

Desmond Tutu

"Do a little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

touch

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Drumming has been a tool used in many cultures for many things, from communication, holistic rituals, community gatherings, and healing. People have had an intimate connection with the drum since discovering that the beat of the drum is analogous to the beat of the human heart. As a universal, vibrational language, the drumbeat communes with the Earth and all of her creatures.

There have been numerous research studies conducted about the power of drumming and the significant effects it can have on the human spirit and body. Drumming is now being used to help people with Alzheimer's, children with autism, and teens with emotional dysregulation. Large corporations have also used drumming to help employees focus attention and improve spirits.

The Healing Power of Drumming

Research further suggests that drumming can serve as a distraction from pain and grief by enabling communication between the cerebral hemispheres, using the physical transmission of rhythmic energy. This allows one to connect with their own spirit at a deeper, more intimate level, making it easier to access feelings of insight, understanding, certainty, conviction and truth.

Drum circles provide an opportunity to connect with groups of like-minded people, including those struggling to find their own personal resonance. Individuals may make this connection by listening and feeling the pulse of the drum, and working out their own personal rhythm in contribution.

Sound vibrations have been known to resonate through every cell in the body, freeing energy blockages that can form as a result of unexpressed feelings and emotions. Drumming helps emphasize self-expression, which can aid in an individual's ability to address emotional health and issues with conflict and even violence. Participants are given the opportunity to present and receive positive feedback. It can help us find our center and become more mindful of the present. Playing in a drum circle can create a magical paradox of moving from the awareness of being out of one's body to being firmly grounded in the moment. Group drumming can complement traditional talk therapy, providing a vehicle for personal transformation, as well as community building.

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Pam Akins, LMFT, a Clinical Consultant at Crestwood American River Psychiatric Health Facility, said, "Witnessing the responses of our clients to participation in a drum circle has been a personal growth experience for me. As a clinician, I have had to give up control of the circle and allow the drummers to take what was needed and give as they were able to. The main attraction is the drum, center of the circle and the heart of healing. In the PHF setting, some clients are active participants, while others may be observers, but it is evident that some type of shift occurs with everyone involved, even if only momentarily."

"The most common initial response is that the client does not know how to play a drum or keep a rhythm, but, once an attempt is made, I can see the client respond to the beat that they create, and start to become increasingly more confident. Instruments are eagerly shared and exchanged. The circle creates unity and a sense of community among the participants. Playing along and sharing their hearts, helps the group become centered and calm," explained Pam.

The experience of conducting a drum circle at a PHF, with clients who are struggling with finding wholeness, has shown Pam and the staff the powerful, amazing and positive effect that beating on a hollowed wooden circle, covered by a tightly stretched membrane, can have.

Contributed by: Pam Akins, LMFT, Clinical Consultant, Crestwood American River PHF and Nancy Soncrant, Campus Administrator, Crestwood American River





Making Connections Through Music

Music Therapy is playing an important role for clients in their recovery at Crestwood Center Sacramento. And it all starts with the drumming circle that was started by Linda Gerardy, a Registered Music Therapist and Director of Recreation, at the campus. “On our Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) program, I use music with exercise and movement groups, guided imagery and art, and occasional lyric analysis, but my favorite is a weekly Creative Expression Drumming Group, utilizing various hand drums and hand percussion instruments,” said Linda. “My mantra to clients is that no musical background is needed to have a successful and enjoyable experience in this group. It is a rarity to have a client answer “No” to “Do you like music?” and the sound alone has a way of drawing in otherwise reticent clients to see what we’re up to. The variety of instruments provided, learning their names, sounds and capabilities are intriguing, and in most cases, a source of instant success that is empowering and sustaining.”

The American Music Therapy Association defines Music Therapy as a clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional, and can help promote wellness, manage stress, alleviate pain, express feelings, enhance memory, improve communication, and promote physical rehabilitation for clients.

“The sound of a drum helps us to notice our own heartbeat, the part of us that keeps us alive and vital,” explained Linda. Drumming in a drum circle with others can be meditative, but also energizing and invigorating depending on how it is structured. Specific studies conducted by professionals in the fields of music therapy and mental health show us that drumming reduces anxiety, tension and stress, helps control chronic pain, boosts the immune system and releases negative feelings, blockages and emotional trauma.

“Community effects of drumming allow for an opportunity for participants to feel connected with others and gain a sense of interpersonal support. This is especially important at our PHF program, where the tendency to isolate is evident with many clients, and the need to develop quick connections to others, who are in similar situations, is needed in order to make all of our program groups more meaningful and beneficial,” said Linda.

There are also both cultural and spiritual connections to drumming for several Native American clients who have come through the campus’ doors. One client patiently informed Linda and her peers that in her tribe’s culture, the same people don’t both dance and drum, so her contribution to the group was to quietly dance her “shawl dance” in a circle around their drumming. Another client thoroughly enjoyed the drumming, but felt the need to sing as well, teaching them a song in the Chippewa language, after which they were able to provide the rhythmic accompaniment for her singing.

Another positive aspect of a drumming group is the ability for clients to serve in a leadership position, a role which is often difficult to provide in an inpatient setting. They have had clients with extensive musical backgrounds who easily and willingly take on this task, but even those without any formal music experience are usually quite successful in taking a leadership role once Linda has modeled it for them.

At Crestwood Center Sacramento, the drumming group will continue to be a wonderful outlet for clients to express themselves through music and helping them with their recovery and wellness goals. Linda summed it up best by saying, “Music, with a drumming group as one small part, is a medium whereby we can more easily connect with ourselves and others. It truly is a universal language where people can join together, at times free of the need for verbal communication, to be able to experience life more fully.”

*Contributed by: Linda Gerardy, RMT
Director of Recreation
Crestwood Center Sacramento*





Health Crisis



How many times do we have to see our clients, friends and coworkers receive a diagnosis of breast cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(COPD) or coronary disease at an early age? How many times do we see these same people pass away from “natural causes” in their 30s, 40s and 50s, while we see the average life span of people grow from 51 years in 1910 to 78 years in 2010?

The sad fact is that for those among us living with a mental health diagnosis, the average life expectancy is conservatively 10 years less than those who don't have that challenge and it also accounts for 8 million deaths worldwide annually. NAMI and other research suggest that the life expectancy gap is actually 14 to 31 years shorter for those with a mental health issue. The mortality rate for people with schizophrenia is four times higher than those without this diagnosis and those with a bipolar disorder have a 13 year decreased life expectancy. This is a reflection of our broken system and communities in need of healing and compassion.

Much of this early mortality is attributed to “natural causes” such as heart disease, pulmonary diseases, cancer, cerebrovascular, respiratory, and lung diseases. Elizabeth Walker, a researcher at the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health in Atlanta, writes, “People with mental health disorders have a high prevalence of chronic medical conditions, with fewer resources to manage these conditions. People with mental health challenges are dying prematurely and at a rate far exceeding their peers without this diagnosis.”

How many people that we love and care for have to die before their time and how many times do we have to plan services and mourn their passing? This disturbing health crisis is often overlooked. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), life expectancy has increased dramatically, unfortunately, “reductions in mortality are not shared equally in this country across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups or health-related conditions.”

So what can be done to start to change this shocking reality?

The first change that is needed is how we deliver services as a society. We need to be honest about the disparities in our culture. Services may be accessible with wheelchair ramps and Braille signage, however, there is no tolerance for people who are disheveled, responding to voices, have ticks, look different or have unpredictable behavior. This intolerance creates barriers so preventive healthcare, such as routine checkups, mammograms, and teeth cleaning, is out of reach. These disparities have led to women with mental health issues dying from cancer at twice the rate as the general population, and these women are also three times more likely to die from breast cancer. Researchers, Colton and Manderscheid, found that the secondary consequences of mental illness are poverty, unemployment, poor housing, stigma, and low self-esteem leading to challenges accessing healthcare, including health professionals' misdiagnosis, less focus on physical health, low compliance with health screening and treatment, and poor communication. This has to stop! We have to create pathways to accessibility, prevention and care. We need to train more primary healthcare providers to work with people with mental health challenges, which is something Crestwood Behavioral Health has been providing to our county stakeholders. We need to design clinics, waiting rooms and services that are more accepting and inclusive of all marginalized populations. We need to develop more welcoming and validating preventive health screenings and utilization of services.



The second thing we need to do in our communities is the creation of Federally Qualified Health Clinic Clubhouses that welcome those with mental health challenges, the homeless, the disenfranchised and their families. A Clubhouse is first and foremost a local community center that offers people who have mental health challenges the hope and opportunities to achieve their full potential. During the course of their participation in a Clubhouse, members gain access to opportunities to rejoin the world of friendships, family, employment and education, and to the services and support they may individually need to continue their recovery. A Clubhouse also provides important routine health screenings that are completed in a client-friendly space, rather than in a hospital or sterile clinic setting. Crestwood is currently looking to explore creating a Clubhouse program in San Diego. Also, a mobile whole health services unit, a companion to the Clubhouse, is needed to bring health screenings and health services to the homeless where they are, whether it is under a bridge, in a shelter or at a wellness center.

We need to be honest about the disparities in our culture.

The next action that needs to be taken is to launch a statewide Wellness and Resiliency Initiative similar to the one Crestwood has adopted in all of our programs that includes serving heart-healthy diets and creating client-oriented cookbooks with heart-healthy recipes and shopping guides. It includes planting organic gardens and using the farm to table approach in our meals. It is bringing Zumba and Yoga to every campus and community. It is having exercise tracks in yards that used to be used for smoke breaks. At Crestwood we support smoking cessation, sobriety and meaningful roles to help replace addiction and isolation. Crestwood also teaches meditation and mindfulness to our clients which lowers heart rate, reduces risk of heart disease and increases pulmonary capacity.

Another action we can take is to live healthier lives as healthcare providers. At Crestwood we use Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) to support our workforce, with staff being paid for time off the floor to attend WRAP groups. We provide mental health days, as well as sick days and expect our staff to do routine health screenings-modeling wellness. We employ meditation and mindfulness practices at all staff meetings and events to encourage our staff to practice mindfulness as a health and wellness practice.

At Crestwood, we will continue to do our part by looking for and incorporating innovative health and wellness measures into our programs. We can truly practice self-care each day, creating a compassionate community of people caring for themselves and others. This may not move the needle on the mortality rate very quickly; however, it is a promising start that we hope will begin to create healthier, longer lives for our clients, friends and coworkers.

*Contributed by:
Patty Blum, PhD
Crestwood Vice President*

When Sam Kim joined the Crestwood Manor Alameda team as Program Director, he brought to their community the gift of music. Sam believes that music is an important part of daily life for many people and very quickly found out that the same is true for the residents of Crestwood Manor. He decided to organize a music group at the facility called, the Sounds of Crestwood. The group meets every Friday in the facility’s community center and has grown from a few people, to a full orchestra of residents who play, sing, dance, listen and write music, or even simply come to turn music sheets for others and to just enjoy the festive atmosphere.

The Sounds of Crestwood



Sam has managed to grow the facility’s inventory of instruments to now include percussion, guitars, ukulele, bass, electric piano, harmonica and even a violin. People have donated used instruments and they were also able to purchase some inexpensively. **“Everyone can be an artist or musician once they step into the Sounds of Crestwood and express their creativity and talent,”** said Sam. The staff has seen so many positive results, such as with residents who are reluctant to participate in other groups at the facility, now can’t wait for the Sounds of Crestwood on Fridays. It has also helped new residents to feel right at home and make peer connections more easily and accessible. One of their new residents said, “I can tell I am going to like this place already because music is my thing!” Other residents are reporting feeling joyful and proud that they can share their talent with others. Another resident stated, “I was a professional singer when I was young. The Sounds of Crestwood reminds me of the good old days.”

“It’s a wonderful way for people to share in a safe and encouraging atmosphere. It’s really amazing the talent we have in our community and the memories shared by people who used to play or used to write music that are now so excited to have this wonderful venue to do it again. It’s also an environment that helps people make friends with others who share a common interest in music,” said Sam.



At Crestwood Manor Alameda, Sam and his musical group plan to continue to share, inspire and uplift both residents and staff alike with the beautiful Sounds of Crestwood.

*Contributed by:
Samuel Kim, MA.
Program Director
Crestwood Manor Alameda*

Lacing up their shoes for Health & Wellness

At Crestwood Chula Vista, they offer several types of fitness and movement activities for their clients, from Yoga to Zumba, to strength training, to dodgeball and kickball. Unfortunately, they found that only a small percentage of their clients were participating in these activities and at the same time were also still struggling with their desire to be healthy and to maintain their weight. “I’m too overweight to exercise” and “I don’t have the energy to work out” were common explanations as to why they were not participating in activities. This presented the staff with a challenge. They asked themselves what activity can just about anyone do, what activity will they want to do and what would be something that would also benefit both their physical and emotional health? The answer was right in front of them. Every client was doing it every day –walking!

*“A journey of
a thousand miles
begins with
a single step.”*

- Confucius



It was right about this time that the City of San Diego advertised the Parks Fit San Diego 2016 Challenge, which is to walk 30 miles in 60 days. Clients and staff were excited to become involved in the 30-mile challenge and it was a way for them to celebrate every step they would take. But as their clients thought about it, they decided that 30 miles in sixty days was not enough and they would instead do 30 miles in 30 days. So the staff purchased pedometers for everyone participating and off they went.

*They were out
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The challenge began on June 18th with a 1-Mile Fun Run. After that, they went on walks in the community, took nature hikes, and joined 5k events. Each and every day, clients could be seen walking the halls and the patio at the facility with pedometers in hand. They pounded the pavement in their neighborhood, trampled the grass at Balboa Park, explored the trails of the Living Coast Discovery Center, and even kicked up some sand at Imperial Beach. The results of the challenge were tremendous! One of their clients walked 215 miles! She reported her miles to the staff proudly every morning. One day she joked, “I didn’t do so well yesterday, I only went 20 miles.” Other clients were motivated to keep up and the race was on! Four clients logged more than four hundred miles and together, as a group, they walked more than 500 miles!

“Beyond the miles they racked up, we were seeing firsthand what we have all read in the research studies, that walking and exercise promotes good health, reduces anxiety, increases self-esteem, and boosts mood,” said Shanel Stec, Recreation Assistant. Clients also made healthier food choices. One client lost 20 pounds and another client lost three pounds. They set goals for themselves and tracked their progress faithfully. They worked together as a team, challenging each other to keep up and they joined other groups. They were out in the community, they were out in nature, and best of all, they were having fun.

The challenge ended on August 13th with the Parks Fit San Diego 5k finale. However, this finale is not the end for them walking, even more clients and staff have signed up for a new challenge that begins soon. Shanel said, **“We are excited to lace up our shoes and walk together, not as clients and staff, but as companions on our journey toward health and wellness.”**

Contributed by: Shanel Stec, Recreation Assistant, Crestwood Chula Vista

Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc.

Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. is proud to be California's leading provider of mental health services, assisting thousands of clients from across the state. Our focus is on creating strong relationships with counties in which we both have a financial commitment, providing the services which are tailored to meet clients' specific needs, and reinforcing a common set of values that guide our practices and policies.



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spotlight

“Give your time, your words, and your presence to those we serve!”

Nicoletta Groff, Administrator, Crestwood Wellness and Recovery Center



accreditation

Crestwood Behavioral Health Inc. is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), which requires a higher standard of care than the licensing standards in California. Crestwood believes this accreditation demonstrates our unwavering commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest level of care and rehabilitation.

Editor: Kari Friesen, Director of Communications