

# “Let it Go!”

An Existential Journey Through the Seasons with “Bubbie,”  
using Art and Music Therapy.

## Existentialism • Existential Theory • Existential Psychotherapy

- Existence
- Ultimate Concerns
- Human Beings cannot be fully understood in terms of:
  - physics, biology, psychology,
- Being attentive to the “Emptiness of a Patient”
- “Engaging not in intellectual discussion of universals but the here and now...”
- Concerned with comprehending and alleviating pervasive symptoms: anxiety, shame, depression, guilt, avoidance...
- Also Prompting life enhancing experiences of: relationship-building, love, courage, power, self-actualization, acceptance...

### Art Therapy

- Art therapy is an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship. (AATA, 2017)

### Music Therapy

- Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. (AMTA, 2017)

## Patient: “Bubbie”


Age: 75

Diagnosis: Multiple Myeloma

Marital Status: Widowed

Religious Affiliation: Jewish

Other: Pt lives alone, has 3 sons, 5 grandchildren



## Expressive Therapy Referrals

Music Therapy (MT) Referral  
September 11, 2014: Music Therapy

Art Therapy (AT) Referral  
September 24, 2014: Art Therapy

*“Pt is extremely anxious and very open to expressive therapies. She experiences low back pain and stomach pain. She also has some neuropathy in her feet. Recently, she’s been having trouble sleeping.”*


RN also reports: pt calls constantly and often requests daily RN visits.



## Fall 2014 • Establishing Control & Finding Roots

<h4 style="text-align: center;">Music Therapy</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted Guitar and Piano</li> <li>• iPad Instruments</li> <li>• “Let It Go”</li> <li>• Music Assisted Relaxation</li> </ul>	<h4 style="text-align: center;">Art Therapy</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pencil and Charcoal Drawings</li> <li>• Colored Pencils and Sparkle Paper</li> <li>• Mandalas</li> <li>• Legacy Work via Collage</li> <li>• Pt self-lead blanket knitting as donations (AT took DSHH pts)</li> </ul>
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*“Pt expressed her desire to continue “teaching” things to her children and grandchildren and “knowing” things as she feels there has been a role reversal since she’s become ill.”*

 Fall 2014 • Establishing Control & Finding Roots


**October 13<sup>th</sup>; 1<sup>st</sup> JOINT visit**

Watercolor Mandala with Music: "GARBAGE"  
 "colored pencils give me more control"  
 "I'm always thinking, I have trouble feeling with my heart."

**DISCOVERIES**


- MT – provide control and comfort
- AT – deeper work on uncovering emotions and feelings
- Pt only does watercolors with AT present




 Fall 2014 • Establishing Control & Finding Roots


<p><b>Art Therapy (Fall Visits Continued)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient want to find gratitude</li> <li>• Unable to verbalize her gratitude</li> <li>• Collage introduced</li> <li>• Finding images makes her "stop thinking and start trusting"</li> <li>• Homework given – mandala with colored pencil - collage work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Music Therapy (Fall Visits Continued)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted keyboard / Performance Goal</li> <li>• Pt ends "lessons" agrees to try "Music Assisted Relaxation" noting pain/anxiety increasing</li> <li>• Energy Medicine Techniques</li> <li>• Reiki (Volunteer and MT)</li> <li>• Breath Work</li> <li>• Morning Meditation Program</li> </ul>
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**Fall Ends**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collage Completed</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pt Discoveries                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I hold my anxiety in my stomach"</li> <li>• "I am scared of death and dying"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reveals family dynamics between sisters, parents, husband, sons, transgendered niece and life long struggle with depression</li> </ul>
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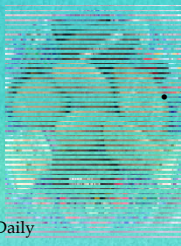
 Winter 2014/15 • Finding Peace in the Waiting


<p><b>Music Therapy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Lake Visualization"                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Walk along the lake</li> <li>– <i>Turned to the left. Couldn't turn to the right despite her efforts.</i></li> <li>– Pt determined for herself "the left was life and the right was death. I'm not yet ready to die."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shared "Death Blanket"                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Decided to use during relaxation experiences .</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Art Therapy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings sheet</li> <li>• Continued art homework/analysis</li> <li>• New Conflict Presented:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– "Where Should I Die?"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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 Winter 2014/15 • Finding Peace in the Waiting

<p><b>Changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety over where to die increases</li> <li>• Medication Changes</li> <li>• Panic Attacks</li> <li>• Disease Progression                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low back/stomach pain</li> <li>– Increased neuropathy in feet</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*massage therapy involved with new symptoms. Pt LOVES it</p>	<p><b>Music Therapy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sleep Scripts and CDs</li> <li>• "Belly &amp; Throat" Breath Work</li> </ul> <p><b>Art Therapy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Use of Mandalas - Pt notes "They're unlocking spiritual growth."</li> </ul>
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**Winter Ends**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CD Program Set</li> <li>• "Let It Go" CD</li> <li>• Meditation Stones</li> <li>• Zen Garden</li> <li>• Expressive Therapy Daily "meds"</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Pt Discoveries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "This whole hospice process has been a re-birth of self. Like I'm giving birth, it's the same feeling."</li> <li>• "I've never been in a better place mentally in all my life."</li> <li>• New Affirmations set to music:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "All we have is this moment. There is nothing else."</li> <li>• "You can't breath unless you are living in this moment."</li> <li>• "I chose to let it go."</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Spring 2015 • Coming Into Full Bloom

**Changes**

- GIP Stays & Move To DSHH
  - Altered mental status, depression, pain
- Medication Changes
  - Increased weakness, agitation
- Disease Progression
  - (related to "grey area" of life)
- Knitting Project Increases
  - (related to "grey area" of life)
- Friendships Formed at DSHH
- Art Studio & Music Group Participation


**Music Therapy**

- Music and Meditation Continue
- Music & Meditation Group
- Instrumental Improvisation Group

**Art Therapy**

- Legacy Work
- Knitting (lots of unwinding and organizing)
- Studio

*Pt requests "Help me cope with the grey part of my life."*



### Spring 2015 • Coming Into Full Bloom

**Joint Visit**

- Painting of Pain
- Imagery
- Breath work & Toning
  - (provided relief, to pt's surprise)
- During Experience Pt identified:
  - Spine pain light to dark
  - Throat black
  - Stomach was golf-sized ball of yarn wound tight, penetrating through lower back

**Post Session**

- "I'm ready for whatever happens. Thank you."
- ATR instructs pt to use ball of yarn to unwind pain when necessary


### Spring Ends

- Settled into DSHH
- Some legacy projects completed (sister/grandson)



**Discoveries**

- Emotional Pain at forefront is causing increased physical pain
- Seeking Closure of difficult relationships
- Realization
  - Pt verbalizes she's understanding her creative process - is a metaphor for her life and emotional state due to her disease and its progression



### Summer 2015 • Closure During the Climax & Chaos

**Changes**

- Requests to no longer schedule formal visits. Stops obsessing over calendar. Less organized.
- Walker and Wheelchair
- Increased weakness, lethargy, confusion, time in bed

*\*Pt begins to receive counseling from outside professional*

**Music Therapy**

- Presence outside of groups is "simplified"
- Music CD Program continued
  - DSHH Staff Educated
  - Posters made for room to serve as reminders

**Art Therapy**

- Hand molds with sons
- Work with sons
- Legacy work for all grandkids
  - (1 session)

"Touch has a memory" – John Keats




## Summer Ends



### Discoveries

- Pt states:
  - "The cancer is getting worse."
- Continues to knit
  - "gives me purpose and meaning."
- Faces mortality
- Distances self from staff
- Seeks help to complete projects
- Internal awareness of death
  - five dolls started in one visit
  - constant phone calls to sons
  - wants increased time with them

## Fall 2015 • Let It Go



### Changes:

- Bed Bound
- Confusion
- Dolls Completed
- Unresponsive

### Art & Music:

- *Presence & Closure at bedside (promise kept)*
- *Closure for family*
- *Closure for us*

## Questions • Thoughts • Insights



### References:

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NOTES: FALL ● WINTER ● SPRING ● SUMMER

