

# MINDFULNESS AND THE MUSIC THERAPIST: AN APPROACH TO SELF-CARE

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## ABSTRACT

Although self-care is important for helping professionals, there is limited practical information on how music therapists might address this issue. The purpose of this heuristic self-inquiry was to examine insights that emerged when a newly-certified music therapist, also enrolled in a Master's music therapy training degree program, engaged in reflective and experiential self-inquiries during a mindfulness meditation training. Results revealed three overarching categories: exploring mindfulness meditation, identifying stressors in personal and professional life, and positive experiences through mindfulness meditation. Each category contained subcategories explicated through insights, personal journal quotes, and discussion of music improvisation excerpts that emerged during the self-inquiries. A creative synthesis, representing the researcher's transformation throughout the research process, is presented in the form of an original mindfulness meditation song. The researcher believes that the insights gained throughout the research process have not only been beneficial in terms of his own self-care, but will also have ongoing positive impacts on his music therapy practice. He also hopes that this research will have relevance for music therapy students and professionals who are looking for optimal ways to address their own self-care needs. Implications for music therapy research, practice, and training are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

The practice of mindfulness meditation combines awareness of breath and awareness of the present moment in a non-judgmental framework, taking its roots from Buddhist spirituality and philosophy (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Hemanth & Fisher, 2015; Moore, 2008). The literature notes many benefits of this practice, some of which include managing physical and emotional pain, dealing with fear, panic, and anxiety, as well as coping with stress (Czajkowski & Greasley, 2015; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010). The present study was focused on potential benefits that relate specifically to personal growth and self-awareness that occur as part of therapist self-care.

Many authors have indicated that self-awareness and self-care are essential for music therapists (Camilleri, 2001; Hesser, 2014; Holmes, 2014; Trondalen, 2015). The sensitive work required of a music therapist demands continuous self-reflection with the goal of developing and/or maintaining oneself as an authentic and grounded therapy professional. Through self-exploration and ongoing reflection on one's personal approach to therapy, music therapists can also

work toward creating a more empathic and congruent alliance with clients (Cammilleri, 2001).

There has been recent interest in the use of mindfulness practices for promoting the well-being of music therapists (Rappaport, 2014) and other creative arts therapists. Several publications indicate that engaging in mindfulness techniques could help these therapists develop a stronger sense of self-awareness which in turn could benefit their clients (Baer, 2003; Baldini, Parker, Nelson, & Siegel, 2014; Seigel, 2010). This strong sense of self-awareness and attention to the present moment potentially heightens the congruent nature and attentiveness of a therapist toward their client, hence fertilizing the ground for a successful therapeutic framework. At the same time, the practice of mindfulness can improve a therapist's sense of well-being, which can indirectly benefit clients.

It seems that at least one creative arts therapies training program shares similar views. Since August 1992, the graduate art therapy program at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado has incorporated mindfulness meditation training into its core curriculum (Franklin, 2014), presumably as a way of teaching self-awareness and self-care to their art therapy students. I am currently unaware of any other creative arts therapies training programs that incorporate mindfulness training into their curricula. I have come to believe that many students could potentially benefit from learning about and participating in mindfulness practices. In fact, it is my recent experiences as a pre-professional and post-professional music therapy student that sparked my interest in the present research topic.

## Personal Relationship to the Topic

I am a classically trained pianist with a doctoral degree in music. Before I began my music therapy training, I regularly performed classical recitals, concertos, and chamber music concerts. I also have more than 10 years of experience working as a piano teacher, both privately and within various post-secondary educational institutions. The workload that I maintained was extensive but I felt that I was handling everything well both emotionally and professionally. However, when I began my music therapy training more than 4 years ago, I was ill prepared for the emotional strain and intense workload that the program demanded. While I found many aspects enormously gratifying, (e.g., learning a range of music therapy techniques and theories, being encouraged to deepen my self-understanding, presenting in front of my peers and professors, engaging in clinical supervision, working with clients, etc.), these numerous demands took a toll on my personal and emotional health. I came to realize that I needed to find ways to more effectively deal with this anxiety and stress that I also believed would continue (albeit in different ways) as I embarked on my new career path. Through my music therapy training, I also came to realize that elements of my personal growth and well-being had been neglected during my many prior years as a music student and music professional. This realization further motivated my interest to pursue the current research. I knew that if I wanted to stay and thrive in my new chosen profession, I needed to establish better self-care strategies. I was searching for a means

to alleviate these issues in a constructive and efficient manner that was congruent with my professional and personal beliefs.

Since mindfulness-based stress reduction meditation techniques seem to have pertinent applications for creative arts therapists, I was curious to find out if these techniques could help me to address my own personal growth and self-care needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the personal and professional insights that emerged when a newly-certified music therapist who was also enrolled in a master's music therapy program engaged in a mindfulness-based meditation training program. I deemed heuristic self-inquiry to be an appropriate methodology to address this purpose. The primary research question was: What personal and professional insights emerge when a newly-certified music therapist who is also enrolled in a master's music therapy program engages in reflective and experiential self-inquiries during a 6-week mindfulness meditation training? It was my hope that these insights would not only be personally beneficial, but also have relevance for other music therapy students and professionals who are looking for optimal ways to address their own self-care needs.

## Key Terms

There are several key terms that need to be defined within the context of the present study. As noted above, this inquiry was focused on aspects of personal growth and self-awareness that occur as part of my own self-care practices. Baker (2003) defines *personal growth* as increased emotional awareness and/or constructive change in one's perspective achieved through self-reflection (Baker, 2003). Camilleri (2001) defines *Self-awareness* as a deep and comprehensive understanding of one's self, beliefs, and values. *Self-care* refers to the physical, psychological, and/or spiritual improvement or maintaining of one's self (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010).

Key terms contained within the research question must also be defined. I recognize *personal insights* as a heightened awareness of my beliefs and/or feelings that are not directly related to music therapy but still may impact my practice, whereas I classify *professional insights* as a heightened awareness of my beliefs and/or feelings that are more directly related to the profession and practice of music therapy. The Canadian Association of Music Therapists calls a *certified music therapist* a Music Therapist Accredited (MTA), which is a person who has completed a recognized university music therapy training program as well as the requirements for professional certification (CAMT | ACM - MTA Credentials, n.d.). Regarding *reflective self-inquiry*, Bruscia (1998) suggests that it involves contemplation or reflexive study for the purpose of understanding one's own attitudes, beliefs, and emotions, while *experiential self-inquiry* involves one's use of arts modalities to gain insight and self-awareness. *Mindfulness* is "the cultivation of attention as awareness, observation as awareness, concentration as awareness, insight as awareness, non-judgment as awareness. In essence, remembering to remember to return to wakeful attention" (Franklin, 2014, p. 269). Mindfulness meditation techniques informed by Thich Nhat Hanh (2015) form the core ele-

ments of mindfulness meditation practice used for this study, which will be described further in the following section.

## RELATED LITERATURE

### Overview of Mindfulness Practices

*Approaches to mindfulness.* As stated earlier, mindfulness meditation is the use of mindfulness techniques as a tool for increased self-awareness, insight, and attention to the present moment. Principally branching from the Buddhist Vipassana and Zen traditions of mindfulness, aspects of these techniques have been used in the field of psychotherapy and mind-body medicine for over 40 years (Rappaport, 2014). Examples cited by Chiesa and Malinowski (2011) include mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and the mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR). For the purpose of this research, I completed a mindfulness meditation training in the tradition of Zen Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh (2015).

*Mindfulness in treatment or therapy contexts.* Several recent studies have examined the use of mindfulness-based practices to address various conditions (Broderick, 2005; Eckhardt & Dinsmore, 2012; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010). In an empirical quantitative study, Broderick (2005) found that mindfulness-based techniques were successful in decreasing the effects of dysphoria amongst 177 participants. Rumination and distraction are often used as an escape mechanism to cope with the effects of dysphoria, and mindfulness-based techniques are argued to be more successful than either of these methods (Broderick, 2005). This research adds to the “growing body of work on this topic by including mindfulness in a traditional experimental paradigm that investigates rumination, distraction, and negative mood” (Broderick, 2005, p. 508).

Eckhardt and Dinsmore (2012) proposed an approach called *Mindful Music Listening*, which combines music listening techniques with mindfulness techniques. Since both these techniques were shown to be effective tools for treating depression, the authors recommended their model to be used as an alternative treatment (Eckhardt & Dinsmore, 2012).

Because little was known about the effects of mindfulness-based therapeutic approaches, Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, and Oh (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of literature that examined the effects of mindfulness-based meditation for people with numerous conditions such as cancer, generalized anxiety disorder, depression, and other psychiatric or medical conditions. Of the 727 articles that were identified, 39 studies met the criteria for inclusion in the analysis. The authors noted that “a sufficient number of clinical trials have been published that justifies a comprehensive effect size analysis of this promising treatment” (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010, p. 180). Results indicated that mindfulness-based therapy was efficacious in treating anxiety in clinical populations. However, with the exception for the measures of anxiety symptom severity, the effect size estimates were deemed not reliable. Because it was only possible to calculate a con-

trol effect size for 16 of the 39 trials, the authors also suggested that future randomized control trials would be needed.

Psychotherapy combined with mindfulness techniques has also recently become more prevalent, with suggestions that this can enhance positive outcomes for patients in a variety of situations including clients with mental health challenges (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010). Authors have suggested that therapists use a mindfulness induction with clients during sessions, as well as encourage their clients to take the practice outside the therapy room and into their everyday lives (Seigel, 2010; Wilson, 2015). Additionally, numerous counseling skills programs endorse a mindfulness-based training program for their trainees and recommend this training as part of the educative curriculum (Burkhart, 2014; Ott, 2010).

Several authors maintain the importance of mindfulness training for therapists and those in the helping professions (Burkhart, 2014; Hemanth, & Fisher, 2015; Ott, 2010; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010; Tarrasch, 2015; Zarbock, Lynch, Ammann, & Ringer, 2015). Of particular relevance is a recommended 8-week mindfulness training that provides therapists a self-care tool for their professional and personal life (Zarbock, Lynch, Ammann, & Ringer, 2015). Additionally, two empirical-based studies advocate mindfulness training for health practitioners as a means to fully engage with their clients as well as avoiding potential burnout in their profession (Burkhart, 2014; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010). A review of the literature indicates that there have been no published self-care models for music therapists that involve mindfulness-based techniques and training. Aside from the mindfulness-based meditation training program for art therapy students at Naropa University (Rappaport, 2014), there are no known mindfulness-based training programs connected to music therapy or other creative arts therapy degrees, indicating that limited emphasis is being given to the practice of mindfulness-based stress reduction for therapists training to entering these professions. Ruminating on the past and/or future can potentially prevent music therapists from reaching their full potential as well as decreasing their successful interaction and relationship with the clients whom they serve. When a music therapist is able to be fully present, maintain flow, and create a musical space that is in the moment, the therapeutic effects for the client can be greatly enhanced (Mika, 2014).

*Mindfulness and music.* The literature indicates that some mindfulness practices have incorporated music in receptive and applied ways (Czajkowski and Greasley, 2015; Diaz, 2013; Eckhardt & Dinsmore, 2012; Koen, 2013). Eckhardt and Dinsmore (2012) proposed an approach called *Mindful Music Listening*, which combines music listening techniques with mindfulness meditation techniques. Since both these techniques were shown to be effective tools for treating depression, the authors recommended their model be used as an alternative treatment (Eckhardt & Dinsmore, 2012). When used in this way, Eckhart and Dinsmore (2012) believe that the music can help people to experience a sense of healing and achieve heightened self-awareness. The authors also suggested that *Mindful Music Listening* might aid non-verbal individuals or those with verbal

communication difficulties by empowering them and offering a creative outlet to connect with emotions.

Diaz (2013) examined the effect of a mindfulness meditation and receptive music listening technique on participants' attention, aesthetic response, and flow. Using the Continuous Response Digital Interface (CRDI) and a questionnaire to measure attention and flow, 132 university students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate music programs were randomly assigned to four experimental groups including a mindfulness induction followed by a music listening response, and a music listening response without a mindfulness induction (Diaz, 2013). While results from the CRDI showed no significant change from the participants when the music listening response was paired with a mindfulness induction, participants in the mindfulness group experienced a heightening of concentration and focus during the music listening response (Diaz, 2013).

Czajkowski and Greasley (2015) examined the use of mindfulness techniques to improve singers' vocal technique. The mindfulness exercises given to vocal students generated positive results with regard to breathing, muscular awareness, and vocal tone as well as improved concentration during vocal coaching. The authors argued that education in mindfulness techniques could add a beneficial holistic component to singers' training.

Overall, these studies indicate that mindfulness practices can incorporate music and/or be used with musicians in beneficial ways. Studies reviewed in the previous section indicate that mindfulness practices can be used to address various issues in treatment contexts. The following section will review what is known about the use of mindfulness practices in creative arts therapies contexts.

*Mindfulness and creative arts therapies.* Recently, there has been substantial interest incorporating mindfulness practices into creative arts therapies clinical contexts (Rappaport, 2014). The creative arts therapies advocate for spontaneous creation and inspiration, and in this way, the in-the-moment philosophy inherent in these therapeutic modalities is similar to that of mindfulness practice. Documented studies reflecting mindfulness-based practices within the creative arts therapies contribute to the variety of ways in which mindfulness meditation can benefit both therapist and client (Rappaport, 2014).

Monti et al. (2006) examined the effectiveness of mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT), which they described as a "newly developed psychosocial group intervention [for] cancer patients" (p. 346). For this intervention, the mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR) created by Kabat-Zinn (2009) was combined with art therapy tasks used specifically with this population. In this way, the model was divided into two components: an objective identification of the health problem and a subjective representation of the emotion associated with that problem. In this randomized control trial involving 111 women, participants were assigned to either an 8-week MBAT intervention group or a wait-list control group. As evaluated with the Systems Checklist-90-Revised, the MBAT group showed a significant decrease in symptoms of distress, as well as significant improvements with aspects related to quality of life. The authors suggested that the evidence could support the use of MBAT as an important and viable treatment option for cancer patients (Monti et al., 2006).

With more than 30 contributors, *Mindfulness and the Arts Therapies: Theory and Practice* (Rappaport, 2014), is an extensive publication concerning the use of mindfulness and its importance within the creative arts therapies. Although it goes beyond the scope of this study to review the 21 chapters in detail, the six sections contained in this book each show a different aspect of mindfulness-based applications connected to the creative arts therapies. Part One connects mindfulness, psychotherapy and the arts therapies. Part Two compares the role of the expressive arts in cultivating mindful awareness. The nine chapters contained in Part Three reflect examples of how mindfulness-based practices are used and integrated with creative arts therapies, and Part Four shows six different examples of mindfulness-based arts therapies. Part Five contains two articles related to the mindfulness-based training component in the education of arts therapies and dance/movement therapies. Part Six investigates the neuroscience behind mindfulness and the therapeutic use of the arts.

From this *Mindfulness and the Arts Therapies: Theory and Practice* (Rappaport, 2014), the only example of the role of mindfulness in music therapy applications is a chapter related to music, imagery, and mindfulness (Dort & Grocke, 2014). In this chapter, a clinical application for music, imagery, and mindfulness was used for an outpatient group at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. The authors documented ten bi-weekly sessions consisting of a mindfulness relaxation induction followed by silently listening to a selected recording allowing imagery responses to emerge. After the music selection, group members are slowly brought back to an alert state, and are encouraged to either draw a mandala or write about the experience. The session concludes with participants openly sharing the imagery experience (Dort & Grocke, 2014).

While the previous sections investigated research related to mindfulness techniques in clinical and musical contexts, the studies presented in this section reflect the growing body of work concerning mindfulness practices and techniques in relation to the creative arts therapies. The next section of this chapter will describe the philosophical foundations and techniques/steps contained in the mindfulness meditation approach used for the present study.

## Mindfulness Meditation in the Tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh

The mindfulness meditation program that informed the present study took place at the Mindfulness Meditation Centre in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, Canada. The founder of this program is Joseph Emet who trained with Thich Nhat Hanh and was made a Dharma teacher in Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition. This program was founded in 1997 for the purpose of providing a resource for those who were interested in establishing their own mindfulness practice. I learned about this program through a family member and felt that its philosophy resonated with me.

The mindfulness meditation practices at the Mindfulness Meditation Centre are influenced by the mindfulness meditation practices of Vietnamese Buddhist monk and author Thich Nhat Hanh. The Centre provides an introduction to mindfulness meditation training through meditative breathing, focusing energies on the present moment, and acknowledging one's thoughts without becoming

emotionally attached to them. The meditator is encouraged to recognize thoughts both good and bad in a neutral and unattached way. In this respect, one can breathe and think objectively without becoming affected by the many passing feelings or thoughts. The practice of mindfulness acknowledges these feelings and aims to have them co-exist harmoniously with other more positively perceived emotions (Emet, 2015).

Mindfulness meditation begins with the conscious awareness of one's breath and attention is given to the simple recognition of how the breath moves in and out of the body (Emet, 2015). Once consciousness of breath is maintained, what follows is the focus on slowing down the breath. Attention is given not to the person breathing but to the acknowledgement of this physical sensation in the body. As a third step to beginning a mindfulness meditation session, one is asked to think about any element of contentedness, or positive feeling, while continuing to maintain an awareness and slowness of breath (Emet, 2015).

In mindfulness meditation, the aim is to always come back to the present moment. The simple ringing of a singing bowl is used during the meditation to remind us to continue to focus on our breath as thoughts pass through our consciousness without reacting emotionally to them. One type of meditation used in this program is called "serenity meditation" which involves simple focus on the breath in a non-judgmental manner (Emet, 2015). "Insight meditation" is another form of this practice used at the Centre (Emet, 2015). When a calmness of breath and stillness of the mind is achieved, one can focus on a particular theme or idea, which can possibly lead to powerful insights or revelations.

Music plays an important role in the experience of mindfulness philosophies and attitudes practiced by Hanh and also at the Mindfulness Meditation Centre (Emet, 2013). Often simple songs are sung with or without guitar accompaniment and the lyrics contain mindfulness poetry containing simple images that remind us to stay connected with our breath and increase our acceptance (Emet, 2016; Hanh, 2015). The premise behind the music is that songs can tap into another part of our consciousness allowing us to be more mindful. The songs, with their simple melodies and poetry, are also meant to act as mantras that we can sing or recite several times a day in order to return to the present moment and to decrease stress. Collected and arranged by the founder of the Mindfulness Meditation Centre, the songs can also be used as methods of continued personal growth and self-awareness (Emet, 2013).

## Self-Experiential Practices in Music Therapy

One important aspect of being a music therapist is developing self-awareness through personal reflection. As noted, experiential practices that incorporate creative modalities can be used by music therapists in their self-reflection processes. Bruscia (2014) indicated that self-experiential practices are essential for music therapists to develop their skills and awareness in four specific ways. First, they help the therapist understand the skills involved in the practice and working with several different populations. Second, they allow the therapist to more fully understand and comprehend clients' experience of music therapy.



Third, the self-experiential process gives the therapist a more intimate understanding of the deep empathy involved toward clients. Lastly, the practice of self-experience in music therapy encourages the therapist to achieve a heightened sense of awareness. Self-experiential practices are used in a multitude of situations such as in the classroom, in mentorship or supervision modes, and in personal therapy for the therapist (Bruscia, 2014). These methods require creativity and openness on the part of the therapist. Through the act of participating in music therapy, one can fully grasp the intentions and healing power behind the practice (Hesser, 2014).

Several authors have suggested various creative experiential methods that music therapists can use for self-reflection. These include song writing (Baker & Krout, 2011) and reflexive journaling (Barry & O'Callaghan, 2008). Hesser (2014) suggested that music therapists a) be open to expanding their repertoire and knowledge of music and instruments; b) become members of organized musical groups or ensembles; c) seek to make musical experiences that perhaps fall outside of their comfort zone. In these ways, music therapists are constantly expanding and growing in both personal and practical knowledge, which will benefit both themselves and the clients they serve.

Self-experiential methods in music therapy also include use of music in supervision or with colleagues, and other self-exploration practices (Hesser, 2014). Through the medium of music improvisation, challenges or insights that arise through clinical work can be expressed. Hesser (2014) suggested other methods of self-experiential learning such as reflexive and creative writing, listening to meaningful music, and developing a more intimate connection to the message within the music. Hesser (2014) also encouraged combining self-reflexive journaling while listening to recordings of one's own referential or non-referential music improvisations. The goal of these experiences is for the therapist to not only further develop her/his skills and ability as a music therapist, but to also greatly increase her/his sense of awareness and openness in the profession.

Mika (2014) investigated the usefulness and familiarity of mindfulness practices, including its clinical possibilities, amongst credentialed and practicing music therapists in London, England. Analysis of data from focus groups and telephone interviews indicated that participants perceived mindfulness as having numerous benefits such as being mentally prepared for sessions, having an enhanced sense of awareness of both self and the client, tuning into one's breath as well as the client's breath, and having a heightened sense of attentiveness to the client's experience. Participants also suggested that the inherent awareness and reflection involved in mindfulness meditation can create a link for active self-reflection and clinical practice. The importance of self-experiential practices for music therapists and the positive results of Mika's (2014) study helped to further motivate my desire to conduct the present study.

Self-experiential practices form the basis for this study in which I used music improvisation and self-reflexive journaling to develop a more comprehensive understanding and realization of the use of mindfulness meditation with regard to my personal and professional needs. The research question for this study was: What personal and professional insights emerge when a newly certified mu-

sic therapist who is also enrolled in a master's music therapy program engages in six-week mindfulness meditation training?

## METHOD

The present study was designed within a heuristic self-inquiry methodological framework. It adhered to data collection and analysis phases outlined by Moustakas (1990) who is credited with developing heuristic inquiry. As a form of first person inquiry, heuristic self-inquiry focuses exclusively on the experiences and emerging perspectives of the researcher as he/she has direct personal encounters with the phenomenon being investigated (i.e., reflecting upon my experiences of mindfulness meditation practices as a form of self-care). This was an appropriate methodology for my study because it allowed for deep self-reflection and personal exploration, which in turn made it possible to reveal important information and insights about my relationship with the topic.

In order to focus the scope of the study, I imposed some delimitations. I chose to conduct a heuristic self-inquiry that involved myself as the sole participant. I participated in a time limited mindfulness-training program consisting of 6 sessions that took place over a 3-month period between June and August of 2016. Data sources were delimited to include a self-reflective journal and recordings of my own musical improvisations. These improvisations were between 5 and 10 minutes in length.

When evaluating the validity of heuristic research, the researcher is primarily concerned with meaning. According to Moustakas (1990), the researcher is the primary judge of validity because meaning can most directly be inferred through the lens of the principal subject of the inquiry (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). In order to ensure validity of the results of the present study, I returned to the data on multiple occasions to assess clarity and comprehensibility of my interpretations. I also tried to challenge myself by asking if I was being as truthful and authentic as possible in my presentation of the material. I consulted with my research adviser who helped me to identify biases and assumptions and who also encouraged me to be consistent and clear in how I expressed my thoughts and ideas. "Heuristic methodology is a subjective but structured research method and if one is ready to face the depth of work required to complete his/her research, the challenges may be overcome" (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010, p. 1585).

Materials used during this inquiry included readings I completed for the mindfulness training program offered by the Mindfulness Meditation Centre in Pointe-Claire, Quebec. I also maintained a personal journal and recorded music improvisations using a professional quality digital recorder (Zoom H4n-SP 4-Channel Recorder). Instruments used in the improvisations included piano, guitar, dombak (drum), and my voice.

As noted earlier, data collection and analysis procedures were conceptualized within the six stages of heuristic inquiry outlined by Moustakas (1990). During the *initial engagement* phase, I personally reflected upon why I wanted to examine this research topic. The purpose of this phase is to "discover an intense interest or a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher and that holds im-

portant social meanings as well as personal compelling implications” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p.65). I expanded my interest on the subject by examining related articles, and developed a deeper understanding of what mindfulness practice could mean for my music therapy work and for myself. At this time, I also received advice, input, and support from faculty members and colleagues and wrote a literature review that formed the basis for the related literature section of this study.

During the *immersion* phase, I completed a mindfulness meditation training program where I examined valuable aspects of mindfulness and my own internal transformation in response to what I was learning. During this phase, research becomes the “song into which the researcher breathes life . . . because the question itself is infused in the researcher’s being” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 43). For this study, I felt that journaling could help me to reflect upon my experience of the training process while it was happening and its relevance to the research question. After every mindfulness meditation training session, I completed a journal entry in which I recorded thoughts, feelings, and/or insights that had emerged. I also asked myself how these thoughts, feelings, and insights were relevant to me as a person as a music therapist and recorded my reflections. I collected additional data once a week through audio recording a non-referential (i.e., no predetermined topic/theme) music improvisation that took place after a mindfulness meditation session done on my own. Using this as a reflective and experiential self-inquiry technique, I allowed myself to be fully present in the moment to whatever emerged (Bruscia, 1998; 2014). Immediately after each improvisation, I completed another journal entry to record what I was aware of in that moment. At the same time, I listened back to the audio recording of each improvisation and recorded in my journal, thoughts, feelings, and/or insights that emerged and as well as reflections upon how these thoughts, feelings, and insights might be relevant to me as a person and as a music therapist. It is important to note that I did not analyze the musical components of the improvisations per se but simply allowed feelings and reflections to emerge in response to the music.

The *incubation* phase occurred after all of the data was collected and lasted for 8 weeks. This involved a retreat from all aspects of the research. This phase is meant to provide the unconscious self with unhampered space to reorganize and ultimately re-examine the original question from a new or fresh perspective. During this period, I also began a full-time music therapy position in Calgary, Alberta and focused my energy on this new job. Although, I completely took a break from the mindfulness meditation training, data collection, and research, I continued to meditate during this period because of my own self-care needs.

In a traditional heuristic inquiry, the *illumination* phase occurs the moment the inner work of the incubation phase “spontaneously breaks through into conscious awareness” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p.67). The data that was collected becomes organized into tacit knowledge and the thoughts and reflections of the earlier phases are given a conscious voice. During this phase, I reviewed all the journal data I had collected and searched for moments of personal and professional insight. Using Neuman’s (2014) first phase of coding analysis, *open coding*, I looked for relevant words, short phrases, and passages within the journals and recorded these phrases separately in a Microsoft Word document. I printed these

documents, cut out each individual phrase, and placed them on a large table so I could see them all at once. Following Neuman's (2014) second phase of coding analysis, *axial coding*, and using the research question as my guide, I grouped the selected codes or phrases into categories and subcategories.

During the *explication phase*, I focused my attention on new layers of understanding, and achieved a broader perspective on the research question. I listened again to the music improvisations that were recorded after my own mindfulness meditation sessions and I identified short passages that seemed to further explicate (i.e., musically express) the categories and subcategories that were generated through the axial coding process. When listening to the improvisations, I was also open to new thoughts, feelings, or insights, and I recorded additional insights that seemed related to the research question. This additional data clarified the relevance of the themes, new insights emerged, and I achieved a heightened awareness in terms of my feelings about myself and about the study at large.

The last phase of heuristic inquiry involves a *creative synthesis* where the processes and outcomes of the research are conceptualized using a creative format. This transformation is not assumed beforehand. Therefore, the form of the creative synthesis was not predetermined at the beginning of the study but rather it was allowed to emerge during and after the illumination and explication phases. The creative synthesis that emerged from this study will be presented in the discussion section.

## RESULTS

The open coding process described in the previous section resulted in 124 codes. To give a few examples, these consisted of words or phrases like: acceptance, compassion, adjustments, at peace with the dualities in life, be kind to yourself, slowness of breath, etc. As described earlier, I then used axial coding to organize these open codes into categories and subcategories. This inductive category development process resulted in three core categories, with each one containing a number of subcategories. These categories answer the research question: "What personal and professional insights emerge when a newly certified music therapist who is also enrolled in a master's music therapy program engages in six-week mindfulness meditation training?" See Table 1 for an overview of the three core categories and their related subcategories.

Table 1

*Categories and subcategories for explication phase*

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Category 1: Exploring Mindfulness Meditation

Subcategory 1a: Resting or calming the mind

Subcategory 1b: Symbolism and metaphor

Subcategory 1c: Connecting with nature

Subcategory 1d: Philosophical foundations

Category 2: Identifying Stressors in Personal and Professional Life

- Subcategory 2a: Nervousness
- Subcategory 2b: Anticipation
- Subcategory 2c: Overthinking
- Subcategory 2d: Negative feelings toward self

### Category 3: Experiences of Growth through Mindfulness Meditation

- Subcategory 3a: Personal insights, realizations, and relationship with music
- Subcategory 3b: Insights toward interpersonal relationships in music therapy
- Subcategory 3c: Insights regarding the therapeutic alliance in music therapy
- Subcategory 3d: Insights concerning personal attitude as music therapist
- Subcategory 3e: Insights toward my music therapy practice

Category 1, Exploring Mindfulness Meditation, comprises several elements and techniques associated with the practice of mindfulness meditation. Tools and indications were given to me by my instructor, which aided me during meditation processes. The coding process revealed several specific areas of focus related to the act of meditation as well as inherent philosophies of mindfulness. The subcategories contained in Category 1 form the base through which I could more fully comprehend Categories 2 and 3. By using the techniques of meditation presented in Category 1, both negative and positive thoughts emerged and I identified them in an objective, non-attached manner. Some of the more negative thoughts formed the basis of Category 2, while Category 3 contained more positive elements and experiences of positive insights.

The following sections will further elaborate on the categories and subcategories that emerged from this study in relation to the research question. Excerpts from my journal are presented in *italics* and are included to support the credibility/trustworthiness of my results. The reader may also notice that some mindfulness concepts are contained in multiple subcategories. Examples include interconnectedness, personal acceptance, relationship with music, awareness and slowing of breath, calming the mind, unconditional positive self-regard, and connecting with nature. This overlapping of mindfulness concepts across categories exemplifies the simplicity and repetitiveness of the practice. However, each time a concept is mentioned, it is because it offers a unique perspective in its relationship to the particular subcategory being discussed.

### Category 1: Exploring Mindfulness Meditation

*Subcategory 1a: Resting or calming the mind.* One of the means by which mindfulness meditation encourages positive feelings is through resting the mind, which requires awareness and slowing down of the breath. Near the end of my training, I experienced a fuller awareness of my breath and pleasure from the meditation process. After my final mindfulness meditation training session, I wrote: *I am profiting from this experience in ways that I never could have pre-*

*dicted. I'm extremely pleased with the sense of calm and feeling grounded that this practice brings to me.* The ability to calm my mind and re-direct it away from numerous thoughts and worries had positive effects on my emotional stability as well as my concentration. Before music therapy sessions, it will be useful to connect with my breath in this way as it will give me a stronger sense of feeling calm and focused.

Working with different clinical or non-clinical populations or within a single population, a music therapist is exposed to varying levels of intensity. The ability to be grounded and self-aware may help to create a calm and safe space for clients who are about to engage in a therapy process. After my long workday is done, I find it difficult to completely "shut off" my thoughts, and often hear a playback of the sessions in my head and feel the energy and pace of the work in my body. Conscious breathing may help me to calm and slow down my feelings and thoughts and bring me into a fuller sense of awareness of the present moment.

A similar feeling of slowness of breath and calm was noted in a journal entry I made after an improvisation that I did in response to a weekly individual meditation practice session from my first week. This improvisation occurred on June 19, 2016, was 8 minutes long, and consisted of voice and guitar. *I feel like I can take in more air and the air replenishes my feeling of calm. The numerous worries and feelings of anticipation are still with me yet are more in the distance, not so present in front of me. The guitar notes create a simple rising melody in a Major key void of sharp or abrupt rhythms and I enjoy the length and vibrations of these notes, which increases my sense of calm. I add a counter melody with my voice and am able to appreciate how each melody plays off each other. Without getting louder or softer, the melodies create a soothing counterpoint that is both simple and relaxing to me.*

Feeling that I never have enough time to learn or prepare music for music therapy sessions, I often find that my guitar playing practice becomes frantic and rushed. In my journal, at this moment in the improvisation I remarked the absence of frantic playing and I perceived a creative energy and the sensation of being completely immersed in the music. When listening back to the excerpt again, I also perceived a sense of optimism to the melody line and hear a certain freedom of time and space.

Mindfulness meditation before practicing the guitar, or any musical instrument, may help to put me in a calmer state and give me more patience and focus throughout the practice session. As music therapists, our hectic schedules do not often permit or allow for long music practice sessions, and a daily 15-minute window of practice opportunity might be the only time available. Using the first few minutes of short practice sessions to calm the mind may result in a more focused and productive session. As noted earlier, part of mindfulness training involves concentrating on and slowing down the breath. When the mind is so active with thoughts, focusing on something so simple may help calm these thoughts. *I like the idea of taking breaths in for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds. It's a great start to getting in touch with the body and calming one's self.* These simple techniques may be helpful to me before, during, and after music therapy sessions, which may in turn have a positive impact on the quality of my work.

*Subcategory 1b: Symbolism and metaphor.* The simplicity of the symbols and metaphors used to represent mindfulness meditation concepts helps to attain a meditative state more quickly (Emet, 2015). During the meditation training sessions, my guide would often give metaphors, such as the wind blowing through the leaves, to represent our breath touching every cell of our body. Emotions were referred to as an airplane that needed to constantly make adjustments to arrive safely at its destination. I began to create my own metaphors and images to represent my thoughts and feelings. After my second weekly mindfulness meditation training session, I wrote in my journal: *I heard a train go by and imagined that my thoughts were aboard the train as it went by. "Bye, bye thoughts" I thought. They are still with me, but now I observe them. I am not a passenger on the train, rather hearing (or viewing the train in the distance).*

I often feel overwhelmed by frantic and unorganized thoughts, and find it difficult to remain calm and objective about these thoughts. This has the potential to impact me not only personally, but also professionally as I often react in this way to the intensity contained in some of my music therapy work. During my second mindfulness training session, we discussed the imagery used by Hanh (1988) regarding calming the mind. Hanh begins this discourse on mindfulness meditation by referring to the orphan children who come to his monastery retreat. In the morning, the monk prepares juice for the children and the last juice to be poured is still mixed in with the sediment from being the last juice in the jug. One boy would not drink the juice because it was not clear. After returning from playing, the boy was too thirsty and wished to find his juice. He did not realize that his glass of juice was still there but now all the sediment had fallen to the bottom of the glass and the juice was now clear and welcoming to drink. *Thich Nhat Hanh's (1988) writing about the apple juice being cloudy and then sitting, letting the particles settle to be clear. A metaphor for our thoughts and the use of mindfulness and sitting quietly to allow our thoughts to settle.* Through mindfulness meditation, I began to feel comforted by enhanced understanding of the concept of being separated from one's thoughts and creating symbolic distance. The characteristic symbols or metaphors of the practice simplifies for me the concept of accepting thoughts without reacting to them.

*Subcategory 1c: Connecting with nature.* Symbols representing nature and the aspects of nature were abundant throughout my mindfulness meditation training process. We were told that the mind is like a garden that needs to be looked after and that it is important to water the good seeds of compassion and loving kindness, while recognizing that other seeds can also exist (Nhat Hanh, 1988). For my third week of mindfulness meditation training, we discussed levels of anxiousness and how to remain calm and stable during these periods. The meditation reflected nature and my trainer asked that we imagine ourselves as being as stable as a mountain: *During the guided meditation, I was feeling slightly anxious and had difficulty calming myself. The outside construction noise was irritating me. The most I could do was concentrate on my breathing and follow the image of being a mountain and feeling grounded on the earth just like a mountain. The wind blows and seasons come and go but the mountain always "stays strong?" Or maybe the mountain allows many things to grow and live on it? Sometimes*

*it's jagged and uninviting, but the other side is beautiful and rich with vegetation. Animals come to live on it, some even climb to the highest peak. Birds perch on its trees. The mountain is you and you are the mountain.* In mindfulness meditation, these kinds of metaphors can help me to connect more closely with nature. This sense of connectedness toward nature may have an effect on both my professional and personal relationships.

In the mindfulness meditation training, we were encouraged to seek outdoor locations for meditation. In this way, one can directly connect with nature, encourage a sense of belonging, often increasing inspiration. *Today we meditated in the main floor room because it was very hot upstairs. A room surrounded by plants and the inside was "giving way to the outside" in a visual way. The sun was shining and it was a miracle. The moment was a miracle.* Images of nature or other representations can also be used in one's daily life as reminders to stay connected to one's breath.

*Subcategory 1d: Philosophical foundations.* From Buddha's teachings, Right Mindfulness is the seventh of the eight right practices, and Right Mindfulness "accepts everything without judging or reacting. It is inclusive and loving, and the practice is to find ways to sustain appropriate attention throughout the day" (Hanh, 2015 p. 65). With Right Mindfulness, one strives not to reject unpleasant emotions or sensations but at the same time not cling to those feelings. Through meditation, one acknowledges if these thoughts or feelings (i.e., mental formations) are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, but does not give judgment to them. The Vijñānavada School of Buddhism contains fifty-one types of mental formations.

Right Mindfulness also acknowledges that suffering is an important part of life and should be accepted, even embraced. Through suffering comes happiness, and one cannot have one without the other. This type of acceptance forms the main philosophical tenet of mindfulness meditation. Thoughts that emerged for me with regard to the metaphysical aspects of mindfulness meditation were expressed in my journal from the third weekly mindfulness meditation training session: *... regarding the sense of oneness or connectedness to nature helps me to feel this sense of "belonging" in the universe. With mindfulness, and more specifically the philosophies of Buddhism, I accept emotions or thoughts that can be negative or counterproductive, and understand that it is part of me and be thankful for it. You cannot change the past anyways, and those thoughts are only happenings in your mind, not reality. The reality is now. Embrace your whole you and focus on the present moment. I can add that the more I accept this part of me that is negative, recognize it, and not feed it, the more I feel liberated to focus on the present moment.*

As music therapists, we are continuously exploring aspects of our identities and our connections to our community (Bruscia, 2014; Camilleri, 2001; Stige, 2015). The philosophical aspects of mindfulness related to spirituality helped to connect me to a sense of myself and to the present moment. Hanh (2015) writes that the first miracle of mindfulness is to "touch deeply the blue sky, the flower, and the smile of our child." Using mindfulness meditation has enhanced the spiritual wonderment with which I view the world.



## Category 2: Identifying Stressors in Personal and Professional Life

*Subcategory 2a: Nervousness.* One of the benefits of mindfulness meditation is an increased ability to develop awareness of one's feelings, both negative and positive. Throughout the training, I became increasingly aware of my feelings and was able to identify and label them. The clarity with which I experienced these emotions was at times difficult, because I believe that many of these feelings had been buried deeply in my unconscious mind, perhaps because they had been too difficult to deal with emotionally up to this point. Mindfulness training exposed these feelings and brought them to the surface. This feeling was evident during part of my second mindfulness meditation training session as discussed in my journal entry from this week's training: *I felt that I am nervous and that I was nervous during the talk part of the session. But, it was a healthier version of the nervousness than say speaking in public or performing. (I think that I am less nervous about speaking in public than performing) ...It is difficult to meditate. I have too many thoughts in my head. But, I appreciate the breathing and the physical sensations from sitting in silence for 30 minutes...Many things arise, and I begin to feel more agitated than before I started the training. It's a challenge to acknowledge parts of myself that I have forever been trying to squash, but at the same time, feeding a smorgasbord too.*

Nervousness was an emotion that often surfaced during my meditation practice. I started realizing that much of my life was built around anxiety and nervousness. One of my biggest hurdles was to explore this emotion and understand how to acknowledge its presence without allowing it to become overwhelming. In a journal entry responding to my fourth week of mindfulness meditation training, I explored these thoughts and felt that insights were revealed with regard to our human nature to feel nervous or anxious. *Recognize them [anxious or nervous thoughts], or go even further and recognize that you are recognizing them, thank them for their presence because this is what makes you a person, and tell them that their presence is not needed at this moment. Many of our traits existed as survival mechanisms many years ago. I think about the short span of time that humans have been sitting in chairs compared to the amount of time humans have been walking, running, squatting, and roaming the earth. We are programmed through many generations to have the instincts we have.*

Being aware of my nervous feelings has helped me to begin developing a congruent sense of self, both personally and professionally. Meditative breathing helps me see that these feelings are completely normal and I need not feel debilitated or "suffocated" by this feeling.

*Subcategory 2b: Anticipation.* Through the experience of training and self-reflection, I recognized that I have continuously looked toward the future with increased anticipation. Looking at this through the lens of mindfulness meditation suggests that I was perhaps continuously nourishing the "seeds" of anticipation. With mindfulness meditation, I can now recognize the presence of these feelings without reacting emotionally to them. During my sixth and final week of meditation training, I explored feelings of anxiousness writing in my journal for

that week: *In the discussion, I brought up my heightening anxiousness revolving around my move and change of life. These are all normal and understandable feelings. Mindfulness training teaches us to accept these feelings and to understand that they are part of us. Wouldn't it be abnormal if I was not experiencing apprehension?* Music therapy practice requires the therapist to be aware of his/her reactions in relation to clients.

During the mindfulness meditation training, my ability to identify the specific emotions and feelings that surfaced in my thoughts became stronger. This heightened sense of awareness sometimes made me more anxious than before I had started the training. This was evidenced in a journal entry again from my sixth and final meditation training session as I began the session feeling aware of my anxiousness, but finding a sense of calm during the meditation. *I started out feeling quite anxious. For a while, so many thoughts were rushing through. As I focused on my breath and looking for a contentedness feeling or thought, I progressively became more relaxed. I could appreciate the moment and eased into a calmer state. I feel that I really need these meetings, now more than ever.*

With regard to my clinical work, the excitement and pleasure that music therapy gives me also creates a sense of anxiousness. This sense of anxiousness is possibly due to being new to the music therapy profession and developing a strong appreciation for the sense of responsibility we have toward our clients as well as our colleagues. Mindfulness meditation can help me to accept these feelings of anxiousness and react to them with kindness.

*Subcategory 2c: Overthinking.* During my first mindfulness meditation training session, I pondered the difficulty involved in identifying and labeling emotions. As I began to just listen to my thoughts, I realized how many thoughts I had, and I was not yet able to simply step "outside" of my thoughts and be objective about them. I thought it would be nice to sometimes be able to turn off these over-evaluating thoughts, like a switch. I did not realize it at the time, but reviewing my data later on, I sensed that I had some hesitation toward the mindfulness meditation training at the beginning. After my first training session I wrote: *It seems that it would be helpful to be aware of the constant changes of our thoughts and generally notice them in order to regulate them. I wonder about how to turn my mind from processing a million thoughts a minute to regulating these thoughts as well. It seems that it would take even more space in my head.*

By the third session, I began to recognize certain aspects of myself, and the possibilities for releasing myself from overthinking. *I think that I am personally susceptible to harping on negative thoughts and spending hours, months, even years chewing them and dissecting them. The fact that I can release myself of this torturous habit is thrilling.* Mindfulness meditation provides me with a philosophy of non-judgment and non-reaction in relation to my tendency to overthink things. A freedom was obtained for me both personally and professionally. My clinical work is becoming more instinctual and intuitive and I am less focused on unnecessary planning and structure, which sometimes inhibited my practice.

*Subcategory 2d: Negative feelings toward self.* Mindfulness meditation teaches one how to tame the internal critique and live harmoniously with that personality trait. One of the principal aspects of mindfulness meditation practice is

learning to be kind to yourself (Nhat Hanh, 1988). During my meditation training session from the fifth week, I brought up thoughts concerning critical attitudes toward myself and how mindfulness meditation teaches us to accept these feelings, while being kind to ourselves at the same time. *Another topic which was discussed was my attitude toward myself as being the constant critic. Nothing is ever good enough. I strive to do well, but I am even able to find fault in my best. It's difficult to say: "Don't be negative" because that's negating the negative. Try to use positive words and phrases like – Be kind to yourself and find the positives in your work.*

Many who enter the field of music therapy likely carry difficult issues, and having an awareness of one's personal struggles can be liberating. It also enhances one's ability to have compassion toward others and relate more closely with clients. This also reveals to me insights surrounding the compassionate, accepting, and empathetic nature of how I view the practice of music therapy. Because many of us have had our own personal issues, we are more apt to have understanding for the difficulties of others. During my mindfulness meditation training, a song called *Give Yourself a Break* (Emet, 2013) was presented to me as a simple way that I could encourage positive feelings toward myself. Mindfulness meditation practice has allowed me to look deeper within myself and connect with these difficult issues.

During an individual meditation session from my third week on June 27, 2016, I let thoughts and feelings arise concerning the inner critique, acknowledging them without reacting to them. Afterwards, during the 9-minute improvisation on the piano, while recording, I breathed slowly for another 2 minutes before playing anything. I wondered what might emerge musically if I just allowed myself to connect with my breath and appreciate the sounds that came out. I sensed that the critic was fighting to make its presence from the very first chord as I immediately stopped and felt uncomfortable about the positioning of the piano bench. My journal entry responding to this improvisation also acknowledged my inner critic: *I gave 2 minutes of silence. The critic was there right from the beginning. I thanked him, but it's like again I wanted to laugh at him. It's hard to listen back because it seems lost. My perception feels really lost. Exploring with this particular chord sound...The first chord: Trust yourself and your instincts. I think this chord is beautiful. Listening back, I want to hear more of these sounds, but my energy at the time was possibly too critical and excited. Perhaps I felt the need for something faster and play rather loud random tone clusters in a variety of registers with quick "jazzy-like" rhythms. I am sure anyone listening would hear this as exuberant thumping, but it was a great energy release for me. A very excited flurry of notes in the lower middle register with the left hand as a subject followed by an equal barrage of a response in the right hand, while adding a semblance of a counter-subject in the left. This is pleasurable to play with full abandon and following a structure at the same time.*

During the improvisation, I could feel my musical and creative voice emerge as noted in my journal response. I was no longer critical of my playing, willing to accept these critical attitudes and motivated to create. *There's a great need to, rather than turn-off the critic and recognizing this as a weakness, to in-*

*stead, recognize the critic, and allow it to share...There needs to be a balance between acceptance, experimentation, and evaluation.* I could sense that I was finally letting go and feeding myself with positive energy. The musical improvisation eventually became more animated and infused with volume and energy. Listening back to this passage again, I sense aspects of nervousness and discomfort. The inner critic still resonates with me, because I find the passage to be angry and disjointed. The calm and open energy that mindfulness meditation brings to me no longer feels represented in this excerpt. Yet, it seems as though I was using the improvisation in a therapeutic sense to release myself of the inner critic.

My awareness of negative feelings toward myself was heightened further during the fourth meditation training session as noted in my journal entry: *It's such a simple phrase: Be kind to yourself. But I wonder how many people actually do or say the opposite. I know that I am often not kind to myself with regard to self-evaluation. In fact, I am extremely critical of myself. I am realizing more and more this fact. I could do well to use the phrase "be kind to yourself" in my meditation. I feel that this could help me become a more complete and emotionally satisfied person.* The value of kind thinking toward myself increased continuously throughout the training sessions. This was shown in the increase of positive comments that progressed in my journal entries, as well as the ability to let go of these feelings during my weekly individual mindfulness meditation sessions.

### Category 3: Experiences of Growth through Mindfulness Meditation

*Subcategory 3a: Personal insights, realizations, and relationship with music.* At the time that I began the mindfulness meditation training, I considered if or how my relationship to music would be affected by this practice. My musical personality and my identity are intertwined with other aspects of my personality such as self-confidence and criticism. Additionally, I dedicated so many hours and years of developing my piano performance skills. I desired to experience music as something new and exciting, and not be halted by preconceived notions or my tendency toward perfectionism that had defined much of my musical identity before entering music therapy. Throughout my music therapy studies, I was encouraged to creatively experiment with new instruments and not be bound by conventional music traditions. I learned how to improvise with others (clients and other students) in a free and non-judgmental manner. This attitude is very similar to the practice of mindfulness in that there are no "expert" meditators and the practice is approached with a welcoming openness. Mindfulness practice offers a multitude of possibilities for finding peace, happiness, and freedom within a simple and non-judgmental framework. This feeling of happiness and freedom was what I was seeking with regard to my music and was an aspect of my relationship toward music that had been neglected.

For this study, I created six music improvisations in response to six mindfulness meditation sessions that I did on my own. For three of these improvisations, I chose to use my primary instrument, the piano. However, the improvisation where I felt the most connected to music and to my inner child came after an individual mindfulness meditation session from the second week on June 21,

2016. During this 7-minute improvisation, I vocalized and played an Iranian drum called the dombak. The journal entry made after this improvisation expresses the joy and comfort I felt when I was able to express my intuitive musical feelings without any preconceived expectations or rules. *After exploring the instrument playing with different parts of my hand and in different areas of the skin as well as knocking the side of the instrument with my knuckles, I eventually create a steady beat with my drum adding a few off-beats at a medium volume. After a minute, my voice enters with random “chirps” every two beats or so. My voice melody starts quite high and slowly descends to a middle range where I feel really connected singing to the off-beats of my drum playing. Experiencing the freshness and wonderment of life’s experiences. Feeling grounded yet free. Being at peace with the duality and struggles that life brings. The drum and voice are so different – like thoughts and the physical experiences. Yet, they work in harmony through meditation and connecting with the breath.*

As previously noted in Subcategory 1a (Resting the mind), I realized that meditating before practicing helps me to have a more productive practice session and I was better able to be aware of my progress. Improvising on instruments on which I had less mastery, such as the guitar and the dombak, allowed me to feel a sense of freshness and sensitivity that I generally did not feel when improvising on the piano. In the improvisation that I did in response to my fifth private mindfulness meditation session, I noted in my journal: *I sensed more freedom than I never before experienced on the guitar. A certain letting go into the instrument and exploring its qualities, yet at the same time, feeling creative and not pushing to make something happen. I sense a certain optimism in the melodic shape of the improvisation and tonality...I was struggling to know the notes but it didn’t seem to faze my attention and joy of discovering things on the instrument. It was a spiritual feeling too, and I again felt like a child who still had yet to discover and learn many things about the guitar.*

Mindfulness meditation gives an intimate knowledge of one’s self (Emet, 2015), and being open and aware of one’s feelings is an important aspect of personal growth. The techniques involved are simple but demand awareness and authenticity as well as a steady and constant return to the breath. During the final improvisation that I did in response to my sixth private mindfulness meditation session, my journal entry reflected aspects of simplicity and structure. *I keep a steady quarter-note D Major strum sometimes moving to neighboring chords. When I enter with my voice enter, it feels supported and confident. Sometimes it’s fun just to strum and keep a beat. Maybe it’s not the most interesting, but it’s good to stay simple and structured. What are the possibilities of staying true to yourself, being authentic, and making life meaningful?*

The philosophical elements of mindfulness meditation discussed in Subcategory 1d also touched on accepting our impermanence and the realization that life is constantly changing, and is manifested in the concept of letting go. In order to appreciate life, one needs to avoid clinging to things or feelings. Mindfulness meditation training suggests that thoughts are just thoughts that pass through our consciousness. We are encouraged to smile at these thoughts but avoid becoming attached to them while we remain continuously focused on our breath. After the

improvisation in response to a private mindfulness meditation session from the first week on guitar and voice, I commented in my journal on the relationship between music and the concept of impermanence. *Letting go still requires practice, but sometimes we need to be free in other ways. I feel that I still need to hold on to something grounding, like the rhythm or beat. I feel like rhythm and melody is still my connection to the earth. These sounds are just vibrations like our breath. It needs to calm us. Sometimes exploration into unknown territories is healthy. It's important to stay grounded but also to understand that life is only about taking on new challenges in whatever form that may be. There is also a lot of gratitude knowing that I can still grow in life.* Using music in a way that can encourage calming of my mind, and promote a feeling of understanding and freedom may become deeply connected to my mindfulness practice.

*Subcategory 3b: New insights toward interpersonal relationships in music therapy.* The mindfulness meditation training and self-inquiry processes facilitated not only feelings of self-acceptance but also feelings of acceptance toward my professional community and colleagues. Being able to listen and having an appreciation for others' viewpoints was highlighted in a journal entry I made in response to my sixth mindfulness meditation training session. *I know that there are those that could act in ways that are different from me. I accept that I need to approach everyone especially those that "bother me" with loving-kindness. The way to combat anger is through loving-kindness. I need to see that when confrontations arise, which they will, my first rule should be to understand the impermanence of the situation and always act with loving-kindness.* This journal entry also speaks directly to successfully thriving in interpersonal relationships with family, friends, those within the music therapy community, and with other professionals.

Through mindfulness meditation, one can grasp a fuller comprehension of emotions and the behavior resulting from those emotions (Emet, 2015). Additionally, having a more calm and grounded self can enhance my ability to develop therapeutic relationships as well as my ability to stay in the present moment. In a journal entry that I completed after my final meditation training session I said: *The ability to understand emotions and behavior is extremely valuable in music therapy for assessment and throughout treatment. Additionally, the calmness that I felt after the meditation felt like my mental conditions for music therapy were heightened.*

*Subcategory 3c: Insights regarding the therapeutic alliance in music therapy.* The practice of music therapy necessitates that the therapist be fully present for the client and have command of various interventions for a wide range of populations that can be used at any given moment during a session. Since I have only been practicing music therapy for a short period of time, it is normal that I sometimes struggle with sessions or with certain population groups. Mindfulness meditation allows me to feel compassion and understanding toward myself and reminds me that I am learning music therapy skills, and that learning will continue throughout the course of my career. Developing acceptance of myself with a license to make mistakes is reflected in a lengthy journal entry made after my fourth mindfulness training session. *I thought that I would eventually feel more confident as I continued to work, but after one year of working, I still get "stage*

*fright” of sorts. I think if I can understand that this is important to my skills and reaction in the sessions. If I wasn’t feeling a certain emotion, it might mean that I wouldn’t be as effective in the actual session. I feel like this is also an aspect of the “fight or flight mechanism.” However, the negative thought patterns surrounding my abilities as a music therapist can be reduced by just recognizing that I’m recognizing this thought, and to be kind to myself. I think this is ultimately going to relate directly to my enjoyment of being a music therapist.*

*Accepting one’s self could also relate to music therapy in the quality of care that I provide, as well as the populations I serve. This also connects strongly to the humanist perspective that acceptance of one’s self leads to acceptance of all others enhancing the concept of an unconditional positive regard.*

An important aspect of music therapy is the development of a more congruent sense of empathy toward clients. Mindfulness meditation training enhanced this sense of empathy for me through the philosophical understanding that we are all connected and interrelated. Additionally, it allowed me to gain insight regarding my emotions as well as seeing all the joys and beauty surrounding me. Following my fourth mindfulness meditation training session, I discussed the importance of staying focused on the needs of the client as well as the connections that I hope to develop moving forward in my career. *To explore this quality is to validate my work, which already brings me joy. I know that I will have a lot more client interaction next Fall. I believe that could be a useful tool of encouragement as the season progresses from being “busy and excited” to “busy and tired.” I feel that these perceptions speak directly to developing a stronger sense of empathy and connection to the clients that we serve. The idea of embracing all of ourselves is in keeping with the humanist point of view in that we are all the same. And our energies are intertwined when in therapy. With a mindfulness perspective, the therapist is the facilitator yet the connectedness to the client is linked by a stronger force or energy. These concepts also speak to being a compassionate and caring therapist.*

*Subcategory 3d: Insights concerning personal attitude as music therapist.*

Regarding my relationship toward music and myself as a music therapist, my personal and professional insights are interrelated. This aspect was illuminated through a journal entry made in response to my improvisation following my first private meditation session. *I have a taste for the sounds and vibrations of music. It is also in all of us. Be kind to yourself as you discover your client’s needs and wishes. It might not always be apparent and trust the music to guide you. If you can have more trust in music it will help you connect with the clients more fully. Understand that your clients need to connect with sounds and vibrations as well.*

Again, my professional and personal insights combined as I reflected on being kind to myself and not feeding the inner critic as discussed earlier in this chapter in Subcategory 2d. I further explored the concept being kind to myself in a journal entry made after my fifth mindfulness meditation training session. *Loving one’s self is, I believe, one of the key aspects of becoming a really great music therapist. If you can appreciate what you bring and know that you are making differences in people’s lives, this can only give you energy to grow and become more effective as a clinician.*

One of my principal reasons for becoming a music therapist is because I wanted to be able to fully embrace the therapeutic nature of music. Knowing which music to use and how to use it is a skill that is constantly being developed as I continue on this path. Working with a variety of different populations demands that the therapist be aware of a multitude of musical needs and tastes. The mindfulness meditation training encouraged calming the mind and through that, I can reflect on all these possibilities. Before considering possible music interventions, calming my mind will encourage openness and flexibility, which in turn will help me to understand the musical needs of my clients. After my first mindfulness meditation training session, I noted in my journal: *Calming the mind also helped me to understanding the powerful nature of music, another powerful drug, involved self-regulation. This is something that I was aware of, but the meditation offered clarity regarding the powerful impact of music. Understanding the use of music in clinical settings, its usefulness and the dangers involved in inappropriate music can be immensely valuable.*

*Subcategory 3e: Insights toward my music therapy practice.* Lastly, and most importantly, mindfulness meditation training has given me a more positive outlook toward my music therapy practice. Before starting the training, and as I became more experienced in music therapy, feelings of insecurity regarding my competence were increasing. Despite developing and enjoying the learning process, I was also developing more anxiety and negativity toward my practice. Explored earlier in this chapter with regard to identifying negative stressors through mindfulness meditation, I felt that my inner critic of my classical piano career was following my new chosen career and manifesting itself in another way. Mindfulness meditation helped in making me aware of these thoughts and provided tools on obtaining encouragement from within. Insights regarding positivity toward my music therapy practice were found in a journal entry written after my fifth mindfulness training session: *Last year, I was always so down on myself about music therapy. I felt that I did not have the competence level to be good. I think that these thoughts negatively affected my practice and I would like to change my attitude regarding that. From now on, when reviewing or making observation notes, after focusing on the client, think about all the good things that I did to make it a positive session. Do this always before finding room for improvement.* The focus on positive aspects of my work in music therapy as well as being kind to my feelings of negativity brought a powerful change in perspective both personally and professionally.

## DISCUSSION

As noted in earlier, the last step in Moustakas' stages of heuristic inquiry involves a creative synthesis where the processes and outcomes of the research are conceptualized using a creative format. This final section contains a description of this study's creative synthesis process. Limitations of the study as well as personal, professional, clinical, and training implications of the results are presented. I have also included suggestions for future research.



## Creative Synthesis

In every mindfulness meditation training session, we sang a song (or several songs) with simple lyrics and memorable melodies that somehow related to the meditation discussion or insights that had emerged during the meditation. The lyrics to the songs were mindfulness poems characterized by the inherent simplicity, symbolism, and positive energy of the practice. These songs had pleasing, uncomplicated harmonies, and the melodies were easy to remember and easy to sing. As a music therapist, these songs helped me to “water the good seeds” and I sang and played them for myself during my weekly practice sessions. The songs would often remain in my head during the immersion phase outside of data collection sessions. I felt like these songs resonated with my personal philosophical approach to music therapy, and I eventually started including some of them in my music therapy practice when it seemed clinically appropriate. During the explication phase of my research, I remembered specific songs that resonated with the themes and subthemes that were emerging. Because of this, I began thinking about using creative song writing as a way to summarize and synthesize my research experience. I decided to use the structure of a mindfulness meditation song in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh (Emet, 2013). As these songs are specific and usually reflect on a singular aspect of mindfulness meditation, I decided to reflect one of the principal elements that impacts all of my mindfulness meditation practice, resting the mind. In mindfulness meditation, only through resting the mind can personal awareness and positive insights be achieved. In keeping with the tradition, my song, through nature metaphors, explores using mindfulness meditation to calm the mind. The song contains two verses, a chorus, and has a simple melody and chord progression. I sang the song with piano accompaniment and recorded it using a Zoom H4n-SP 4-Channel Recorder. I also made a copy of the sheet music with piano accompaniment and guitar/piano chords (See Appendix B). The lyrics to the song are presented here:

The Great Blue Heron

### *Verse 1*

As I rest and as I calm the mind

I breathe in and feel the sunshine

I breathe out and the snow gently melts

Smiling to the birch, the sparrow and the pine

### *Chorus*

As I follow my breath, I feel the warmth of the sun

As I follow my breath, I see the moment has begun

As I follow my breath, I watch the deer having fun

and I follow my breath, watching the great blue heron

## *Verse 2*

Breathing in, I see swallows in the trees

Breathing out, I watch them fly off free

The breeze is warmly touching my face

Passing through this beautiful and mountainous place

## *Chorus*

As I follow my breath, I feel the warmth of the sun

As I follow my breath, I see the moment has begun

As I follow my breath, I watch the deer having fun

and I follow my breath, watching the great blue heron

When I first recorded this song, I felt like part of the music strongly resembled a famous jazz song that I knew. I felt that I needed to change the chord structure somehow, but I tried to acknowledge this internal critique and just allow the words to take their shape within this musical structure. I decided that the music and the lyrics were just right for my first mindfulness meditation song. Listening back to the song brought a smile to my face and made me laugh. I appreciated the imagery of nature, and this allowed me to find an internal sense of joy and appreciation for the miracle and beauty of life.

## Limitations

This study had some limitations, which must be acknowledged. I have only been practicing as a professional music therapist since May 2016. Prior to conducting this study, I had no previous training in mindfulness-based techniques. Therefore, it is important to note that my interpretations and ideas are based upon my experiences thus far.

For self-care reasons, I could not completely abandon my mindfulness meditation practice for the incubation phase of the heuristic inquiry, which as noted in Section 3, is normally required in this methodology. This could have affected my interpretation of the data. One must also keep in mind that while my results may contain elements of transferability, they were informed by my unique perspective and by my own personal experiences, and they would likely be different for someone else.

Going into this study, I also had some assumptions, which could also be considered as limitations as they may have inadvertently influenced how I collected and analyzed the data. I assumed that mindfulness is an effective way to address stress reduction and promote self-awareness. I assumed that the research process would be a constructive experience for me and that the results would not only be relevant to my work as a music therapist but also to the work and self-care of other music therapy students and professionals. Finally, I assumed that music therapists who integrate mindfulness practices into their lives will be less stressed and provide better therapy, which will have a positive impact on client outcomes.

## Personal Implications

My research question was: What personal and professional insights emerge when a newly certified music therapist who is also enrolled in a master's music therapy program engages in six-week mindfulness meditation training? Here, I have highlighted and summarized the most salient personal and professional insights that emerged as a result of this study.

*Self-care.* Mindfulness meditation offered me a method of achieving increased relaxation and contentedness. The calming of my mind through connecting to my breath can allow my body and mind to rejuvenate and recharge, satisfying many of my own personal self-care needs.

*Insights and awareness.* When my mind is calm, I can reflect on aspects of myself and my interconnectedness with others, gaining a broader understanding through observing without reacting emotionally. Through this inquiry, and through calming the mind, I felt my awareness was heightened and I gained numerous personal insights, some of which are too personal to share in this study. I can share that feelings of anger, fear, or frustration would sometimes occupy my thoughts. While meditating, rather than trying to squash or ignore these emerging feelings, it was immensely healing and liberating for me to acknowledge these feelings, and reflect upon them with compassion, understanding, and loving kindness. This sense of awareness became heightened throughout the process, and I feel that continued mindfulness meditation helps me to deal with these strong emotions with more compassion and understanding.

*Connectedness with clients.* The results section discussed the abundance of nature metaphors used to be more mindful and aware of one's surroundings. Deepening my sense of connectedness toward nature may help me to feel more at one with clients during sessions, opening the possibility for strong therapeutic relationships to develop.

*Relationships with family and friends.* When one is being mindful and in the present moment, a heightening of awareness can be achieved. Through this practice, my communication with others has improved as I focus less on my personal feelings and emotions and become more focused on listening, understanding, and connecting with others.

*Increased confidence.* Mindfulness teaches us to listen to positive thoughts while also acknowledging the negative thoughts. Through this practice, I observed the negative thoughts to have less impact on me emotionally because, rather than being emotionally affected by these negative thoughts, I was accepting all thoughts as neither good nor bad. This approach toward accepting myself and my emotions helped me to achieve a more positive attitude and increased confidence in terms of how I perceive myself.

## Potential Clinical Implications

*Self-care practices.* Being an effective therapist means that one must have the mental capacity and energy to organize and lead sessions. Additionally, the desire to connect closely with clients and integrating ourselves into their musical

world can be draining both physically and mentally. Mindfulness meditation can be used by music therapists and other clinicians to increase relaxation and calm, allowing the mind to unwind while connected only to the breath. It is an efficient way to reconnect with one's self and come back to a calm and refreshed state. I used mindfulness meditation throughout this past year as part of my own self-care practice

*Interpersonal relationships.* With a calmer mind, clinicians can be more effective in communicating with colleagues in a positive and reciprocal manner. Through this, a therapist can also appreciate the unique qualities in their colleagues and co-workers, and perhaps work more harmoniously with them than they might otherwise. Through practicing mindfulness meditation, I felt that the effectiveness of my interpersonal relationships have improved.

*Openness to feedback.* Increasing positive and encouraging thoughts, and being kind to oneself can allow for an increased willingness to learn and discover. This positive attitude can prove helpful in receiving comments and feedback regarding one's clinical work from supervisors, colleagues, and co-workers. Additionally, the ability to accept positive feedback with appreciation and authenticity can be greatly enhanced. Since starting a new full-time music therapy position, I have been given quite a lot of feedback, and I feel that mindfulness meditation practice has allowed me to absorb this feedback with more openness and gratitude.

*Navigating difficult times.* From my own personal experience, feelings of being overwhelmed can often arise in the practice of music therapy. Through mindfulness meditation, one does not need to internalize this type of stress. Staying focused on the present moment, with conscious breathing can help one to ride the storm of difficult times in a constructive manner, while always being kind to one's self. I have used the practice of mindfulness meditation several times during to help me navigate the many highs and lows of my first year of full-time work.

Additionally, recognizing feelings of nervous anticipation that may arise before or within sessions or that may arise when meeting new clients may help one to have a stronger sense of self-congruence. By connecting with one's breath and allowing the feelings of anticipation to pass without reacting negatively, one will be able to maintain a stronger sense of awareness and calm during difficult moments.

*Openness to making mistakes.* Mindfulness teaches us to be kind and accepting to ourselves. Through mindfulness meditation, it is possible to achieve an understanding that making mistakes is a precursor to learning. Often with mindfulness meditation, perceived mistakes become invaluable sources of insight and understanding, sometimes leading to discoveries regarding one's clinical work that might have otherwise been lost or led to unhelpful feelings of frustration. Since beginning mindfulness meditation practice, I have noticed a shift in the direction of welcoming mistakes as points of learning or discovery rather than with frustration or disappointment. With a continued focus on the breath, accepting the feeling without reacting emotionally will help to ground one's self completely in the present moment.

*Enhanced concentration.* When one is fully in the present moment, awareness is increased, and one is more focused on what is happening during sessions. This heightened awareness, can allow the therapist to observe the session with increased focus and attention. Improved concentration can also be useful in gaining a stronger awareness for client assessment and treatment planning. Through my mindfulness practice, I have noticed an increase in my concentration within the sessions, as well as during assessment and treatment planning. Additionally, I have sensed an improved ability to concentrate on the music during sessions thus enabling me to maximizing its therapeutic potential.

All potential clinical implications noted above (improving self-care practices, improved interpersonal relationships, openness to feedback, navigating difficult times, openness to making mistakes, and improved concentration) have the potential to enhance clients' experiences in music therapy, which in turn may have positive impacts on therapeutic outcomes. Thus, music therapists who maintain regular self-care practices such as mindfulness meditation, may not only be helping themselves, but also their clients.

## Education and Training

As discussed, numerous aspects of my music therapy training felt enhanced by this experience. A mindfulness meditation program similar to the one used for this inquiry could be offered as a supplementary aid or class for students wishing to explore this topic. Along with the self-experiential methods of journaling and improvisation already used in classes, a mindfulness program/component could be incorporated into music therapy training. This could enhance the learning experience and provide unique insights to both students and professors. Certified music therapists at any stage of their careers (new and experienced professionals) could also pursue mindfulness meditation training as part of their continuing education, especially given the wide range of potential benefits noted in this thesis.

Numerous therapists use mindfulness in their practice, and because of the potential benefits, an introduction to mindfulness meditation could be added as a separate class for a music therapy degree program and included under the requirements for the certification board. The program could consist of reading materials with written assignments and case studies of the use of mindfulness in therapeutic settings.

As an addition to the mindfulness training, students would be asked to present guided mindfulness meditation sessions and given the opportunity to incorporate music as part of these sessions. An awareness of the use of mindfulness and music with specific populations could also be explored during these courses, with each student presenting a mindfulness-based experiential in a session plan for their chosen population group.

## Research

Through this heuristic inquiry, I was able to gain a direct and concentrated experience of mindfulness meditation. The insights and implications that emerged from this study were all derived through my personal experience. A study which compares the personal and professional insights of several newly certified therapists, might be useful in identifying common themes across cases, which could provide an enhanced perspective of the perceived effects of mindfulness meditation for these individuals. It might validate some of the themes that emerged in the present inquiry. Alternatively, new and unique insights could emerge, thus broadening our understanding of this practice.

Other qualitative studies such as dialogical phenomenology or hermeneutics could also be used to study the effects of mindfulness. By taking notes of interviews and bracketing, an alternate perspective could be achieved from the researcher. The understanding and interpretation by the researcher is at the forefront of these studies, and could provide us with a rich appreciation of mindfulness meditation.

From a quantitative perspective, it might be useful to measure the effects of a mindfulness meditation training program through a randomized control trial, consisting of either music therapy students or certified music therapists. The experimental group would receive several weeks of mindfulness meditation training while the control group would receive another form of self-care training. Measures to examine might include levels of stress, anxiety, self-confidence, self-esteem, etc.

I would also encourage other newly certified music therapists or music therapy students to conduct a heuristic inquiry similar to this one. Although their insights and perspectives will likely be different than mine, there are many potential benefits to be gained by participating in this type of self-reflexive process at the beginning of one's career. Establishing good self-care practices early on may prevent future burn out. Furthermore, similar research studies could increase our understanding of the role of mindfulness meditation and the implications of this practice for music therapists as well as provide feasible and relevant models of self-care.

## Concluding Remarks

The experience of engaging in mindfulness meditation training for this heuristic inquiry produced compelling and powerful insights with regard to my professional and personal life. Because I was open to this method, I feel that my self-awareness was enhanced and my self-care needs were addressed. As indicated in the limitations section above, I did not completely stop practicing mindfulness meditation during the incubation phase of the inquiry as my self-care needs were being met by this practice. For this reason, I would propose modifying the design of future research studies potentially to allow for this need to be addressed. I found that throughout the training, I was able to meditate and calm my mind with increased ease. Many feelings and emotions surfaced, and I began listening to these feelings in an objective and unemotional manner. While negative feelings toward myself surfaced as a subcategory during the axial coding phase, other neg-

ative themes also emerged such as anger, fear, and frustration. While I felt that these themes might have been personally too difficult to explore for the purpose of this research project, through my personal meditation practice, I continue to search for insights and understanding regarding these themes.

As a precaution to others that might wish to explore this approach or conduct a similar inquiry, please be aware that certain thoughts or feelings may surface that could be difficult to acknowledge or confront. This could prove to be emotionally difficult for someone who is just beginning this process. Maintaining awareness of one's breath and being kind to oneself can help to overcome difficult emotions and allow for further awareness of the present moment. Being able to conduct this research within an academic context provided me structure, guidance, and a sense of emotional stability when difficult material emerged. For those that might want to explore this method outside of an academic context, I would suggest that they establish a formal support system, which could include personal therapy, peer supervision, and/or professional supervision.

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## APPENDIX A

Suggested Readings from the Mindfulness Meditation Centre Completed by the Researcher

- Emet, J. (2015). *Mindfulness meditation*. London, England: Souvenir Press Ltd.
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## APPENDIX B

### Mindfulness Meditation Song

# The Great Blue Heron

D. Moran

Moderate

The first system of music consists of a grand staff with three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of whole rests. The middle staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a whole rest, a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), and a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5) with a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, C#5, F#4). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), and a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3).

The second system of music consists of a grand staff with three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a whole rest, a quarter note chord (Bm7), a quarter note chord (Em), and a quarter note chord (A). The lyrics "As I rest and as I calm the mind, I breathe in and feel the sun" are written below the notes. The middle staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a whole rest, a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), and a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), and a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3).

The third system of music consists of a grand staff with three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a quarter note chord (D), a quarter note chord (Bm), a quarter note chord (Em7), and a quarter note chord (F#7). The lyrics "shine, I breathe out and the snow gently melts, smiling to the birch, the sparrow and the" are written below the notes. The middle staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5), and a quarter note chord (F#4, C#5). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music: a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3), and a quarter note chord (F#2, C#3).

13 F#7 Bm7 Em

pine. As I fol - low my breath, I feel the warmth of the

17 F#7 Bm7 Em

sun. As I fol - low my breath, I see the mo - ment has just be-

21 F#7 Bm7 Em

gun. As I fol - low my breath, I watch the deer hav - ing

25 F# Em Bm Em7 G

fun, and I fol - low my breath, watch - ing the great bl - ue her

29 F#7 Bm Em A D

on. Breath-ing in, I see swal-lows in trees, breath-ing out, I watch them fly off

33 D Em F# G F#7 G

free, the breeze is warm - ly tou - ching my face, pass-ing through this

36 F# G F# Bm7

beau ti-ful and mount-ain-ous place. As I fol - low my breath, I feel the

40 Em F#7 Bm7

warmth of the sun. As I fol - low my breath, I see the

4

44 Em F#7 Bm7

mo - ment has just be - gun. As I fol - low my breath, I watch the

48 Em F# Em Bm

deer hav - ing fun, and I fol - low my breath, watch - ing the

52 Em7 G F#7

great bl - ue her - on.

55