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Amy Clements-Cortés

Wilfrid Laurier University, notesbyamy2@yahoo.ca

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Freeing the Voice Within through Guided Imagery and Music

Amy Clements-Cortés

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Abstract: This paper presents the case study of a 38-year-old female, “Joy,” and her Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) process. Joy was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to Canada in 2008 to pursue further studies along with her husband. Joy is a music educator who was drawn to GIM to explore issues with her parents, husband, anxiety and stress in order to lead her to improved well-being and healing. This paper provides the relevant background information on GIM, and several important topics in Joy’s therapeutic process, including: gender issues being raised in Hong Kong, effects of parental gambling on child development, identity development, and performance anxiety. Joy desired focus and longed for her inner voice to be freed. Joy also wanted to feel strong enough to assert her wishes as an Asian female in order to present herself authentically. GIM sessions provided Joy with the space to identify and explore her concerns, which led her to improved well-being and healing. GIM is a music psychotherapy intervention that is particularly well suited to work with music educators and musicians, due to their experience and connections to music.

The following is a case study of Joy, a 38-year-old female musician and music educator and her Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) process covering five sessions that spanned the period of three months. Background information is provided on Guided Imagery, how and why case study methodology is commonly used for psychotherapeutic and GIM sessions and studies, and relevance of the GIM method in work with music educators. A literature review focusing on Joy’s issues that were addressed in her sessions is presented to provide context for the therapeutic process and case study.

Background Information

Guided Imagery and Music (GIM)

Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) is a therapeutic process using music and a trained facilitator to create an environment to facilitate personal insight that provides answers and guidance for significant life issues. The Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (BMGIM) is the “use of specially sequenced western classical music designed to stimulate and sustain a dynamic unfolding of imagery experiences” (Mardis & Clark, 2008, ¶ 2). GIM supporters believe: imagery and music are therapeutic agents; transpersonal and psychodynamic aspects are part of therapeutic process; and expanded awareness results in major therapeutic benefits (Burns & Woolrich, 2004).

GIM is based upon humanistic and transpersonal theories that emphasize the attentiveness of the individual and the influence of music on ego development. The classical music programs in the BMGIM provide structure and direction for the experience (Bonny & Pahnke, 1972). In this process, music is the impetus that releases unconscious material such as feelings, images, and memories for use in therapy and music is prescribed to enable the imagery process. The creator of the method, Helen Bonny, produced numerous music programs including: Caring, Peak Experiences, Imagery, Grieving, Relationships, Mostly Bach, and several others (Bonny, 1978).

BMGIM Session Structure

The BMGIM session format commonly unfolds through four

different phases (Bonny, 1978). **Phase One:** Opening conversation, in which client and therapist find a therapeutic focus for the session. **Phase Two:** A relaxation induction, where the therapist guides the client through a short relaxation experience. **Phase Three:** The music-imagery experience (involves the therapist playing a specifically designed program of classical music and the client imaging to the music. During the music listening, the therapist dialogues with the client, supporting and encouraging the client’s spontaneous imaging to the music. This process continues until the music program ends, usually around 30 to 40 minutes). **Phase Four:** Return and post-talk (the therapist helps the client bring closure to the imagery experience, and return to an alert state of consciousness).

Guided Imagery for Music Educators

Music educators face unique challenges in the workplace that may lead to work stress or burnout. Hamann, Daugherty, and Mills (1987) studied music educator burnout and found factors that contributed to burnout included: work load and time to complete work, desire to change professional careers, contentment with job, unclear goals from administration, lack of personnel goals in career plans, lack of recognition by students, and lack of cooperation among teachers in the district outside the area of music. McLain (2005) found that a lack of environmental support, diminished program offerings, and reform in curriculum can lead to diminished professional esteem for music educators, which may cause emotional challenges and burnout.

Music therapy has been proven to be an effective treatment method for burnout in a variety of work settings, with the majority of studies focusing on long-term care or healthcare workers (Bittman, Bruhn, Stevens, Westengard, & Umbach, 2003, Hilliard, 2006, Brandes et al., 2009). Studies focusing on music therapy to treat teacher burnout, and music educator burnout specifically have not been common areas of investigation up to this point. Cheek, Bradley, Parr, and Lan (2003) studied music therapy techniques in conjunction with cognitive behavioural interventions and found that teachers reported lower levels of burnout symptoms when the interventions were combined than

the control group of teachers who received cognitive behavioural interventions with no music therapy aspect, providing a premise and evidence towards using music therapy or music supported counselling/ psychotherapy techniques to treat burnout and stress among teachers. The specific case study below is not about burnout and was selected to demonstrate the power of the GIM method to address other issues which affect music educators but also a broader group of individuals.

Case Study

Formally defined by Yin 1981 (cited in Yin 1989) “a case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context;” (p. 23).

Case study methodology allows investigators to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2008) while being suited to research questions that require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes, varying in the level of analysis from policies to individual psychotherapy (Hartley, 2004). Further, Yin (2011) explains characteristics of case studies as being associated with process evaluations, analyzing outcomes of interventions, and involving field-based data. Gillham (2000) describes that a case study involves a naturalistic observer who subjectively interprets the observations of the client, and that a case study researcher can use a variety of methods to gain information, including documents, records, interviews, detached observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts.

Case Studies in Music Therapy

Smeijsters and Aasgaard (2005) assert that case histories, case vignettes, or case examples (which at times are referred to as case studies) have been customary ways of portraying music therapy practice. They state, “The case is almost always a single client or client group, and the study is an account of music therapy sessions in which the therapeutic process, including problems, goals, interventions, and outcomes, is described” (Smeijsters & Aasgaard, p. 441).

A music therapy case study generally begins by presenting the client history, followed by a description of the music therapy assessment including the treatment goals. Details of the music therapy sessions and the course of treatment which includes subjective information received from the client, and a description of the interventions that were used at the various stages, goes in the next section. This is often followed by a section which presents the therapist’s objective assessment, analysis, and discussion of the music therapy treatment. Case studies are typically informed by the therapist’s written assessment, session and chart notes, transcriptions where possible and video or audio recordings of sessions.

Literature Review

Several issues that were central to Joy’s therapeutic process included gender issues being raised in Hong Kong, effects of parental gambling on child development, identity development and performance anxiety. Current literature on these issues and the effect they have on a client’s psychological and emotional well-being will be discussed in relation to how they are important in understanding Joy’s therapeutic GIM process.

Hong Kong and Gender Identity Issues

According to Lee (1998) in Hong Kong there has been substantial change in women’s status within the family in the last few decades. Further, she acknowledges that since the 1970s there has been a decrease in the birth rate and persons are marrying at later ages, which are signs pointing to a shift from traditional patriarchal families. However, patriarchal institutions

continue to exist (Ng, 1994). Lee’s (1998) comparative ethnographic study of women who work in factories in Hong Kong and Shenzhen affirms the importance placed on family roles in shaping women’s identities, with prominence given to familial and gender interests rooted in social networks as opposed to autonomous, sexual selves. The results of a large territory-wide survey in Hong Kong on gender equality revealed substantial differences still exist in households with respect to the division of labour, employment and participation in community and politics (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1997).

In Joy’s process, this information is important to consider and understand as it greatly influenced the values and beliefs of her parents and husband, and affected the voice that Joy had trapped within herself regarding her true desires and pursuits.

Gambling

Research into the effects of gambling have focused on the gambler’s immediate family and have shown the extensive damage caused ranging from severe financial problems, emotional and relationship problems, to physical and psychological abuse (Gaudia, 1987; Heineman, 1994; Jacobs et al., 1989; Ladouceur et al., 1994; Lesieur & Rosenthal, 1991; Orford, 1994; Volberg, 1994). In particular, gambling problems can have strong negative effects if the gambler is a female partner (Franklin & Thomas, 1989; Lesieur & Rosenthal, 1991; Lesieur, 1989; Mark & Lesieur, 1992). According to Abbott, Cramer, and Sherrets (1995), “A compulsive gambler can devastate the family system adversely affecting the marriage, parent-child relationships and the psychological development of children” (Abbott, Cramer, & Sherrets, 1995, p.260–261). Lesieur (1989) maintains that due to chaotic and unpredictable behaviour of the affected parent, children may experience severe global psychosocial disruption.

With respect to high-school aged children whose parents had serious gambling problems, Jacobs (1989) and Jacobs et al. (1989) found similar ranges of problems. Jacobs (1989) further identified that these adolescents suffered from poor stress management skills, impoverished interpersonal relations, weakened coping abilities and that they were at greater risk of developing behaviours that negatively affect their health. Research suggests the effects do not end in adolescence and that serious problems may be experienced in later adolescence and adult life, and that the affected child will be more likely to gamble (Browne & Brown, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Griffiths, 1995; Ladouceur et al., 1994; Lesieur & Klein, 1987; Moody, 1989).

Joy’s mother had a gambling problem that greatly disrupted the family structure. The situation caused strain and forced Joy to work to help pay the family’s way out of debt. She was teaching music full time in an elementary school and also waitressing at night and giving private music lessons to help pay the bills. Similar to what Jacobs (1989) describes, Joy suffered from poor stress management skills, behaviours that contributed negatively towards healthy living, and had trouble in her relationships expressing her true feelings, wishes and desires.

In this process, music is the impetus that releases unconscious material such as feelings, images, and memories for use in therapy.

Identity Development

Joy demonstrated multiple issues with identity development. Growing up in Hong Kong, Joy grappled with gender identity issues, and struggled to find a place where she felt she belonged compared to where society was telling her she belonged. Joy was also forced to work for her family, and she appeared to struggle with her social identity, as she was playing a role in her family that may not have felt normal to her or those around her. Côté (2006) states that many youth are required to postpone aspects of their identity formation, and that society may be presenting a diminishing normative structure to govern the transition to adulthood. Joy faced the issue of attempting to form her identity in two cultures, and this may not have been helped by Western society's prolongation of identity formation. Archer (1989) affirmed that when females were compared to males in adolescence, females were more likely to be delayed with regard to family roles, and had a greater complexity of identity tasks as they confront intrapersonal and interpersonal goals simultaneously. This is true in the case of Joy, as she struggled to achieve her inner educational and professional goals while balancing the identity demands of her family and husband.

Performance Anxiety

Anxiety is comprised of both a physiological and a psychological aspect, and the psychological aspect affects the way we interpret sensations (Clarke, Davidson, Windsor, & Pitts, 2000). Salmon (1990) defines performance anxiety as "the experience of persisting, distressful apprehension and/or actual impairment of performance skills in a public context, to a degree unwarranted given the individual's musical aptitude, training, and level of preparation" (Salmon, 1990, p. 3). Performance anxiety appears to affect more females than males (Deutsch, 1999).

Joy's performance anxiety seemed to stem from desiring support and approval from her teacher, as she craved support so greatly from her parents and impacted her work as a music educator.

Case Study of Joy

Joy is a 38-year-old female born in Hong Kong who immigrated to Canada with her husband of ten years, Henry, so that both partners could complete undergraduate studies. Joy and Henry did not have any children and only one family member living in Canada, Joy's aunt. Joy's family had never been supportive of her passion for study and education and she felt no support from them. Her family feels strongly that she should finish her studies, begin working again and start a family; and Joy senses stress to return to Hong Kong. Joy worked as a music teacher before she immigrated to Canada. She knows she can return to this job but wanted to be teaching students at a more advanced level and therefore required further education. She and Henry are not interested in being parents but feel pressure from their families to have children. Joy is driven to complete Master's and PhD degrees and feels pressure to do as much as she can because she believes that time is running out.

Current Situation

- **Husband.** Joy's relationship with Henry was strained. The couple was struggling with money as both were full time students and Joy was currently living apart from Henry for 4 months while she continued studies in another city in Canada as part of her undergraduate degree. Joy wanted to pursue graduate studies, and if she does in the future, the couple will live apart as her husband will finish his schooling in the city where they currently live, and Joy will need to move to pursue graduate study. Her husband does not encourage her studies and offers little comment, support or an ear to listen to her concerns.
- **Mental space.** Joy holds considerable guilt and anxiety

inside. She pressures herself to do many things such as study and earn excellent grades, but she also feels pressure from others to pursue work and children rather than education. Joy craves approval and support, which subsequently drives her into a cycle where she feels she must work harder to finish her studies faster. She feels anxious and tense, and says there are not enough hours in the day for her to do all the jobs.

- **Music.** Joy is a musician and music teacher/educator who plays several instruments and enjoys a variety of styles of music, including classical. She has both a positive and negative relationship with the piano. Joy enjoys playing but feels considerable pressure to play at a consistently advanced level, and if she does not attain that level she is exceedingly disappointed and hard on herself. She suffers from performance anxiety.

Assessment and Goals

Joy came to therapy with an idea of what she wanted to explore and work on and she shared those issues during the assessment.

Joy's goals.

- To find the next pathway in her life. (Should she continue school or restart her career?)
- To explore the relationship with her parents
- To explore the relationship with her husband
- To reduce performance anxiety
- To reduce her overall stress level

Further identified goals in discussion with Joy.

- To begin to accept and acknowledge her high skill level as a musician and clinician
- To work through her family issues in order to pursue the career, education and family path that she desires
- To explore her issues of guilt and anxiety which potentially stems from her parents
- To recognize her accomplishments, celebrate her strengths and not diminish them

Sessions and Therapeutic Process

Session 1: "Darkness"

Joy had her first GIM session one year prior to our sessions with another GIM facilitator. On the day of our session Joy said she felt tense and wanted to release this tension. She was pleased with her progress in her studies but felt discouraged by her parents' lack of support. She was feeling pressure and was emotionally hurt. Joy desired the will to do as she pleased and to not feel stifled by other's wishes or demands.

As the "Imagery" music program started, Joy's journey began with her sitting on a bench in a park with a fountain. A ball of light was used as part of the induction for the session, and the light brought fresh air and freedom. Joy began with this

Issues that were central to Joy's therapeutic process included gender issues being raised in Hong Kong, effects of parental gambling on child development, identity development and performance anxiety.

image but it quickly shifted to a black dot that she was chasing far away. Everything was black. There were periods of light shining and the colour pink appeared alongside trees that were blocking out the blackness. For the majority of the music portion of the GIM session, Joy's imagery shifted from a black dot to glimpses of light shining. In the last music track of the program the light returned and was making patterns, however the patterns were not intelligible.

Key images: black dot, shining light, pink colour, black clouds.

Post-talk. Joy was surprised by the black dot and said she wanted it to go away but acknowledged the black dot was similar to her life. Specifically, the dot was her block and that is why it was so prominent in the session. The light represented her inner drive. She alluded to this but did not say so explicitly. Joy was motivated to continue to explore her dot and what it meant in future sessions.

Session 2: "Weaving a Web"

Joy came to the session asking to breathe as she felt something was blocking her ability to do so. She desired increased energy and inner support for her concerns regarding relationships and education. Joy reported a recent conversation with her parents where her father was crying and told her how much he missed her. She imparted that she had a strained relationship with her mother due to her mother's gambling problem that had placed their family in emotional and financial jeopardy. Joy talked more about her marriage today explaining that her husband hated school and did not understand her drive to continue studies after achieving her undergraduate degree. He felt she should be "happy in her place" in society. She felt neither her husband nor her parents understood her drive to study. This contributed to her feelings of an inability to breathe.

For this session I selected the "Relationships" music program, and as the music began Joy was sustained by a pink star that brought energy and support as she waited for someone to join her. Joy began in a concert hall with no audience. She imaged herself standing in front of the stage but could not bring herself to stand on it. Joy went to a room with synthesizers and lessons taking place. A fellow student was playing a flute but Joy could not hear the music. She noticed gum that was left behind and she wanted to taste the gum even though it was dirty. Joy's imagery then shifted back where she started and she was now sitting in the audience on a comfortable seat. The seat was an important image and she liked its maroon colour and comfort. As the third piece of music in the program began a spider web surfaced. It did not scare her but she could not find the spider. The web prohibited her from focusing, and she wanted to see what was going on. She saw numbers on a screen counting down from 5 to 0. Then the countdown kept repeating. The maroon colour was still prominent at this point.

Key images: Concert hall, room with synthesizers and lessons, gum, maroon colour, spider web, numbers counting down.

Post-talk. When asked about sitting in the audience, Joy expressed concerns over her piano performances and stress associated with performance. She commented on the spider web stating that it was like her life, it was prominent but there was no focus, just many paths leading everywhere. She desired focus and wanted to continue to explore this in future sessions. She said she would speak with her parents this weekend and try to explain in greater detail her desire to continue her schooling. She was nervous about this, but stated she knew that is what she wanted.

The spider archetype. According to Massimo Mangialavori, the web weaving spider, *Aranea diadema*, is a remedy for people who need to define their own identity (Chicetti, 2003).

The idea of not having been understood and appreci-

As the third piece of music in the program began a spider web surfaced. It did not scare her but she could not find the spider. The web prohibited her from focusing.

ated for what and who they are is more predominant in this remedy than in other spiders. Unfortunately, they are searching for support in their own family that has shown to be unable to help them and even worse, they have the tendency to reproduce this lack of understanding and help in their own relationships, falling in love with people that show a very similar behaviour to that of their primary caregivers. They find themselves in a position where they fight for identity in front of a family and society that never even recognized them as an individual person. (Cicchetti, 2003, p. 48-49)

Session 3: "Nurturing Water"

Joy came to the session having reflected on her past two sessions and decided that she wanted to continue to pursue her education regardless of the lack of support from others. She stated that her husband had become slightly more supportive and she felt she could proceed with her desire to pursue a Master's degree. Today, she wanted to gain insight into her future desires to study and to try to resolve some of the issues with her parents and their lack of support. She wanted to grow stronger in order to stand up for herself and what she truly wants.

As the "Caring" music program started, Joy began her journey in a park resting comfortably against a tall tree. The tree was significant because she stated that it had deep roots and was nurtured by the water as it had grown very tall and strong. She imaged a long river that held many life sources such as plants and fish. Water was important as it sustained life and Joy decided to go and drink from the river. She was unsure at first but the music supported her to drink. She became refreshed with this water and described feeling light and nourished by the water she drank. Joy picked up a fish that began speaking to her. This fish was significant as it told her that she was a strong woman in control of her destiny. Joy seemed to drink in the words from the fish and repeated them several times in her imagery report. For example, "Joy continue to study"; "Joy pursue your dreams"; "Joy do not worry about what others think." After hearing these words, Joy decided to rest on a rock and stayed there for a while. She said the rock was giving her stability and she wanted to rest there a while longer, looking around and enjoying the beauty in the park.

Key images: Park, deep roots, tree, water, fish, rock.

Post-talk. Together we discussed the mandala she drew of herself; a drawing of Joy sitting on a rock in the park holding the fish in her hand with water pouring down on her that she was drinking. Joy said she felt "great" and refreshed by this session and that the fish was telling her to follow her dreams and drink from the water that would sustain her lifelong goal. She mentioned the tree and how it helped support her and she understood how she could grow strong and become like the tree. Joy acknowledged she did not need to rely on her parents for their approval. Through further discussion she decided she would tell her parents of her plan to pursue her Master's degree and she af-

firmed she was okay with whatever fallout might transpire as a result of that discussion. She recognized the importance of the fish and understood the fish was really her inner self.

Session 4: "Motherhood"

From the time we last met, Joy had a chance to speak to her parents and her husband about her plan to study. She said her husband was supportive on her moving and their subsequent separation while she studied. Her parents were less supportive. Her father cried and her mother said she should start a family and return home with her husband when he finished his degree. Her mother did not feel it was Joy's place to study further and that she should be a "wife" and attend to her family and her husband's needs and not put her needs or desires at the forefront. Joy said she stood up for herself and explained that children were not part of her and her husband's plans. She felt sad about the lack of support from her parents but proud of herself for standing up to them and making a decision. She was excited about future study and encouraged by her husband's support. Joy said she did miss her parents and felt some disconnection with them and those relationships as she had not seen them in over two years. She indicated her desire to go to Hong Kong to see them but more so she expressed her feelings of loss and sadness over their lack of support for her career and study. She wanted to explore the loss of not feeling supported as a child or adult, or not being loved for being the strong independent woman she had become.

As the "Grieving" music program began, Joy started her journey by walking along a path that was barren. She stayed on this barren path for a while stating that it was dark and she had trouble finding a way out. Then she imaged a mother holding a small child and as she got closer to the image she realized it was her and her mother. Her mother was rocking and singing to her and telling her that she wanted to go to school but was forced to marry and raise a family. This made her mother upset and she was drawn to gamble and resent her children. Her mother felt that Joy should also follow this path but when Joy began crying her mother embraced her and wiped her tears away and the journey ended with Joy as an adult.

Key images: Barren path, mother, child, rocking, singing.

Post-talk. Joy reported that although this was a hard journey, it was important, as she realized why her mother was resistant to her desire to study. She felt some relief over the explanation about her mother's gambling problem and expressed empathy and love for the sacrifices her mother took in order to raise her family. She said she could finally let go of her feelings of resentment for having to work to help support her family and get her family out of financial difficulty due to her mother's gambling problem.

Session 5: "The Voice Within"

Joy came to the session speaking of her recent piano master class experience and her anxiety. She said that she practiced for many hours to prepare but when she had to play she froze. Joy was frustrated by her inability to perform in front of others and specifically her piano teacher. She was highly upset with her piano teacher's comments towards her and that seemed to be contributing to her anxiety to perform. Joy felt discouraged by her piano skills and said at times she hated the piano. She felt trapped by the piano and hated the anxiety and stress about performing when she often received little support from her teacher. Joy said that she did feel supported by the other students and reported that they too felt similar anxiety performing for this teacher. Joy was feeling insecure and inferior to her teacher's expectations of her and her playing. At one time she loved playing the piano and

Important images in Joy's GIM sessions represented support, nourishment, focus, and letting go, all which were important in Joy's journey of healing.

desired to have that feeling return as opposed to always feeling anxious when preparing to perform. We spoke briefly about performance anxiety and I described some techniques that might be helpful and Joy was receptive to implementing.

As the "Emotional Expression 1" music program started, Joy began her journey in a rain storm where the wind was pushing her towards a dark hole. She hesitated to go towards the hole but was drawn to it and the wind pushed her to walk towards it. She said the rain was refreshing and cool, and it was helping her feel covered. When she got to the hole she heard a voice saying "Do not be afraid." She entered the hole to find a piano and a large stage where she decided to sit and play the piano. She loved the feeling of being on the stage and said the piano was helping her play all the right notes. She played for a long time and suddenly an audience began to gather. She continued to play and she received a standing ovation for her playing. The imagery changed suddenly and it began to rain and she felt cool comfort from the water.

Key images: Wind, rain, voice, piano, stage, audience, standing ovation.

Post-talk. We discussed the mandala Joy drew which consisted of her playing the piano soaked in the rain. I held it up to her and she said she was refreshed and that she could begin to love the piano again. She felt surprised by the standing ovation and loved the feeling that came along with receiving it. She felt that she was overwhelmed by her piano teacher for many years and that she could now try and break out of that cycle. She currently understood that she needed to play for pleasure more often and not always focus on the demands of her teacher.

Summary of the Sessions and Next Steps

Goal Summary

The following was accomplished in sessions:

Asserting her desire to continue music studies at the Masters level

Exploring the relationship with her parents, primarily her mother and grieving the loss of her lack of support and resentment over working to support her family due to her mother's gambling problem

- Exploring the relationship with her husband and realizing his support to continue studies
- Beginning to assess her performance anxiety and her relationship with the piano
- Sessions facilitated her beginning to recognize her skill and value as a musician and music educator

Continued Work and Next Steps

Referring to goals initially established, these goals still remain for Joy to accomplish:

- 1) To recognize her accomplishments, celebrate her strengths and not diminish them
- 2) To work towards developing a healthier relationship with the piano
- 3) To reduce her overall stress level

Therapeutic Analysis and Interpretations

Most Important Key Images

Black dot, hole and clouds; water, supportive voice, piano and stage.

The amount of blackness, the dot, and hole represent the block and void in Joy's life, the lack of support she feels and the loss of the relationship with her mother. It is a black hole: a void, a loss. Water in several forms was nourishing to her and provided her with refreshment, repose and the ability to move forward and make her own decisions. It strengthened her. The supportive voice was there to help Joy move forward. I believe it was her inner voice and also the voice she wished to hear from her mother and husband.

The piano and stage were present as I believe Joy was beginning to work towards her anxiety with respect to performance, and performing up to the standards of her teacher.

Conclusion

This paper provided the relevant background information on GIM, case study methodology, relevancy of GIM for music educators and several important topics to Joy's therapeutic process, including: gender issues being raised in Hong Kong, effects of parental gambling on child development, identity development, and performance anxiety. Through Guided Imagery and Music (GIM), Joy was able to address many issues that were causing emotional and psychological pain. Joy's issues of gender and identity, interpersonal relationships, and performance anxiety were addressed and worked through during GIM sessions. Important images in Joy's GIM sessions represented support, nourishment, focus, and letting go, all which were important in Joy's journey of healing. Joy desired focus and longed for her inner voice to be freed and for her to feel strong enough to assert her wishes as an Asian female in order to present herself authentically. GIM sessions provided Joy with the space to identify and explore her concerns, which led to improved well-being and healing. After the GIM process was complete, Joy was able to be confident in her role in the world and have focused, valuable, and positive feelings towards her future.

GIM is a music psychotherapy technique that is highly applicable to musicians, music teachers, music educators, music therapists and all persons with strong musical connections. It is a method that deeply and quickly activates the unconscious while music provides support for the exploration of issues in a contained environment.

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Dr. Amy Clements-Cortés is assistant professor in music therapy at the University of Windsor. She has extensive clinical experience working with older adults in long-term and palliative care, adult mental health, complex continuing care, developmental delay and children with varied diagnoses. She holds a Masters and PhD from the University of Toronto, and an undergraduate degree in music therapy from the University of Windsor. Amy teaches voice through her company Notes By Amy and sits on the Board of Directors for the CAMT where she holds the position of internship chair. Her research has been focused in long term care, geriatrics, cognitive impairment, stress reduction, sleeping problems, pain, and palliative care. Her latest book, *Episodes of Relationship Completion Through Song: Case Studies of Music Therapy Research in Palliative Care*, is available on www.Amazon.com. The accompanying CD may be purchased on her own website www.notesbyamy.com.

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