

Guided Imagery and Music (GIM): The Spectrum of Contemporary Practice

This article describes the range of applications of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) in contemporary clinical practice, as outlined in the poster at the bottom of the article which was originally presented at the 2016 *British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)* conference.

The poster includes information about the Bonny Method of GIM at the top. This is the original method developed by Helen Bonny in the 1970s which, in brief, involves the client imaging whilst listening to a sequence of pre-recorded music in a relaxed state, eyes closed, lying down. The client's imagery experience evolves spontaneously as an expression of his or her inner process in response to the music, the therapist's role being to provide non-directive verbal support ([click here for further information](#)).

The Bonny Method is very well suited to helping clients with anxiety, depression, bereavement, relationship difficulties and many other problems, where verbal counselling or psychotherapy would be an alternative form of treatment. Whilst in this respect the Bonny Method has wide-ranging clinical application, as a powerful form of depth psychotherapy it is not necessarily suitable for those with severe mental health difficulties, at least not to begin with. This is where the intensity of the emotion experienced may be too much, for example, or there might be difficulties distinguishing the imaginary and the real worlds (with psychotic conditions, for instance). Other clients may not have the physical or emotional stamina required because of a medical condition.

For such clients, work with music and imagery may nevertheless be extremely beneficial, the Bonny Method of GIM having been modified and a range of simpler Music and Imagery (MI) methods and specialist techniques developed to make it suitable. These enable work to take place with vulnerable clients in a way that is both accessible and safe, where the aim might be to develop inner resources and ego-strength before confronting experiences of emotional conflict, abuse or trauma, for example.

Work of different types can be undertaken with both individuals and groups. This includes work with clients with complex mental health conditions ranging from PTSD to eating disorders; work with clients in palliative care and with various medical conditions; and work with children.

The Bonny Method in both its original and modified forms is also used with musicians and others involved in the creative arts to promote health and well-being, and help with performance anxiety, for example. GIM is also used for team-building in organizational contexts.

In summary, GIM can be thought of as a spectrum of practice which includes the Bonny Method, MI and other GIM practices, with a growing range of clinical applications as outlined in the lower half of the poster ([click here for more information](#)).

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Guided Imagery and Music (GIM): an evolving spectrum of practice

Martin Lawes, GIM Primary Trainer, FAMI. www.integrativegim.org

Helen Bonny, musician, music therapist and researcher, developed GIM in the 1970s and 80s in the USA using predominantly classical music. A professional association and training programme were established. GIM spread to Europe and worldwide.

The Bonny Method of GIM

Music-centred transformational psychotherapy



Music as co-therapist. It acts as a kind of 'fuel' that takes the client on an inner journey.

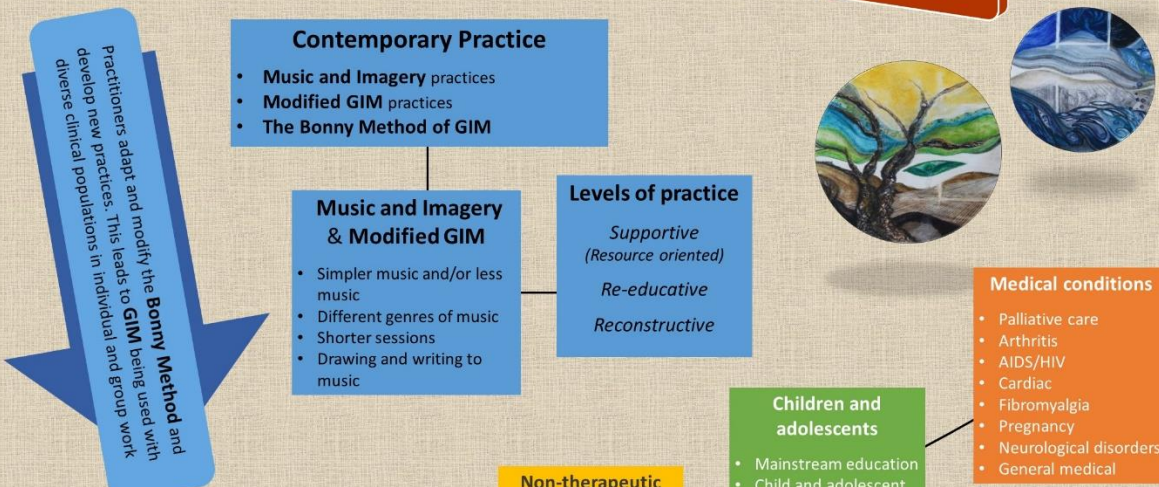
- Discovering inner resources
- Releasing blocked emotions
- Working through problems and discovering solutions
- Psychological and spiritual development

The therapist uses non-directive guiding techniques to support the client to engage in the process and integrate the experience afterwards.

Applications

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Abuse
- Bereavement
- Relationship issues
- Couple therapy
- Addictions
- Low self-esteem
- Music therapy trainees

'let the music take you where you need to go'



Contemporary Practice

- Music and Imagery practices
- Modified GIM practices
- The Bonny Method of GIM

Music and Imagery & Modified GIM

- Simpler music and/or less music
- Different genres of music
- Shorter sessions
- Drawing and writing to music

Levels of practice

- Supportive (Resource oriented)
- Re-educative
- Reconstructive

Medical conditions

- Palliative care
- Arthritis
- AIDS/HIV
- Cardiac
- Fibromyalgia
- Pregnancy
- Neurological disorders
- General medical

Children and adolescents

- Mainstream education
- Child and adolescent psychiatry
- Eating disorders
- Some special needs applications

Non-therapeutic applications

- Spiritual exploration
- Retreats
- Self-development
- Cultural issues
- Creative development

Mental Health

- Schizophrenia
- Complex PTSD
- Addictions
- Survivors of abuse
- Eating disorders
- Dissociative identity disorder
- Work related stress
- Autism

Staff support

Musicians, therapists, artists etc.

- Well-being
- Relationships with music
- Personal therapy for music therapists
- Performance anxiety
- Creative blocks

GIM training makes it possible to:

- Offer the Bonny Method in private practice
- Use modified GIM in existing music therapy settings (where appropriate).
- Apply GIM skills in music therapy to working verbally, integrating words and music, and working with symbolic play, art and other creative expression.
- Practitioners often find it develops and deepens their relationship with music.

Training programmes are endorsed by the Association for Music and Imagery (AMI). The training takes place at 3 levels with training seminars, lasting 3-6 days, taking place two or three times a year (depending on the course). Levels I & II (1 year). Level III (2½ years). Some training programmes focus on the **Bonny Method**. Others also include training in **Modified GIM** and **Music and Imagery**. A full list of programmes can be found at: <http://ami-bonnymethod.org/resources/training-2/>

Artwork by Susan Nares, FAMI