

## ***Engaged Music Listening with Guided breathing (EMLGB) (Leslie)***



### **RECOGNITION OF ENGAGED MUSIC LISTENING with GUIDED BREATHING (EMLGB)MI Method.**

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I offer the following Music and Imagery program: *Engaged Music Listening with Guided Breathing* (EMLGB) as a registered form of Music and Imagery, adapted from the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM).

This Music and Imagery method originated 10 years ago as a simple music activity based on a receptive Music Therapy technique of focused music listening to pre-recorded music with guided breathing. It has since been further developed over the past 3 years at a special school for teenagers with Autism in Dublin and later with a general population of clients, as an MI method. I am currently in the process of writing a book on the subject entitled *From Silence into a Musical Space-Engaged Music Listening with Guided Breathing*.

EMLGB is a MI method, adapted from and complementary to the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM), identifying issues presented by clients and providing tools to address these issues in a similar manner to the BMGIM method. It is also utilised as a therapeutic method to facilitate client self-awareness and self-actualization. It has also been shown to be effective as a preliminary 'taster' music and imagery session where some clients may find a full GIM session to be overwhelming. In such circumstances EMLGB, as a less intense approach, can be of benefit. While EMLGB is an independent, stand-alone MI method in itself, it is a complementary adaptation of BMGIM. Therefore, where appropriate, the method may lead to the client moving on, at a later stage, to a full program of BMGIM sessions.

It is similar in many ways to BMGIM in its methodology and mode of delivery, but should not be seen as merely a shortened version of BMGIM. An EMLGB session differs in a number of significant ways:

- It generally operates at a lower level of intensity for the client than a classic BMGIM session.
- The method is particularly useful for clients who may have had limited or no exposure to music and imagery methods or may be anxious about participating in an MI session.
- With this in mind, the emphasis between the guided breathing and engaged listening elements can be varied according to the needs of the client. In other words, the amount of time spent on either element will depend on whether the client is having difficulty engaging with the breathing exercise or with the music listening.
- Overall this technique can result in a less pressurised therapeutic space than that of some other MI methods. The client is not trying to concentrate on a number of session procedures or elements at once.
- While EMLGB is a stand-alone MI method in itself, it can be integrated as a foundation level introduction for BMGIM training or other MI training programs.
- The music listening section is shorter than in a BMGIM session (approx. 5-10 minutes).

- The music selections are shorter than in a BMGIM session.
- Music selections tend to be from the crossover/neo-classical genre. They tend to contain a degree of repetition, with less instrumentation and simpler arrangement than many classical BMGIM selections. They may also be more ambient in nature. This can allow the client to remain with whatever imagery may be evoked for a time, without sudden change.
- Music repertoire can also include BMGIM selections from beginner level programmes and MI methods such as Music breathing (MB) (Körlin, 2019).
- There is no or limited guiding by the therapist during the music listening section of a session, allowing the client to experience the musical space with little distraction.

#### Rationale behind the EMLGB method:

While the original rationale behind the creation of this receptive music method had been to expand and enhance the existing music therapy service provided for groups of people with special needs, the method has since been refined and developed as a complementary, adapted form of BMGIM.

The intention is to create a dynamic 3-way interaction between therapist, music and client, through a music and mindfulness listening programme with guided breathing, to address fundamental areas of concern and to achieve fundamental therapeutic goals. The method has been delivered within a mindfulness framework as an aid to focus and attention, with deep engagement in the present moment. A holistic approach, employing mindfulness techniques, in conjunction with guided breathwork and relaxation exercises has shown to be effective with the engaged music listening experience.

It is imperative that clients feel safe and secure in the therapy environment. In this regard music selections are chosen to support and safely contain emotional engagement during the session. As a therapist, you are in the same musical space as the client. By being connected to the music, your energy is focused on holding the client safely in that space and channelling the music to him/her (Justice, Kasayka, 1999). This is further supported through the employment of subtle verbal 'cues' during the music listening section by the therapist. The process will thus foster a state of relaxation, bring inward attention to the breath and invite engagement with the music at a deep level in the present moment.

#### Music selections:

Music is primarily chosen from classical and crossover/contemporary repertoire with flowing melodic and predictable harmonic progressions. Instrumentation tends to include strings and woodwind with some percussion and electronic effects. As sessions progress the therapist will introduce selections, where appropriate, with greater musical variation to further stimulate imagination and emotional response (including self-chosen music). Selections can also be chosen to match the perceived mood of a student, using Hevner's Mood Wheel (Hevner, 1937).

Music pieces that I have found to be effective tend to be in the contemporary, cross-over type genre. Many of these can be viewed on YouTube or purchased on iTunes:

- Olafur Arnalds-*Only the Winds & 1995*.
- Pat Metheny Group-*In Her Family*.
- Ian Leslie/Tommy Hayes-*At First Light*.
- Jon Hopkins-*Abandon Window & Echo Dissolve*.
- A Winged Victory for the Sullen-*All Farewells are Sudden*.
- Tigran Hamasyan-*Garun a (Var.)*.
- Arve Henriksen-*Sorrow and its Opposite*.
- Max Richter-*In the Garden & Written on the Sky*.
- Ola Gjeilo-*Santa Monica*.
- Nils Frahm-*Went Missing*.

#### Format for the EMLGB method:

Each session is of approximately 10 to 40 minutes' duration. A clear, concrete explanation of the process and step-by-step instructions before the session begins will help to allow clients to engage comfortably and effectively. The session begins with a preliminary prelude/conversation between therapist and client concerning any current life-issues of significance for the client that could arise during the session (similar to a BMGIM session).

Preliminary discussion with the client in order to assess therapeutic aims and objectives.

Induction/Relaxation/entering into the musical space:

- The client begins in a standing position. The Therapist then leads with some simple (Yoga type) relaxation exercises, demonstrating each as you move through them (optional).
- The therapist and client then sit down. Take time to ensure that you are both comfortable and still before moving on. The therapist then introduces an awareness of the breath. The relaxation is primarily focused on the breath as a dual means of drawing the music into the therapeutic space as well as providing a way for the student to breathe into the music.

Guided breathing exercise:

- During this section the therapist intentionally controls and regulates the respiration of the client, in accordance with the client's tolerance and comfort. The breathing volume is modulated as a means of following and containing arousal states between music selections as well as the modulation within each piece (Körlin, 2019). Within the Autonomic Nervous System the parasympathetic and sympathetic systems cooperate in the regulation of autonomic activity. The manner in which these systems interact in the breathing cycle can be seen in heart rate variability. The heart rate typically decreases at the bottom of the breath, when volume is minimal and increases towards the top, when the lungs are full (Körlin, 2018). As a result, a smaller breathing volume is used for relaxing music and is gently increased, as appropriate, for more energising selections.
- An ambient-style piece of music can be used (optional) as a reinforcing element to initially engage the client during the relaxation/breathing process (Wolfe, 1980). Verbal support and guidance is offered by the therapist, as appropriate through the session.

Engaged Music Listening:

- Play the music selection(s) –the duration of the music listening will depend on slowly developing the attention span of the client, e.g. on the number of times the client has participated in the activity.
- The therapist uses the words ‘Breathing and Relaxing’ at 30 second to 60 second intervals, or as required, during each music selection. It can be a useful guide and cue for the therapist to breathe loudly enough for the client to hear during this.
- There may also be some minimal guiding employed by the therapist, as required.
- In this section the primary consideration is to be present for the client and to support the process.

Return from the musical space/conclusion:

- When the music has finished the therapist gently guides the client back from the musical space.
- The therapist will conclude by ‘bookending’ the activity with a similar relaxation exercise to that conducted at the beginning of the session.
- Therapist and client breathe mindfully together for 1 minute to end the session.
- The therapist and client will then have a conversation to reflect on and process any imagery, emotional content etc. that may have occurred during the session.

Optional additional activities:

- Art materials may be made available for client to draw a Mandala after the music has ended (optional). The client can draw responses to the session experience with crayons/paints etc., while listening to the main music selection again. The client may then be invited to share a description of the drawing or any thoughts or feelings on the overall experience.

Trainee requirements for acceptance onto and completion of EMLGB:

The requirements to complete the training in EMLGB (basic level) are as follows:

This level is a simple music and breathing activity and is open to carers, musicians, teachers, nurses etc

- Participation in a 1-hour presentation/seminar, facilitated by the trainer.
- Receive 1 individual or group experiential session from the Trainer.

The requirements to complete the training in EMLGB (intermediate level) are as follows:

This level is a Music Therapy receptive method and is open to Music Therapists and advance level Music Therapy students

- Participation in a 2-hour presentation/seminar, facilitated by the trainer.
- Receive 2 individual or group experiential sessions from the Trainer.
- Knowledge of all course materials, including music repertoire.

The session and supervision/consultation requirements to complete the training in EMLGB (advanced level) are as follows:

This level is open to FAMI / EAMI accredited BMGIM Therapists, level 3 BMGIM trainees

- Participation in a 2-hour presentation/seminar, facilitated by the trainer.
- Receive 3 individual or group experiential sessions from the Trainer.
- Deliver 6 sessions with clients (2 of these may be group sessions).
- Receive 3 individual or group supervisions/consultations with the Trainer.
- The Trainer will discuss with the trainee if further sessions or supervisions are required.
- Knowledge of all course materials, including music repertoire.

#### Current and future training programs for EMLGB:

The intention is to make EMLGB available in the future as an MI method, as soon as is practicable, to qualified therapists and health professionals. It is a suitable method for those already qualified in another MI method. It has been integrated, as a module, into BMGIM training programs, both as an independent method in itself, an adaptation to BMGIM and as a foundation level introduction to the Bonny method.

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Ian Leslie Biographical Details:

Ian Leslie, MAMT, FAMI, is a professional saxophonist/composer, senior music therapist, EAMI accredited BMGIM trainer, AMI-Fellow, and Music Breathing (MB) practitioner. He is the creator of the Music and Imagery method: *Engaged Music Listening with Guided Breathing* (EMLGB).

He served as a European Network of Guided Imagery and Music (ENGIM) committee member between 2008 and 2012. He is currently a member of the education committee for the European Association of Music and Imagery (EAMI).

He has presented seminars at the University of Limerick MA in Music Therapy, The Vocational Education Committee, Irish Psychoanalytical Society and The Creative Arts Therapies Association. He is also a published author.

His particular area of interest is currently focused on expanding the potential client base for GIM through the creation of new GIM programmes, employing contemporary genres. This is closely tied in with his use of adapted forms of GIM in addition to the development of other associated receptive Music Therapy techniques.