

Workshop: Guided Imagery Council (GIC)
Presenter: Marc J. Weigensberg, MD

Objectives:

1. To experience council first hand to deepen the understanding of its principles and uses
2. To understand the basic principles of guided imagery council and potential uses in health and healing.
3. To experience stress-reduction guided imagery, and debrief the experience within council format

Summary of Session:

This is a hands-on, experiential workshop in which you will learn about and experience the process of Council, and the mind-body, complementary-integrative healing modality of guided imagery, and how they can be used together for healing purposes. You will take part in council discussion and experience a simple guided imagery stress reduction exercise. The session will conclude with further discussion (in council format) as well as extensive opportunity for reflection and questions. The goal of this final segment will be to emphasize the potential uses of GIC for personal, clinical, and institutional balance and well-being, emphasizing its use in underserved populations.

What is Council?

Council is a facilitated group process rooted in indigenous traditions throughout the world. Council, also known as “Talking Circle” or “Heart Circle”, has been used in contemporary fields as diverse as social justice, education, and business. Council allows for effective delivery of Guided Imagery, a mind-body modality used to promote stress-reduction or lifestyle behavioral change. In underserved, Latino adolescents, we have shown GIC is highly acceptable and deliverable, promotes empathy and group relatedness, reduces subjective stress and biomarker salivary cortisol levels, and reduces type 2 diabetes risk factors. We have used GIC to promote self-care among pediatric resident physicians serving underserved patients at a large, urban public hospital.

The main principals/intentions of council:

- 1) Sit in a circle to minimize hierarchy;
- 2) Use a designated object (“talking piece”)
- 3) **Speak from the heart**
- 4) **Listen from the heart**
- 5) Speak leanly (briefly, or “to the heart of the matter”)
- 6) Speak spontaneously
- 7) Confidentiality

What is Guided Imagery?

1. The generation of mental images and/or sensations leading to a specific health or behavioral outcome (e.g. stress reduction, pain relief, behavior change)
2. From: <http://www.healthjourneys.com/Main/Home/What-Is-Guided-Imagery>
Over the past 40 years, the effectiveness of guided imagery has been increasingly established by research findings that demonstrate its positive impact on health, creativity and performance. Because of the brain structures involved when guided imagery techniques are deployed, it will often heighten emotion, laughter, sensitivity to music, openness to spirituality, intuition, abstract thinking and empathy. And because it mobilizes unconscious and pre-conscious processes to assist with conscious goals, it can bring to bear much more of a person's strength and motivation to accomplish a desired end.

Selected Bibliography:

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3. Mehl-Madrona L, Mainguy B. "Introducing healing circles and talking circles into primary care." *Perm J*. 2014;18(2):4–9. doi:10.7812/TPP/13-104
4. Weigensberg MJ, Vigen C, Sequeira P*, Spruijt-Metz D, Juarez M, Florindez D, Provisor J, Peters A, Pyatak EA*. Diabetes empowerment council: integrative pilot intervention for transitioning young adults with type 1 diabetes. *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* 7:1-15, 2018. PMID:29552422.
5. Weigensberg MJ, Provisor J, Spruijt-Metz D, Lane CJ, Florindez D, Wen CKF, Perdomo M*, Goodman K*.. Guided Imagery Council: Acceptability and preliminary effects of a novel group-based lifestyle intervention in predominantly Latino adolescents, *Global Advances in Health and Medicine*, 8:1-12, 2019. PMID:31106035t