



MBAT4Seniors: Mindfulness Based Art Therapy as Effective Tool to Improve Mental Health of Seniors in the context of COVID19 pandemic

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IO1: TOOLKIT - Music and movement techniques



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Short summary

Music and body movement is a very interesting way to practice mindfulness because it's directly connected to our feelings and sensations. While our mind can sometimes "be blocked" and generate some difficulties to connect with what we feel, music can be a far more direct road to connect with our heart and to generate some positive emotional states. It's also one of the oldest ways to transform the way we will and think that humanity has used in history.

DIOSAS (GODDESSES) - Body movement performance

Benefits

It helps people understanding better their strengths and virtues and to connect with symbols/ideas that are inspiring. Body movement is also an excellent relaxation therapy that creates more serenity

Materials needed: Technical requirements:

- Large space or room (optional with mats).
- Sound equipment.
- Space for the show or exhibition if desired

Instruction for the implementation

Depending on the needs of the participants, we will choose one of the Goddesses and work with those attributes.

It is considered appropriate to work in 2 sessions of 2 hours each.

Phase 1: contact with the attributes to deal with

Based on the reading of Jean Shinoda Bolen's book "The goddesses of every woman", an extract of the concepts to work on is made through a series of questions in relation to each one of the attributes of each Goddess. Once participants are familiar with the attributes of each goddess, they will respond on their own to the inputs provided with the descriptions of the goddesses with movement, internalizing and creating a choreographic phrase.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, depending on the archetype of the goddess.

In this case, an attribute of Athena has been taken.

- How do you feel when you fight?
- When, at what point in your life? At what moment did you feel threatened and had to fight?
- Why, what were the reasons that triggered this fight?
- How did you fight? In what way did you do it?
- How did you feel?
- What consequences did it bring you? Changes, traumas, breakthroughs, depression, break-ups, wounds, self-improvement...

Phase 2: body perception

Start connecting with your body by closing your eyes and breathing consciously, relaxing yourself during a few minutes.

Start moving slowly your body, warming gently your muscles from the top to the bottom. You can start with your head and neck, doing small stretches. Do it slowly, paying attention to any sensation and being fully focused on the part of your body you are moving. Then your shoulders, trunk etc.

Once you have kindly and slowly warmed all your body, close your eyes and reconnect with the symbol of the goddess you have chosen for this practice, in this case we picked Athena.

Phase 3: express the energy of the Goddess

Feel the energy of her calm strength entering your mind and body. The wisdom, the ability to think clearly and with strategy to change what must be changed, and protect what must be protected. A strength that is not rage, but rather a calm and balanced will to the right thing. Strength of will and mind serenity at the same time.

This energy is inside you, every time you need to use it. It's yours. You don't lack anything, don't need to learn from the outside how to have it. It's inside you, and it's present in your body right now.

Start slowly to move your body so this symbol and energy can express itself through you. Let your arms and hands move so you can express this calm, wise and powerful strength. Let yourself flow, without judgement. Nobody is watching you. Breathe and let yourself express your good qualities through free movement.

Start now moving your shoulders too. Keep breathing in and out with awareness. Feel how your own energy, how your mind and heart connect more and more with the symbol of Athena. The more you move, the more you connect with what she represents.

Now you can let your trunk enter this dance too, if you wish. Maybe your legs and feet want to express themselves too.

What movements want to be reproduced, once and again, like choreography?

In front of a threat or a danger, how is the Athena inside you acting?

In times of peace and good fortune, how is the Athena inside you acting?

Phase 4: ending the practice

When you wish to do so and feel prepared, start slowing your movement until you stop your dance. Close your eyes and continue breathing. Feel the energy in your body. What do you feel? How is your mind and heart right now?

You may now open your eyes.

Tips

This technique also exists with masculine gods and for a masculine public, as it was written and developed by Jean Shinoda Bolen's book "The gods of every man". It can then be adapted for any kind of public.

Laughing therapy

Laughing therapy is a powerful way to make people feel happier. Laughing has positive impacts on people:

Laughter relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

It boosts the immune system. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

It triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

It protects the heart. It improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Laughter lightens anger's heavy load. Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.

It may even help people to live longer. A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

Benefits: Reduce anxiety, stress and helps people to connect between each others helping them to overcome feeling of shame

Materials needed: Music and speakers, space in the room

Instruction for the implementation:

Phase 0: Preparation (5 minutes)

The group starts by doing mindfulness body focused practice: eyes closed, we start by paying attention to our physical sensations, our breathing...And we smile. We pay attention to how our smile makes us feel, how it generates a positivity inside us. We relax every muscle of the body.

Phase 1:

Sharing smiles: (5 minutes) All participants then open their eyes and start walking through the room with a big smile on their face, sharing positivity with every person they meet in front of them. This part helps them to connect with each other and feel more secure.

Phase 2:

Dancing by imitating an animal (5 minutes): Everybody has to move through the room dancing like an animal (they can choose which one individually). The more

sounds, jumps, playing etc. they do the better. The more the interact with each others the better two.

Phase 3:

Laughing break (3-5 minutes): all participants have to laugh. It may be fake at the beginning, but most of the time it starts becoming a real laugh after a little while. They can laugh together, interacting together the way they feel necessary.

Phase 4:

Dancing by imitating people from the XVIII century: everybody has to “go back in time” and dance like they were living during the XVIII century. They can imagine whatever they want and do it the way they want.

Phase 5:

End: everybody stops dancing and pays attention to how they feel and breath.

- How is my body?
- How are my emotions?
- My thoughts?

We close the session by sharing a last smile to everybody and letting the opportunity to the one who wants to share their experience to do so.

Mindfulness arts therapies

Choose the creative activity that you want to spend time doing.

Set aside the next 30-45 minutes for the activity with a mindful approach.

Sit for a few minutes, noticing your whole body. Now notice your breathing. And make room for a few exhalations that are a little longer and preferably with a release and a sigh. This allows the body and mind to relax.

Now notice your thoughts coming up right now and notice how your mood is. Just notice it and tune in on the activity.

With kind present attention, you must now find the materials that you will need for the activity and then sit where you will do the activity.

Notice how you sit. How are the feet positioned and is it possible to sit relaxed on the chair. Notice your hands and again notice your breathing.

During the activity, you will now be guided in how to do the activity with a mindful approach.

Doing the activity with a mindful approach means that you from moment to moment are aware that you are sitting here and doing an activity.

When thoughts arise, e.g., about something you have to do later today or planning dinner, then it is quite natural that it comes up, and the intention here is not to dwell on those thoughts, but to practice letting them be - letting them go and turning your attention back to the activity. It is always possible again to notice how the hands work, feel the materials in the hands in general and you can register what you notice in the room and in the body.

Moods and feelings will probably also appear along the way. It happens quite naturally. Again, simply register them and, as far as possible, have a curious approach to them and accept that they arise, but without going into them. Unfolding the activity can, for example, be difficult. You don't find that it's shaping up the way you'd like. You might feel a sense of frustration. It can simply be frustration and is not wrong. But again, try to see if you can accept it, let it go and return to the activity by feeling the hands and seeing what they do and possibly notice the breathing.

Now start the activity:

When the hands are in motion through an activity like this, it can help the body and mind to calm down. The activity does not require special prerequisites, which is an important prerequisite, since in this way we can reduce the tendency to become too performance-oriented. The intention is more to approach a relaxed state of being, where we discover what we are preoccupied with from moment to moment. We can discover what thoughts the head is full of, how the body is experienced and what mood we are in right now.

This activity helps to find peace in the body, thoughts and mind.

The participants do not necessarily have experience in noticing how they feel while we are doing an activity.

It is important that we prepare the participants for the purpose and intention of the MBAT activity, as well as that we use simple formulations about what is meant by doing an activity with a mindful approach.

We are preoccupied with different things in life and everyday life. It can be positive and uplifting experiences, but it can also be discomfort, e.g., worrying thoughts, pain or restlessness in the body or feelings such as sadness, frustration and the experience of being lonely.

When we do an activity with a mindful approach, we are concerned with sharing the attention, so that we are both aware of the activity – e.g., notices how the material we work with feels in the hands, and at the same time notices what we discover in the body, in the thoughts and in the emotions. And all the time with a friendly non-judgmental approach. Whatever we discover, everything is perfectly fine.

When we give attention to the activity again and again, we may find that e.g., discomfort in the body or mind changes or perhaps completely disappears - or simply that we encounter it in a different way. The intention is not that the discomfort should disappear, but that despite the discomfort we can find meaning in doing an activity.

Doing activities with a mindful approach can contribute to the following:

- The ability to stay focused is strengthened
- The body's muscles are relaxed
- Circulation and breathing rhythm are slowed
- The mind calms down and we respond more balanced to discomfort
- The ability to shift focus from circling thoughts is strengthened
- Kindness and compassion to oneself and others are strengthened
- Preparation and process around outdoor activities
- Shape/create sculptures/art with natural materials

The activity can be divided into two activities .

Activity 1: Finding materials in nature

Go for a walk, for example, by the beach and/or in the forest, where it is possible to find materials

Phase 0:

Instruction in the activity creating art with natural materials

Phase 1:

Get ready for the walk with appropriate clothing, footwear. Bring any drinking water, a basket or bag for materials.

Phase 2:

Instruct that the walk takes place in silence. We intend to be here. Notice the body and breathing. Regardless of what is noticed, we practice acknowledging what we feel. Next, notice what the mood is right now. Regardless of the mood, it's perfectly fine. It should not be pushed away. Notice the thoughts. Are there many thoughts and what is the content.

The participants get ready for the walk and the instructor instructs that the participants walk at a pace that is suitable for the individual. Agree, if necessary, where you gather again at a given time, e.g., after 30 min. Here, too, the instructor has instructed how the participants

walk with attention to sensory impressions, thoughts and feelings along the way, while at the same time finding space.

Phase 3:

The participants now go out and collect materials and practice being present here and now on their own at the same time as the activity of collection natural materials for creating sculptures.

Phase 4:

The instructor brings the participants back together and ends the activity. It can be concluded by the participants taking turns showing the materials they like the most and explaining why in one sentence. A short round can be added where the participants tell how they experienced walking in silence and having a mindful approach to collecting natural materials. What did the participants notice? The instructor and other participants listen without commenting.

Emotion Regulation with Music: Sonic Reflection

Sonic Reflection is a mindfulness art-based therapy that utilizes music as a medium for emotional exploration and regulation. This technique encourages individuals to engage with music, allowing it to guide their emotional experience and provide a platform for self-reflection. By focusing on the auditory senses, participants can navigate and process their emotions without the need for traditional visual art forms.

Benefits:

Emotional Regulation: Using music as a tool helps individuals regulate and navigate their emotions, fostering a sense of control and awareness.

Sensory Engagement: The auditory focus of Sonic Reflection engages the senses in a unique way, promoting a deep connection with emotions and the therapeutic power of music.

Mindful Breathing: Incorporating breath awareness with music promotes a rhythmic and calming experience, contributing to stress reduction and emotional well-being.

Enhanced Self-Expression: Participants express emotions through the selection and interaction with music, providing a non-verbal and creative outlet for emotional expression.

Materials needed:

Piece of paper or any textured material music that resonates with your current emotional state

Instruction for the implementation

Phase 1:

- Find a comfortable space. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Inhale deeply, exhale slowly. Begin to attune your auditory senses to the sounds around you.
- Select a piece of paper or any textured material. Explore its tactile qualities with your hands. Feel the surface, notice any textures, and immerse yourself in the sensory experience.

Phase 2:

- Choose a piece of music that resonates with your current emotional state. It could be a song, instrumental piece, or any music that evokes a response.
For example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BpvQJtZ_ok
- As you listen, pay attention to the nuances of the music. Notice the tempo, dynamics, and emotional tones conveyed by the sounds.

Phase 3:

- Focus on your breath as the music plays. Inhale and exhale in harmony with the rhythm and melody. Allow the music to guide the pace of your breath, creating a synchronized experience.

Phase 4:

- Without using traditional art forms, express your emotions through subtle movements or gestures. Let your body respond to the music naturally. This could include swaying, tapping fingers, or any movement that aligns with your emotional state.
- Verbalize or internally acknowledge the emotions that arise. For example, if the music evokes joy, say "thank you for this moment of joy."

Phase 5:

- Conclude the session with a moment of gratitude for the emotional journey experienced through music. Express thanks for the opportunity to connect with and understand your emotions in this unique way.
- Open your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and carry the sense of emotional awareness with you into the rest of your day.

Tips

Sonic Reflection offers a creative and sensory-rich approach to emotional exploration and expression, using music as a powerful tool for self-discovery.

Dealing with Anger with music

This methodology is a mindfulness-based art activity focused on painting and music. It aims to express feelings, recognize them, and find a new emotional balance. It consists of having the possibility to listen to some different types of melodies linked with the 6 basic emotions (anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise, and joy).

This activity aims to overcome the problematic ones by transforming the emotion into a resource. Starting the session with specific questions helps the trainer to know the participants better, and to create a warm and confident bond with them and between them.

To focus on a particular emotion and to work on it with a mindfulness attitude is something that they might not be used to, so it's perfectly normal that if they have some difficulties discovering, imagining or feeling this particular emotion. Please help them understand that it's better to start working on medium-intensity emotions, for it's about enjoying and not working on big traumas. This is the perfect moment to teach them the power of their attention, to be here and now without judgement. And music is a particularly powerful way to connect with feeling, for it help us connect with what we feel even if we are “blocked” and more “insensitive” normally or during that particular day. The mind can fool us, but feelings and sensations are normally more “sincere” and are always happening now. The mind can go to the future or the past, but feelings are an open door to connect with the present. Paying attention to music can help us connect with ourselves even if the mind has difficulties to do so. In general, numerous benefits are linked to mindfulness practice.

Numerous benefits have been identified, as follows:

- Reducing stress and managing anxiety
- Controlling fear
- Learning to concentrate and ignore distractions
- Encouraging creativity
- Approaching the experience with curiosity and open-mindedness
- Learning to calm down when feeling angry or upset
- Encouraging kindness and compassion towards oneself
- Reducing self-criticism
- Consciously relaxing work-related muscle tensions
- Developing psychosocial skills such as patience, humility, joy for the well-being of others, generosity, diligence, and equanimity
- Living with kindness and in balance with others and the environment.

Title of the exercise: Dealing with Anger with music

Benefits:

- improving mindful awareness
- increasing empathy, and emotional regulation

Material needed:

- loudspeaker to play music
- printed human silhouette
- colors

Instruction for the implementation:

Phase 1 - Introduction: You can start this practice by connecting with your audience, warmly welcoming them, and asking them generally about their day. Once we have created this communication, you can start by asking them a little bit deeper about how they feel today, helping them to start connecting with their feelings. Once they have answered, choose the melody that is more appropriate to the group's state of mind (you can find the link below).

Phase 2 - Preparation: Ask your participants to find a comfortable position and explain to them how to start the session: "Find a comfortable position for you. It can be on the chair, on the sofa, in the bed, or wherever you feel good. take some paper where you can draw the shapes of the body twice and some colours to paint them, which you will do when I tell you so, later on. Now listen to the music and follow the rhythm and the instructions."

Phase 3 - Implementation I

You can now introduce the practice to the group by explaining:

"Today we will work with our anger, so we can transform it."

Get in a comfortable position... let's pause everything for a few minutes...

We will travel within ourselves, to be able to welcome our emotions and be able to release them...

We will start by relaxing our face... we feel how our eyes are relaxing... the eyelids... the jaw....

In each breath, I am aware that I fill myself with air.

With each exhalation, I am aware that I am relaxing my face.

Now we feel our neck... and we relax it... Each breath of air that enters gives us well-being... each exhalation relaxes our neck..."

It's important to check that nobody is falling asleep, as when someone relaxes deeply it's easy to feel this way. You can explain that to them by saying:

"If you feel sleepy coming on, you can slightly open your eyes."

We feel our hands... and we relax them completely....

We feel the touch of the air that enters through our nose...how it is colder when it enters and hotter when it leaves...

Now that we are present in the here and now, we are going to remember something that usually makes us feel angry. Please do not choose something that creates a lot of anger in you, try to choose a medium level of intensity.

Pay attention to the music that is about to start, and let your body hear it...

Now you, as a facilitator, have to start playing the music, which you can find here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imbw37H1HB4>.

And then you can continue explaining:

"Observe what sensations it causes you, and in what parts of your body, without judging what you feel or identifying with it. Rather, it is about observing it with curiosity, love, with patience without wanting things to be different from what they are.

You continue explaining: "Anger is a natural emotion, which reminds us that some important limit for us has been transgressed. However, accumulating it or identifying excessively with it generates suffering, for us and for others.

Now open your eyes, and take one of the two body shapes you drew. This is where you can collect the painful feelings. Start now painting your anger choosing the part of your body where you feel it and the color or colors that better represent it...

Take a pause here, so they all have time to follow those instructions and then continue:

Do not try to be inside the feeling of anger....for you are not your anger. Instead, welcome it as you would welcome an old friend who comes to visit you at home for a few days. With kindness, courtesy, and knowing that it will soon be gone and cannot stay forever. "

Now that we have given our anger an open, even-tempered, and tolerant space, it is time to let it go so that we can sow seeds of serenity and inner peace within ourselves.

You now have to change the music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AImuCtIoklo>

Implementation II (Cultivation of peace and serenity):

Bring your breath to the parts of your body where you felt the anger. You can imagine that the air that passes through your nose continues on its way until it reaches this part of your body, refreshing it, softening it and generating a zone of greater well-being.

Keep breathing and bringing your breath of air loaded with well-being and serenity to your body. Notice how your muscles, organs, your skin relax and how little by little your emotional world calms down.

Take now the other drawn shapes. This will be where you will collect the positive feelings.”

You now have to make a pause so they all have time to take this second sheet and the pencil colors.

“Start now painting your serenity and peace choosing the part of your body where you feel it. Take the 2 shapes and observe them, compare them. Keep the shapes for the next time you will do an exercise with music. It will be nice to see the body map of your feelings expressed through colors.”

Now the practice is finished but it's important that you can help them to close it. You can say to them:

Before opening your eyes, you can draw a smile on your lips, as a way of thanking life and yourself, or yourself, for having been able to carry out this practice. Remember that you can carry this state of consciousness into the rest of your life and your day. You may now open your eyes and start moving your body slowly.

Phase 4 - Closing session

Now that your group has ended the meditation, it's a good moment to help them understand better what they have felt, experienced, and discovered. You can ask each person to share with the group the experience if they want to.

Some useful questions that you could ask are:

- How do you feel now?
- What happened when you start painting your emotions?
- What did your mind do during the process? Did it go to the past or to the future?
- Where did you feel the emotion in your body?
- Did you experience some difficulty? Which one?

Tips

This technique can be used to deal with other emotions by changing the music according to the state of mind you want to manage. Furthermore, we suggest keeping the silhouette and re-using it to work with other emotions. The final result will be to have an emotional mapping for each learner.

Mindfulness Nature-Based Therapy: Viktor Frankl's Flower Harvest

Viktor Frankl's Flower Harvest is a mindfulness art-based therapy that draws inspiration from Frankl's existential ideas and combines them with the therapeutic benefits of nature and sensory awareness. This technique encourages individuals to engage with their surroundings, specifically through walking and picking flowers, to explore and process their emotions in the context of nature.

Benefits

Existential Reflection: Viktor Frankl's existential concepts guide participants in reflecting on their purpose, meaning, and values as they connect with nature. **Sensory Awareness:** Engaging with the natural environment stimulates the senses, promoting a heightened awareness of the present moment and emotions. **Mind-Body Connection:** The physical act of walking and harvesting flowers fosters a connection between the body and mind, promoting holistic well-being. **Gratitude and Meaning:** Viktor Frankl's emphasis on finding meaning in experiences aligns with the gratitude techniques incorporated into the session, fostering a sense of appreciation for the present moment.

Materials needed: --

Instruction for the implementation:

Phase 1:

- Find a natural setting such as a garden, park, or meadow. Begin by standing still and grounding yourself. Feel the earth beneath your feet and observe the sounds, scents, and colors around you.

Phase 2:

- Start walking at a comfortable pace. Pay attention to each step, feeling the ground beneath you. Let go of any distractions and focus on the rhythmic motion of walking.
- As you walk, consider Viktor Frankl's idea of finding meaning in each step and being present in the journey.

Phase 3:

- Approach a flower or plant that captures your attention. Before picking it, observe its color, texture, and fragrance. Consider the symbolism of the flower and how it resonates with your emotions.
- As you pick each flower, reflect on the emotions it represents for you. Is it a symbol of joy, resilience, or tranquility?

Phase 4:

- Take a moment to sit or stand with the harvested flowers. Reflect on the meaning and purpose they hold for you in the context of your current emotions.
- Consider Viktor Frankl's philosophy: finding meaning in the experience, connecting with the present, and embracing the potential for growth.

Phase 5:

- Express gratitude for the experience, the natural surroundings, and the emotions explored. Acknowledge the beauty of the present moment.
- Conclude the session by arranging the harvested flowers in a way that feels meaningful to you, symbolizing the beauty and purpose found in the journey.

Tips

Viktor Frankl's Flower Harvest provides a unique and mindful approach to emotional exploration and existential reflection, integrating nature, gratitude, and purpose into the therapeutic experience.

Book: Frankl, V. E. (2020). Yes to life: In spite of everything. Beacon Press.
<https://www.amazon.com/Yes-Life-Everything-Viktor-Frankl/dp/080700555X>