed in the song “*You Raise Me Up*”. Figure 1 illustrates these key elements of the concepts in the intervention process as the foundation for moving into the CDMM.

### Song/Concept 1: “Among the Wildwood Trees” – Awareness of Self and Others

Etiology and concept. The first song: “*Among the Wildwood Tress*” was composed by the first author while attending a one week retreat in the Wildwoods of California, just above the Russian River, two miles from San Francisco. It relates to Concept 1 of

Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

'*awareness of self and others*'. Its "*Etiology*" stemmed from the need to capture the peace and simplicity of being one with God, with nature, and with fellow journeymen from all walks of life. The song depicts joy, splendour and creativity while lamenting those who choose to remain pessimistic and forlorn. If we can find our Eden Garden, we can have a taste of bliss in this world. When one's heart is open to experience, there is a cosmic connectedness with perception, sensation, fantasy, imagination, knowledge and the fullness of life. This outward experience can grace and enhance our whole sense of pleasure, sensuousness, beauty, truth, art, functioning and freedom. As we dare to break our finite boundaries, we discover the richness of being in touch by the value and goodness of other people.

Reflective themes. This song relates to such *Reflective Themes as*: 1) Appreciation, 2) Caring and Sharing, 3) Friendships and Fellowship, 4), 'Peace', Unity and Oneness, and 5) 'Turmoil' and Barriers

Key topical words and phrases from the song. There are *Key Topical Words and Phrases from the Song* which clients can readily identify with in the meditative focusing process such as 1) 'Community', 2) 'Solitude' and Splendour, 3) Save Haven, 4) Optimism, and 5) Wonder and Ecstasy. The lyrics are found in Appendix A, Song # 1 Lyrics "*Among the Wildwood Trees*"

(BR) and (CDMM). Following an explanation of the song's etiology and participants' exposure to the concept of their *awareness of self and others*, the themes of *peace and turmoil* and the key words and phrases such as *solitude and community*, they were asked to provide a verbal response to the lyrical composition and then invited to grow silent and through BR and CDMM, reflect upon their inner experience of the above input. Clients were guided through a focused meditation by quieting their minds while being conscious of their breathing. The instrumental version of the song selection was played for the CDMM.

One client remarked: "I was listening intently to the lyrics as my body began to feel a tension and uneasiness with the words: "*Some hold hate with sisters and with brothers and the fool scorns those who are so free. Yet there still the young and old together who with hearts of love breathe through the Wildwood trees.*" Suddenly, out of no where, I realized a

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

constriction in my chest. I became aware of an uncomfortable conflict I have had with my mother before she died and the fact that she never allowed me to reconcile the gap between us. As I listened again more carefully to the words: *“Now face to face the circle sound of music inflames our hearts and makes our souls as one. As drums do beat we feel a soul vibration and from the dark merge slowly t’wards the light.”* I began to feel a loosening up of the tension in my chest. It had moved to my neck. As I gave it a “gentle, caring presence,” my body began to feel a sense of release and liberation. It was emancipated, as it were, from the “shackles and chains” which separated me from my mother. As the song ran its course, I had a blissful feeling inside my body as I vividly recalled the words: *“If there were a place so near to heaven the Eden Garden well before the fall. But for to dance with soul and flesh united, t’would be Shangrila among the Wildwood trees. Yes! Shangrila among the Wildwood trees. I know my mother is with God and in a good place.”*

Song/Etiology and Concept 2: “You Raise Me Up” – Sensed Energy of a Universal Force

The second song: *“You Raise me Up”* sung by Gosh Grobin relates to the concept of a *‘sensed energy of a universal force’*. The *“Etiology”* of this song has a common appeal to the soul’s hunger for truth, beauty and love. When our lives are congruent with that of a higher power we can have peace and serenity in our lives, free from the shackles which otherwise hamper us. The intent of this song is to emote a sense of a Universal, Divine Cosmic Force that connects with the living and the dead. A sense of a Power greater than ourselves is clearly central to the song's focus. Being at one with a universal force moves us to a deepening peace and unity with ourselves and with others, especially those whom we have lost. It carries a wholesome message of hope, encouragement, and our innate human desire and purpose to support one another and to be there for one another. One might compare the 'YOU' in this song which to some would refer to GOD with the 'YOU' to the song: *“The Wind Beneath My Wings”* or connect it with the same feeling tone as *‘My Heart Must Go On’* by Celine Dion.

It is difficult to live in happiness when we persistently isolate ourselves from others. Caring is born out of the trials and tribulations we experience in life. In order to experience profound moments of companionship or fellowship, we need to find contentment in our lives

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

by breaking away from the stereotypic roles which we have falsely created and which we hide behind to mask our separateness from ourselves and others (Dass & Gorman, 1985). In order to enhance our own spiritual awareness and commitment to others in the counselling process it might be helpful to consider the following “*Reflective Themes of* : 1) Allowing A Universal Energy Into Our Being, 2) Feeling and Emotions, 4) The Inherent Need For People To Give And Receive Love, 5) Trust, and 6) Weariness.

Key topical words and phrases from the song. There are “*Key Topical Words and Phrases from the Song*” which clients can readily identify with in the meditative focusing process such as: 1) Empowerment, 2) Enhanced Self-Esteem and Renewal, 3) ‘Hope’ and ‘Healing’, 3) Openness To One's Inner Pathway, and 4) ‘Peace’, ‘Tranquillity’ and Solitude. The lyrics are found in Appendix A, Song # 2 Lyrics “*You Raise Me Up*”

(BR) and (CDMM). Focused meditation allows clients to concentrate on the body’s language which contains a wealth of intuition and inner wisdom. Following an explanation of the song’s etiology and the participants’ exposure to the concept of *sensed energy of a universal force* the themes of *trust and weariness*, and their exposure to the music and *lyrics*, they were asked to take some time to be in their body in a pensive and bodily awareness way while conscious of the pace and tempo of their breathing.

One participant’s response to this song was lucid and expressive:

As I listened to the words and began breathing and later was guided by the focused meditation, I was initially afraid at first to deal with my unresolved grief issues. I was unsure whether I should enter into this process as I had been holding back on a concern which has been causing me grave anxiety and consternation over the last six months since my brother died. As I listened to the soothing ness of the guide’s voice, the gentleness of the instrumental music and the subtle meaning of the lyrics, my body was brought to a place of contemplation and delight which I had not experienced in a long time. In the beginning of this experience I was, as the song suggested, actually “*down*” and “*my soul*” was “*so weary*” because I was “*walking on stormy seas.*” It seemed I couldn’t get myself out of this unexplainable rut. As I entered the silence in my body, a rich awareness came over me. I allowed the truth

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

inside of me “sit awhile with me” and this gave me an overwhelming feeling of relief and exhilaration. At the completion of the breathing, music and meditation, I felt an inner sense of peace and contentment without the mind-boggling jumble of the brain.

One respondent replied with the following:

I had entered the session with a splitting headache. I was not sure that I would be able to endure the “quieting” demands of the session. I am glad that I stayed. As I listened to the graceful movement of the music, the light heartedness of the lyrics, the words of the therapist and my own inner promptings of the heart, I could sense that my mind was taken away from its persistent preoccupation – the headache. I noticed myself smiling at the words: *“There’s a place where air is pure as sea breeze and the rain so crystal clear it shines. For where the wind plays music through the pine combs, it sounds like heaven throughout the Wildwood tress”* as it made me conscious that I was carrying a migraine that I didn’t need. As my body began to relax to the whimsical impulse of the music, my body gave way to almost magical release of the tension in my body. Before I knew it, my headache was gone. I felt an inner sense of refreshment and rejuvenated. It was hard for me as a somewhat cerebral and pragmatic lawyer to believe and witness in my own body language that such relief could actually occur in such a brief period of time. I felt mesmerised but grateful for discovering a way of healing the mind by paying more careful attention to the needs of my body. It works. WOW!

As I engaged in the meditative focusing process, I had the image of myself as being a minuscule speck of sand on the seashore. As my heart started to expand with the breathing and the hushed vibration of the music, an entirely divergent and much impressionable picture leaped upon me. I was taken away to a greater spectrum of a global nature where I felt one with the galaxies, the stars and the universe. What stunning sensations we can experience when we leave our soul open to the “spirit within.” I could feel sadness in the fact that I take myself too seriously and often lose

### Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

the sense of aliveness and exuberance. The more I look at my humanness, the more I feel a sense of the Divine and this song makes me feel “happy” about this awesome thought.

This song penetrated my heart. Though whimsical and imaginative, it captured for me a deep sense of gratitude for the work I do and the opportunity I have to be *sight* for those who are *blind at heart*, *hope* for the *hopeless* and *light* for those who have *no dream* to live by. The mediation makes my soul want to leap for joy and dance with the rhythm of the music.

Participants in the various sessions also expressed an increased comfort in terms of making music a relevant part of their own lives. One client expressed a hesitancy to enter his ‘*inner-soul*’ journey, because he had up to this time been harboring a grudge with the deceased but was surprised at the extent that the issue was resolved once he gave way to this initial resistance. Clients mentioned that the combined process of (BR), (SOMBLT) and (CDMM) made them feel more centered and relaxed. Clients indicated a desire to further these three processes on their own at home as an avenue for psychological, emotional, and spiritual support. Some clients wanted to show others how this approached helped them in their grief resolution. One client remarked to the song: “You Raise Me Up” with its indirect reference to God, that she found it a bit intimidating because she had a resentment towards God, but discovered that this was an issue that was lodged more in her mind than in her heart and that the song actually drew her closer to her higher power.

#### Suggestions for Social Workers and Counsellors

It is hoped that this paper has provided the reader with a greater appreciation of the bio-psycho-spiritual dimensions of the three differential uses of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT). The intent of this work was also to place emphasis on 1) the re-imaging of social work and 2) in the re-awakening of instrumentality of the self as a means of effective professional practice.

In the selective interviews, clients learned ways to use (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) as a tool for spiritual growth and fulfilment, 2) to systematically examine their own thoughts, feelings, behaviours and experiences through a process of self-reflective

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

advanced artistic, accurate empathy, 3) to engage in an intimate dialogue with their own body/mind/spirit through focused meditation, 4) to utilize inner- (client) directed meditative breathing as a means of achieving inner peace and serenity and thus, translating the benefits to clients and subsequently, being a transformational source of life and vitality for them. The therapeutic practice principles used in this multiple use of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) included: 1) the mobilization of resources to reduce stress and foster inner-directed change, 2) the installation of a renewed spiritual hope and 3) the weaving of mind/body/spirit into the soul of the self-discovery process (Tobin, 1994).

Social workers and counsellors are encouraged to use empirically based (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) where clients are guided, directed and connected by and through their own inner truth, practice wisdom and experiences as this holds much promise for therapists working with various populations (Gallant, Holosko, Gallant, Jean-Baptiste, 2004).

The following represents a list of practice suggestions for counsellors with a spiritual focus who wish to embrace these principles to reduce stress and increase their effectiveness with clients.

- i) Allow clients time to listen to the language of the body as a gateway to the inner life of *Spirit* thus, providing for peace, tranquillity and integrity in the work that are attempting to accomplish.
- ii) Recommend that they take a few moments each day from their schedule for spiritual enlightenment by effectively creating a space of inner solitude for (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) awakening themselves to enhanced levels of self-awareness and enlightenment.
- iii) Provide them with an opportunity for (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) to be an avenue to dialogue with their own thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviours and experiences as they carry on with their daily work. Encourage them to be surprised and empowered by the joy and beauty of their own inner truth and furthermore, translating its effects to their everyday life with relatives and friends.
- iv) Remind them not to be afraid to use (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) as a form of

## Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

spiritual nurturance for heart and soul that will enable them to recognize dormant and long standing issues which may have accumulated in terms of the way they think, feel and behave.

### Final Thoughts

This paper presented an example of how counselors can take advanced accurate empathy and reframe it into a self-directed advanced artistic accurate empathy (SD-AAAE) learning tool through the use of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT). It demonstrated how (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) bring together the components of the blocked issues so they may be released. In this manner, social workers and counselors are able to identify with the 'soul' qualities of self-reflected advanced artistic accurate empathy. Often times, destructive attitudes and patterns affect innumerable clients, creating energy blocks. Scheffer (1984) advocated for the removal of destructive energy blocks which play havoc with one's inner world. By being sensitive to client needs and responding to them in an inner-reflective manner, social workers can also be more open, sensitive and adept at listening to the heart and soul of each client's unique scenario. Clients can use (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) as a means of discernment and clear-sightedness in terms of their Higher Self, or their Higher Power.

For the most part, this paper has shown that the use of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) provided a positive experience for clients in the selective sessions. Nonetheless, this study raises a number of questions for further research and consideration. First, which type of songs and lyrics have the strongest effects on workers? [i.e., instrumental music alone, song/lyrics or the combination of both, client-directed mindfulness meditation, and/or breath relaxation?] Second, what type(s) of clients would respond best to this approach or which clients would be less likely to respond effectively? Third, how can other forms of (BR), (CDMM) and (SOMBLT) enhance the processes which have been initially undertaken here in the social work field? Fourth, could the same effect be achieved without the music -- that is the words alone or without the breath relaxation? Finally, would it be helpful to use just the breathing and focused meditation and saying the words of the songs? If we believe that research should help us to ask the right questions, these may be the starting point of

Bio-Spiritual Music Focused Energetics For Social Workers

future studies in this pioneering work. How helpful would MM be on its own?

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**Figure 1 The Dynamics of Breath Relaxation, Client-Directed– A Self-Directed Paradigm for Social Workers (SD-PSW) in a Day Long Training Workshop**

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Selective Sessions	Etiology & Concepts	Self-Reflective Themes	Key Words and Phrases	Lyrics to the song	Breath Relaxation and Mindfulness Meditation
	<b>Concept 1</b> Awareness of Self and Others	Peace and Turmoil	Solitude and Community	<i>"Among The Wildwood Trees"</i>	Quieting the Mind and Breath Conscious-ness
	<b>Concept 2</b> Sensed Energy of a Universal Force	Trust & Weariness	Hope, Healing & Tranquility	<i>"You Raise Me Up"</i>	Pensive Bodily Awareness and Breathing Tempo