

Drumming for Life

An inclusive, accessible, community music making experience

Relieve stress

Build confidence

Develop relationships

Support overall well-being



Why drumming?

Every culture in the world has a history of drumming

Drums resonate with our own body frequencies (432 hertz)

Bilateral stimulation

Low tones calm/high tones excite

Why the tubano drum?

(26 inches tall) proper height for seated position, vented sound hole on bottom; no need to lift it in the air (like a djembe), crossing the midline (bilateral symmetry) for therapeutic value

Why Social Drumming

Purpose: Create an inclusive, accessible, community music experience where participants use shared rhythm to relieve stress, build confidence, develop relationships, and support overall well-being. This session aligns with the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council's commitment to inclusion and to helping people live, work, learn, and play in the communities of their choosing.

Core message: There are no wrong notes in this circle—only opportunities to listen, contribute, connect, and begin again.

Social Benefits of Drumming

Provides individuals a safe environment for the development of skills such as sharing, listening, problem-solving, and accepting diversity to support emotional and social competencies.

Group drumming as a form of social participation has been used as a therapeutic intervention to increase self-esteem, for team building, and developing leadership skills.

In a study by Creech, Hallam, McQueen, and Varvarigou (2013), active music-making was, “found to provide a source of enhanced social cohesion, enjoyment, personal development, and empowerment, and to contribute to recovery from depression and maintenance of personal well-being throughout these latter stages of adult life”

Social Benefits of Drumming

The ability to engage in music-making group activities forms and strengthens social bonds and may be the basis for human's ability to organize socially by increasing cooperation and reducing tension.

An important use of rhythm and drumming is as a means for social integration and social bonding by bringing people together to participate in community activities.

Drum circles provide positive opportunities for social participation and have been found to be supportive of emotional health and self-regulation.

Relieve Stress

We carry approximately 90% of our stress in our shoulders.

Raise shoulder stretch to ears

Lead three slow breaths:

- Inhale silently. Hold breath.
- Exhale with a gentle hand tap on the drum or lap.
- Repeat, allowing participants to adapt as needed.

60 to 220 BPM (beats per minute)

Stretching exercises:

- Palms out to climbing to finger tap
- Finger wriggle LCR



Relieve Stress

Stress-Relief Rhythm

“Drumming can give our bodies a healthy way to release energy. We will build the sound together, then bring it back down together.”

Activity: Rhythm Wave

1. Begin with gentle tapping.
2. Gradually invite a stronger, fuller sound.
3. Add a simple call-and-response:
Facilitator: Boom-boom / clap
Group echoes: Boom-boom / clap
4. Build intensity for about one minute.
5. Use a clear slowing gesture and reduce to quiet tapping.
6. End in silence with “scene” cue.

Build confidence

“Confidence grows when we get to make a choice, try something, and hear that our contribution matters. In this circle, every sound can be part of the music.”

Activity: Name and Choice Rhythm

- Round 1: Each participant plays a short rhythm while saying their name.
- Round 2: Each participant chooses a favorite food and plays a rhythm to match it.

Go around circle and take turns



Develop Relationships

Now for my favorite part of Social Drumming, sharing our favorite music

My name is Josiah and today I'd like us to drum with one of my favorite song, *Strangers Like Me* (from Disney's Tarzan, written and performed by Phil Collins"

Index fingers up (to demonstrate first positions)

Facilitator counts in (1, 2, 3, 4) play on the 5th beat do your best to follow my lead.

Play along with the facilitator for a little bit, then venture into your own rhythm/beat

Music starts

"Perform song" (count in)

Validate the song

Take turns around the circle and repeat all steps

Today we focused on

- Stress relief: A steady beat and focused attention can create a calming, grounding break from daily pressures.
- Confidence: Every participant can make a meaningful contribution without needing musical training.
- Relationships: Rhythm requires listening, turn-taking, cooperation, and respect for differences.
- Well-being: Social drumming can support emotional, psychological, and social well-being by fostering engagement, agency, accomplishment, and connection.
- Inclusion: The best drum circle is one where every person has a real choice about how to participate and where all contributions are valued.

Support overall well-being

“Take one quiet breath. Think about one thing you did today: you listened, you made a sound, you made a choice, you encouraged someone, or you helped create music.”

- “How do you feel now?”

“Thank you for bringing your rhythm. Today we practiced being present, supporting one another, and creating community—one beat at a time.”

References

1. Carolan, 2016; Cottrell & Gallant, 2003; Ekins & Owens, 2018; Plastow et al., 2018
2. Cudd, Sean. (2020). The Perceived Benefits of Participation in Community Drum Circles. Retrieval from Sophia, The St. Catherine University repository website: <https://sophiastkate.edu/ma/osot/25>
3. Carolan, 2016; Cottrell & Gallant, 2003; Ekins & Owens, 2018; Plastow et al., 2018
4. Breedlove & Watson, 2017; Chang et al., 2009.
5. Brown & Jordania, 2013; Fitch, 2006; Kirschner & Tomasello, 2009
6. Kalani, 2004, Núñez, 2016
7. Ayres & Robbins, 2005; Bundy, Lane, & Murray, 2002; Núñez, 2016
8. Field et al., 1997; Field, Hernandez- Reif, Diego, Schanberg, & Kuhn, 2005; Hernandez-Reif, Dieter, & Field, 1998; Hernandez-Reif et al., 2004
9. David, Kilner, & Friston, 2006
10. Smith, Viljoen, & McGeachie, 2014; Ekins & Owens, 2018; Fancourt, Ockelford, & Belavia, 2014; Fancourt et al., 2016
11. Geller, 2018; Gray, 2018
12. Will & Turow, 2011
13. Jovanov & Maxfield. 2011. Study entitled: *Effects of repetitive rhythmic music on EEG and subjective experience*
14. Bittman, Stevens, & Bruhn, 2017; Jones, 1976; Will & Turow, 2011
15. Shier, Butler, & Lewis, 2013
16. Mikenas, 2003; Friedman, 2000
17. Dunbar, Kaskatis, MacDonald, & Barra, 2012; Janata & Grafton, 2003; Phillips-Silver & Keller, 2012.
18. Fancourt et al., 2016; Jacobson, 2019; Wood, Ivery, Donovan, & Lambin, 2013.

Contact Information

Josiah Mielke

jcrmielke@gmail.com

Joe Parrish

socialdrumming@gmail.com

Annie Mielke

asdevelopment.org@gmail.com

(515) 306-0030

<https://www.adventuresinsocialdevelopment.org>