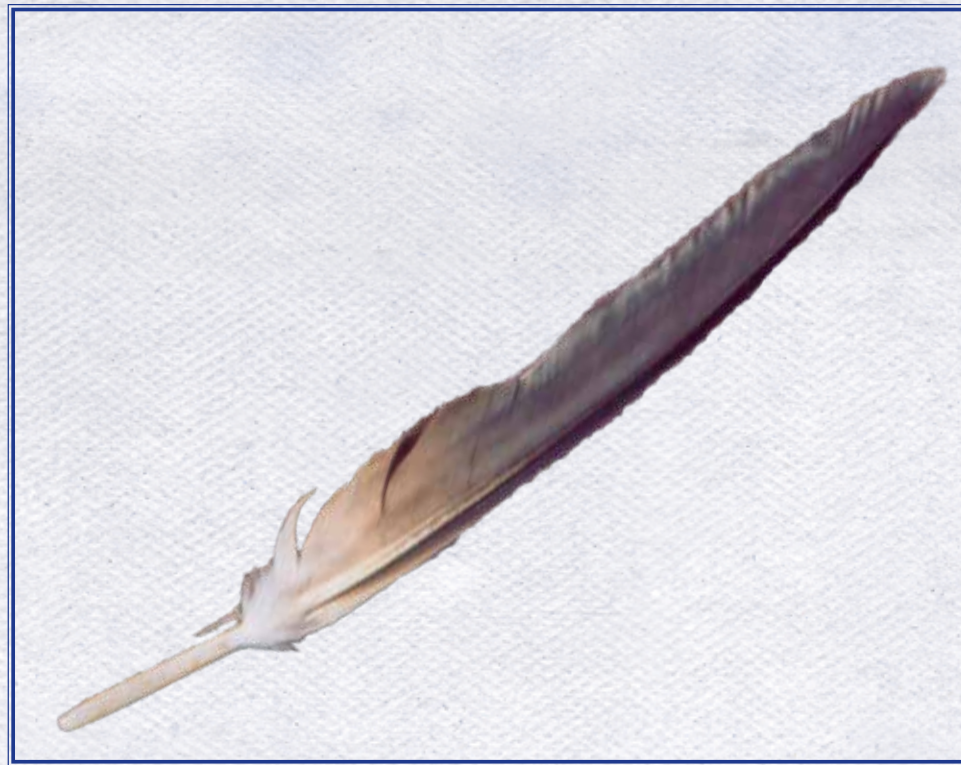


*Take Flight to Freedom:
Guided Imagery for
Health and Healing*



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Activity, Time and Materials

ACTIVITY:

Direct a guided imagery session rooted in the folklore involving birds, the watching of birds and their movements, and birds as representations of unencumbered freedom of movement. Introduce American Indian flute music and its relationship to birds. Use American Indian flute music as the vehicle for conducting a guided imagery session to positively impact the physical states of the participants, as well as their emotional sense of freedom. Guided imagery is documented to have a positive effect on physical and emotional states, such as heart rate, blood pressure, brain wave activity, and a sense of calm. This activity can be utilized in a group or individual setting.

TIME:

Eighty minutes over one session. (Fifty minutes for the introduction, discussion of folklore, and showing of examples; thirty minutes in preparation for and conducting of the guided imagery session with American Indian flute music. The time will vary depending on the number of participants.)

MATERIALS:

- Large, color photocopies of American Indian flute players and a traditional dancer (if possible, mounted on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels)
- Feathers
- Apples, bananas, lemons (to be squeezed into tea), oranges, and red grapes (Place these in bowls on the tables prior to the session.)
- A good sound system to play a CD or digital recording
- The CD *Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music* by Dr. Linda Gourneau and Keith Bear
- The CD *On the Edge of the Wind: From the Mythic Landscape of the Dakotas* by Keith Bear
- The book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*

Note: Additional copies of both CDs mentioned herein can be obtained by contacting the North Dakota Council on the Arts. These CDs were specifically designed to optimize the physical and emotional impact of guided imagery by utilizing American Indian flute tunes with mid-to-low tonal range.

“THREE PLAGUES” (LONELINESS, BOREDOM, HELPLESSNESS):

This activity is designed to specifically address the sense of helplessness. Many elders in care facilities feel a loss of freedom in their lives. Some can no longer drive. Some are confined to the elder care facility due to forms of dementia such as Alzheimer’s. Some are confined to their rooms, in wheelchairs, or otherwise feel limited in their freedom due to other mobility issues. Yet they lack such physical restrictions in their imaginations. It is in this way that the guided imagery session will allow the participants, in their imaginations and minds, to feel unrestricted in their movements, to feel free to travel and to “move” or “fly.” Loneliness and boredom is addressed by creating an opportunity for people to come together as a group and to share in a common experience.

ASSOCIATED MEDICAL STUDIES:

Evidence from studies indicates that music has positive effects on a variety of physiologic functions and parameters, such as reduced anxiety, reduced cardiac complications, reduced blood pressure and heart rate, increased immune cell messengers, a drop in stress hormones, and a boost in natural opiates.

Imagery is the currency of dreams and daydreams, memories and reminiscences, plans, projections, and possibilities. It is the language of the arts, the emotions, and most importantly, of the deeper self. Imagery is a window to your inner world; a way of viewing your ideas, feelings, and interpretations. It is a means of transformation and liberation from unconscious distortions that may be directing your life and shaping your health.

--Gaynor, Mitchell L., M.D. The Healing Power of Sound: Recovery from Life-Threatening Illness Using Sound, Voice, and Music. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2002.

--Rossman, Martin L., M.D. Guided Imagery for Self-Healing. Novato, California: HJ Kramer/New World Library, 2000.

Cover photo: Eagle “breath feather” found at the front of the wing and used to steer the bird in flight. Eagles, which are considered sacred to American Indians, are said to bring messages and to help people.



Keith Bear started playing the flute when he worked as an orderly at the Flagstaff Medical Center in Arizona. As he recalls, "Some of the patients were immobile, bandaged, and ill. They were physically hurting, but I could see they were emotionally hurting, too. I had traded with a traditional man for a flute, so I took that flute and played for them. It was powerful. The flute brought tears and healing. It was then, I knew the power of the flute to heal and transform." (Image courtesy of Troyd Geist, North Dakota Council on the Arts.)

Activity Plan

SESSION 1 (80 MINUTES):

(Fifty minutes for the introduction, discussion of folklore, and showing of examples; thirty minutes in preparation for and conducting of the guided imagery session with American Indian flute music.)

I. Prior to conducting this activity, the person directing it should read the related article, “Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music,” that is included in this toolkit in order to better understand the background and context of the guided imagery process. This activity can be conducted in either a group or individual setting. The person conducting this activity should explain that those in attendance will participate in a guided imagery session rooted in folklore that involves birds and American Indian flute music. The activity leader should read aloud from the following explanation:

Evidence from medical studies indicates that music has positive effects on a variety of physiologic functions and parameters, such as reduced anxiety, reduced cardiac complications, reduced blood pressure and heart rate, increased immune cell messengers, a drop in stress hormones, and a boost in natural opiates.

The awareness of sound and music’s impact on people is not new, however. For ages, religions have recognized the power and influence of sound and music on physical

and psychological states. Indeed, sound and music is a universal theme in every great spiritual and mystical belief system, and has been used in that context to intensify members’ communion with the divine. Such examples include Gregorian and Tibetan chants.

Imagery is the currency of dreams and daydreams, memories and reminiscences, plans, projections, and possibilities. It is the language of the arts, the emotions, and most importantly, of the deeper self. Imagery is a window to your inner world; a way of viewing your ideas, feelings, and interpretations. It is a means of transformation and liberation from unconscious distortions that may be directing your life and shaping your health.

Guided imagery combines imagery with voice, music, and sound to explore and address issues, whether these be physical, emotional, social, or otherwise. In so doing, the process helps one to accrue potential health benefits.

Note: This activity should be held in a space where people can talk comfortably with one another. The space should be comfortable, warm, quiet, intimate, and should produce a sense of tranquility. If possible, it should be held in a place where the lights can be dimmed when the guided imagery begins. In bowls around the table, provide

apples, bananas, lemons (to be squeezed into tea), oranges, and red grapes as snacks. (These specific fruits will later serve as visual cues during the guided imagery session.)

2. Begin by asking the following questions:

- Have any of you ever experienced a sense of calm at a religious ceremony or while listening to music? (Participants may have examples to share from church or from other spiritual contexts. Engage them by asking them to share and describe those experiences.)
- How many of you watch birds or in the past have watched birds? (Engage the respondents with follow-up questions so that a conversation develops. For example, what kind of birds, what do they look like, what time of year was it, do they sing songs?)
- What do you like about watching birds?
- Did you know that birds figure prominently in omens, premonitions, and signs? Then provide examples by reading aloud to the group the following items from *Sundogs and Sunflowers*: folklore items “55. A Bird at the Window,” “56. Rooster Crowing (Version 1),” and “57. Rooster Crowing (Version 2)” on page 146, and folklore item “58. Eagles and Hawks” on page 147. Try to engage the participants in discussion by asking if they have heard of any other similar beliefs.

3. The person directing this activity should explain to the group that

some Great Plains American Indian dances are inspired by birds, as well. Ask the participants if they have seen an American Indian powwow. What do the dancers wear? What are some of the items used or do you imagine the dancers using to decorate their outfits?

Draw the participants’ attention to the color photos of the Dakotah/Lakota champion dancer Wade Keeps Eagle of Bismarck, ND, and of the prairie chickens featured on page 147 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers*. (If possible, mount color photocopies of the images on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels in different parts of the room to make them easier for the participants to see. Or, make large color photocopies that can be distributed to the participants. Or, simply show the images in the book itself.) To the group, read aloud the blue text above and below the pictures on page 147. Point out how Wade’s stance is similar to the picture of the prairie chickens dancing on their “courtship ground.”

During this part of the activity plan, the person directing the activity or an assistant should distribute at least one feather to each person in attendance. Ask each participant to keep or hold onto the feathers for the duration of the activity plan. (The feathers will be used later.)

Note: In activity plans, it is important to try to stimulate as many of the five senses as possible to better connect the participants with the subject matter or activity at hand, hence the feathers. Additionally, while reminiscing works well for people in the early stages of dementia who are trying to hang onto memories, it may be

frustrating for those who may be in the middle to late stages of the disease. It is in this way that stimulating the use of other senses, such as touch, may help to better invoke the participants' memories. The fruits set on the table will provide visual, olfactory, and taste cues specifically connected to the upcoming guided imagery session.

4. The person directing this activity should explain further that Great Plains American Indian flute music and stories also prominently involve birds. To the group, read aloud the text on page 252, "The Sacred Branch That Sings," from the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers*.

Draw the participants' attention to the color photos of the flute players Dan Jerome of Belcourt, ND, and Keith Bear and Brendan Gourneau of New Town, ND, as featured on page 252 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers*. (If possible, mount color photocopies of the images on 25" x 30" display boards set on easels in different parts of the room to make them easier for the participants to see. Or, make large, color photocopies that can be distributed to the participants. Or, simply show the images in the book itself.) Point out how feathers adorn the flute and how the ends are carved to resemble the heads of birds. By reading aloud, further explain the following:

At the end of many American Indian flute tunes, one often can hear the musical imitative call of various birds. The breath of the musician sometimes is described as the wind, flowing through the flute, upon which the tune "flies."

Then ask the following questions:

- What do you think about when you see birds in flight? How would you describe birds in flight—as graceful, smooth? Would you like to be able to fly like a bird and why?
- If you were a bird flying through the air, what sensations do you imagine you would feel? Describe those sensations and how they make you feel—the wind blowing across your body, feeling happy, exhilarated, free.

5. The person leading this activity should now begin the guided imagery phase of the activity. It is important to have all electronic devices (such as cellphones, televisions, and radios) out of the room or turned off. Tell the participants to sit where and how they feel most comfortable and relaxed. Ask the participants to hold the feathers they were given and to look at them for a few moments. Inform the participants that a recording will be played and that they should relax and follow the narration. (Residents who are afraid of heights or who have experienced trauma involving heights should be discouraged from participating.)

Dim the lights. Then ask the participants to close their eyes and focus on their breathing. Guide them in this exercise by slowly saying, "Take a deep breath, drawing in through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. In through the nose, and out through the mouth. In through the nose, and out through the mouth."

Play Track 1, “Take Flight to Freedom,” from the CD *Take Flight: Guided Imagery to American Indian Flute Music*. The track will run approximately twenty minutes. (Turn up the volume loud enough so that all can hear, but not so loud that it is disruptive to contemplative relaxation and imagining.)

6. At the conclusion of this phase of the activity plan, encourage but do not pressure the participants to share how the guided imagery and music made them feel and what they imagined. (Expressing what one imagines allows even people with forms of dementia to participate by taking the pressure off other activities that involve memory. It is in this way that more people are able to interact.) Remind the participants that they are welcome to stay and share in the snacks provided: the apples, bananas, lemons (to be squeezed into tea), oranges, and red grapes.

Note: After this activity is complete, people usually do not want to lose what they have created with their imaging. They should be encouraged to use that “vision” when they are in a quiet space. Using American Indian flute music while doing so may help them more easily reach that space because of its soothing and melodic sound. The CD utilized in this activity plan features tunes in the mid-to-low tonal ranges to maximize physiologic effects. While the capacity for imagery varies from person to person, every individual will experience the effects of guided imagery according to his or her own personal physiology. Dr. Gourneau expects that people who meditate regularly will have longer-lasting effects, while some may experience only short-term effects, and others may have physiological

effects that occur only for the duration of the session. Regardless of the duration, any effect is beneficial.

Therefore, regular non-pressure, relaxed practice is encouraged. It is recommended that this guided imagery session and others like it be utilized periodically, perhaps weekly or monthly. Even simply listening to melodic, relaxing music of mid-to-low tonal range like that in many American Indian flute tunes, while focusing on breathing and imagining, can help to create a positive reaction. It is in this way that music can serve as the guide for ongoing imagery sessions. Once the guided imagery procedure is introduced, practiced, and mastered via the *Take Flight CD*, the imaginative and meditative process may continue without narration with the use of the purely instrumental CD, *On the Edge of the Wind: From the Mythic Landscape of the Dakotas*, which features sounds of nature with traditional flute music by Keith Bear.

OPTIONAL SUGGESTION:

If possible, utilizing a musician or musicians in live performance for such an activity is very much recommended. Physician Linda Gourneau and her son Brendan Gourneau, an American Indian traditional flute player, both have observed that utilizing live music, and having an actual heartbeat at the end of the flute, creates even greater benefits for the participants through guided imagery.

AUTHOR • DR. LINDA GOURNEAU:

Dr. Gourneau graduated from the University of North Dakota Medical School in 1989, completed her Family Practice residency in 1992, completed a Bush Leadership Fellowship in 2002 involving a self-designed study of Native American healing methods in North Dakota, and completed an Integrative Medicine fellowship directed by Andrew Weil, MD, at the University of Arizona School of Medicine in 2002. She was certified in Medical Acupuncture through the Helms Medical Institute and UCLA in 2005. In 2005, Dr. Gourneau also opened the Natural Journey Center for Integrative Medicine in Bismarck, North Dakota, which provides medical acupuncture, family medicine, and integrative therapies that include guided imagery.

AUTHOR • BRENDAN GOURNEAU:

Brendan is a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes, in northwest North Dakota. He also is a descendant of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota. Brendan has spent his entire life participating in Native American cultural activities. Through the North Dakota Council on the Arts' *Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program*, Brendan apprenticed in traditional American Indian flute music and flute-making with master musician and Mandan-Hidatsa traditionalist Keith Bear. Brendan performs for public schools and other programs throughout North Dakota. He has used flute-making and playing to help students who are blind feel more connected to their school community. Brendan helped to design and provide services to workshops facilitated by the Natural

Journey Center for Integrative Medicine, addressing mind, body, spirit, and emotional healthcare. Brendan has also provided the flute music for guided imagery sessions and workshops facilitated by the Natural Journey Center for Integrative Medicine.

AUTHOR • TROYD GEIST:

Troyd is the state folklorist with the North Dakota Council on the Arts who is charged with encouraging the preservation and continuation of folk and traditional arts, heritage, and culture. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Sociology/Anthropology from North Dakota State University, and has participated in and conducted projects involving the impact of folk art and folk traditions on personal health and well-being. Those efforts include traditional storytellers working with fetal alcohol research and prevention programs, Bell's palsy as viewed and treated in traditional cultures, familial Alzheimer's disease tracking using anthropological methods, and the use of culturally infused narrative and traditional music for guided imagery. He directed the original *Art for Life* pilot project in 2001-2003, which measured the effects of long-term folk arts and artist interaction on combating the negative impact of the "Three Plagues" (loneliness, boredom, and helplessness) that many residents in elder care facilities experience. Subsequently, he developed the *Art for Life Program*. With Dr. Timothy J. Kloberdanz, Troyd co-edited, co-compiled, and co-authored the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*.