

Drum Circle Study Summary

In-Patient Eating Disorders Program

For

St. Paul's Hospital

By

Lyle Povah, Facilitator

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Drum Circle Study Summary

This Drum Circle Study was undertaken as part of a six-month African drumming program in the In-Patient Eating Disorders Program at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The study hypothesis was "*drum circle participation increases the positive and decreases the negative emotions and feelings in eating disorder patients*".

This drum circle program ran for 22 sessions from February 20th to August 21st 2009, and involved patient and staff participation in a weekly one-hour drum circle from 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. (purposefully scheduled immediately following breakfast - typically a high-risk time for eating disorder behaviors). Data was collected using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and patients rated their emotions and feelings before and after the drum circle experience on a scale of 1 – 5, 1 being "very little or not at all" and 5 being "extremely".

This study was recently completed and this summary provides general information - further analysis is pending.

A drum circle is a rhythm-based event where people gather in a circle to express themselves with African drums and percussion instruments. A facilitator guides the session, encouraging and supporting people as they reconnect with their innate sense of rhythm. Inclusiveness is a core principle - people of all backgrounds, mobility, ages and skill levels (even first-time beginners) can participate. This particular drumming program followed a specific protocol and offered a diverse range of activities which included singing, playing percussion instruments, movement, relaxation to music, rhythmical games, body percussion and of course African drumming.

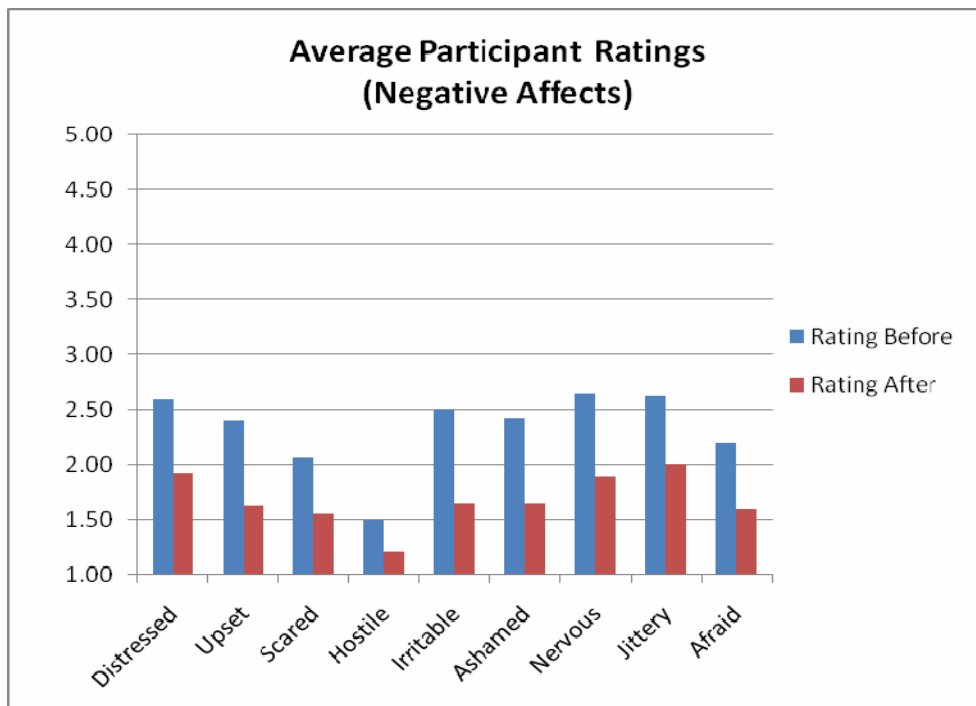
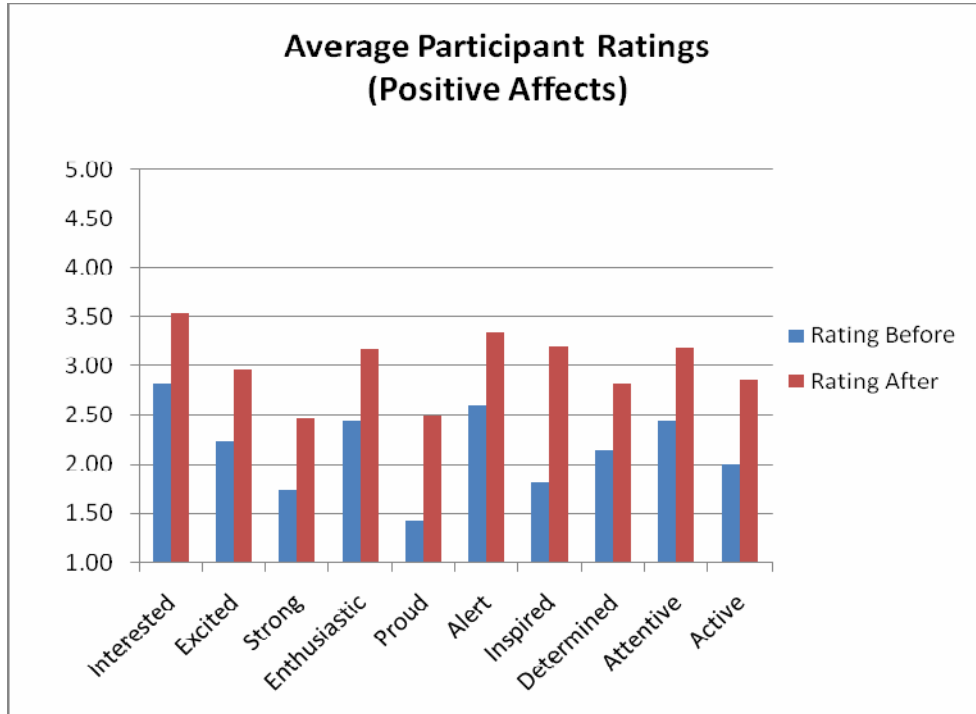
Patient Participation:

Over the six-month period of the study, 46 different patients participated in a total of 150 drum circle experiences (participation ranged from 20 patients who each participated in one drum circle to one patient who participated in a total of ten drum circles). Participating patient numbers varied from 4 to 8 patients in each of the 22 drum circles. The 46 patients filled out 115 PANAS survey forms over the duration of the study (115/150 = 77%). Patient participation is compulsory (patients are excused from the program only if in acute medical or psychiatric crisis).

Patients filled out PANAS survey forms before and after each drum circle experience. They were asked to rate their experience and were also asked three additional things:

1. What did you like least about the Drum Circle?
2. What did you like best about the Drum Circle?
3. Please comment on how staff participation affects your experience of the Drum Circle.

The Graphs and Table below show the summarized results of the Study:



Note:

- 1 = very little or not at all
- 2 = a little
- 3 = moderately
- 4 = quite a bit
- 5 = extremely

Average Ratings for all Drumming Sessions			
	Rating Before	Rating After	Difference
Interested	2.83	3.54	0.71
Excited	2.24	2.96	0.71
Strong	1.74	2.46	0.72
Enthusiastic	2.43	3.17	0.74
Proud	1.43	2.49	1.05
Alert	2.60	3.34	0.74
Inspired	1.82	3.20	1.38
Determined	2.14	2.83	0.68
Attentive	2.43	3.18	0.75
Active	2.00	2.86	0.86
MEAN:	2.17	3.00	0.83
Distressed	2.60	1.92	-0.68
Upset	2.40	1.63	-0.78
Scared	2.06	1.56	-0.50
Hostile	1.50	1.22	-0.28
Irritable	2.51	1.65	-0.86
Ashamed	2.42	1.65	-0.77
Nervous	2.65	1.89	-0.77
Jittery	2.63	2.01	-0.62
Afraid	2.19	1.60	-0.59
MEAN:	2.33	1.68	-0.65
Difference between Means:	-0.16	1.32	1.48

Positive feedback included:

- drum sound is very soothing and healing; makes me feel better in mood and anxiety
- it is so refreshing and stress-relieving; takes my mind off of all my troubles and keeps me refreshed even afterwards; it also warms up my freezing cold body
- I enjoyed the full hour, very invigorating; it was awesome and uplifting
- great group, a lot of laughter
- allows you to be completely in the experience and forget troubles
- takes away food thoughts which I appreciate; distracting and unique activity
- being able to let go and enjoy; able to vent out frustration in a more active way
- non-judgmental environment makes it easier to feel comfortable playing when normally I'd be worried about playing well or perfect
- the inclusion of everyone no matter what their abilities

- being able to experiment and be creative and make music; the energy that comes from the power of the music; the rhythms and variety of sounds and intensity of the drums
- it's very meditative; feeling the drum music through my soul - it is a real outlet for self expression
- Lyle is very interactive and engaging with participants, very encouraging, sure to include everyone - very supportive

Staff Participation:

30 different staff members, including nurses, pastors, recreational therapists, occupational therapists and student nurses, participated in a total of 93 drum circle experiences over the duration of the study (participation ranged from 19 staff members who each participated in one drum circle to one staff member who participated in 18 drum circles). Staff were asked to provide feedback on their experiences.

Staff feedback included:

- everyone got engaged in the music, it was nice to be playful and the drum circle was very energizing!
- Laughing; sharing; sense of togetherness; alternative group process; alternative expression and creativity
- the way the facilitator ... creates a safe environment for the patients to participate to the degree that they wish to; the simple act of sitting in a circle containing patients and staff helps to temporarily put aside the normal institutional boundaries and roles - very therapeutic
- Anyone can play; relationship and connection happens (therapeutic relationship);
- variety of instruments; call and response; singing; allowing individual instruments to be heard
- clear instructions; room to be free and show personal expression; singing as a group
- the freedom; the singing; the teacher's encouragement
- the singing and everyone's participation; the rhythm made by the group
- people's enthusiasm and participation level; wide variety of instruments to play; easy to follow

This Study and the Drum Circle Program was conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada by Lyle Povah and MusicWorks.

Lyle Povah - Biography

Lyle has been a musician for over 40 years and leads retreats, events and workshops throughout North America and Europe. He has pioneered bringing the power of drumming, rhythm and music into various areas - health and creativity, leadership for managers and executives, community and team building, eating disorder programs, children and autism, and intergenerational learning.

Further experience includes:

- On the Faculty at the Haven Institute www.haven.ca/programs/drum-talk.html
- Facilitates Executive Development Programs at the UBC Sauder School of Business for the past 11 years
- Music Practitioner at BC's Children's Hospital for nearly 20 years
- Leads the longest running weekly Community Drum Circle in Canada
- On Maxfit Movement Institute team www.maxfit-movement.com

Click this link for a [complete CV specifically related to eating disorders](#)

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