

# MANDALA

WINTER 2023

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The Oracle is All of Us

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Bach to Rock and Roll

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The Magic of Music

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Earl E. Bakken Center for  
**SPIRITUALITY & HEALING**

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# MANDALA

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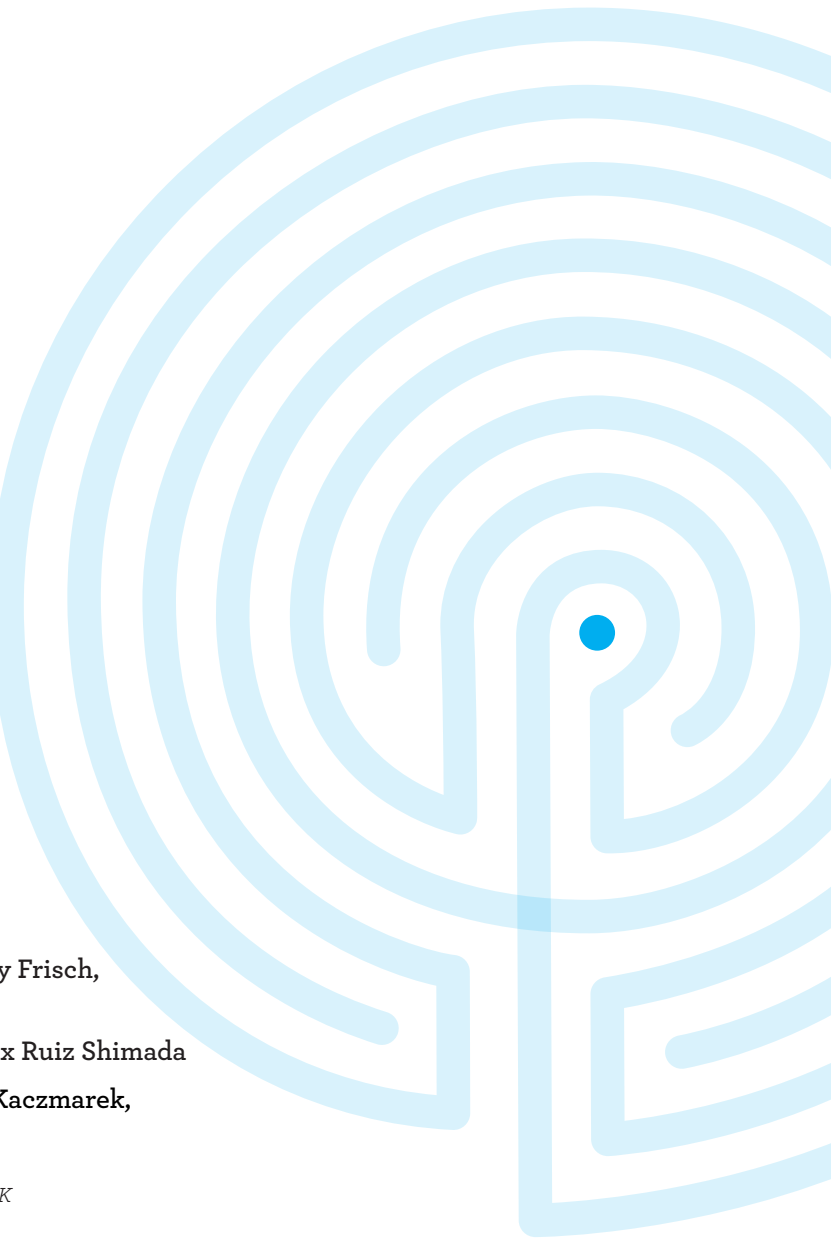
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Mandala is the Sanskrit word for “circle” and is a sacred symbol that mirrors a state of consciousness through a concrete pattern. Native Americans use mandalas as healing and transformational art in the sand; art therapists to facilitate healing; and Tibetans as visual representation of Buddhist beliefs. As a universal symbol of healing, the respective circles of the mandala capture the many diverse aspects of the Center’s work: reflection, transformation, spirituality, creation, and lastly, the ongoing journey that continues to shape what we are to become.

# Advancing Health and Wellbeing through the Arts

It's an incredibly exciting time within the arts and healing movement. While many of us have intuitively known that the arts are healing and enrich our lives in countless ways, now research has validated impressive clinical outcomes.

A new field of study, the neuroarts, examines how the arts and aesthetic experiences measurably change the brain and body and how this knowledge is translated into practices that advance health and wellbeing. As noted in a report published by Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the Aspen Institute, and the Center for Applied Neuroaesthetics, the arts can help people prevent, manage, and recover from physical and mental challenges, stop tremors in Parkinson's disease, and give voice to people who are unable to speak. The arts can return memories in the face of dementia, raise the spirits of those who are depressed, and lessen stress and inflammation by lowering cortisol levels. The arts can also foster social cohesion that is so essential to community health. I encourage you to access the report titled Advancing the Science of Arts, Health, and Wellbeing at [https://neuroartsblueprint.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NeuroArtsBlue\\_ExSumReport\\_FinalOnline\\_spreads\\_v32.pdf](https://neuroartsblueprint.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NeuroArtsBlue_ExSumReport_FinalOnline_spreads_v32.pdf)

The Bakken Center continues to grow our focus on the arts and healing. For close to a decade, we have been teaching academic courses that focus on music, the creative arts, and healing. In the article Bach to Rock and Roll, Jenzi Silverman shares how music, emotion, and memory are interconnected. Check out the student comments and learn about the many ways that our courses have been inspiring and life changing.

I am very excited about the ongoing partnership with the Minnesota Orchestra. The Magic of Music story highlights a recent unique collaboration that focused on anxiety and mental health. The Center's Mindfulness and Wellbeing Instructor Mariann Johnson began the night with some background on mindfulness followed by a guided meditation. The attendees then practiced listening mindfully to a live performance and afterwards, had the opportunity to interact with the musicians to share their experiences and feedback. I am so grateful for the outstanding leadership of Mariann and Sue Nankivell, who leads our business development and community engagement work. Their passion, creativity, and deep commitment to this work and partnership has been instrumental in the success of this collaboration.

The Oracle is All of Us is an introduction to a new initiative led by Molly Sturges, an artist, composer, and researcher. Based in the SONIC lab with biomedical engineer Dr. Hubert Lim, Molly is creating immersive arts experiences that blend art and science in support of personal and community healing and wellbeing. We recently had our first taste of a pop-up Oracle event that was held in the Center's Meditation Space in October that is described in the article. Pop up events will continue in the spring at which time we will also launch a new collaboration with the Weisman Art Museum. Stay tuned for what's to come!

If any of these initiatives ignite your passion as a donor, we'd love to have a conversation with you. I am incredible grateful to our community of donors that enable us to offer such unique programming that touches so many lives.



Wishing you, your families, and all you celebrate with Happy Holidays! Mary Jo

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jo Kreitzer".

Mary Jo Kreitzer, PhD, RN, FAAN  
Founder and Director  
Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing

Your support creates a transformative impact on lives, driving innovation in whole person health and wellbeing at the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing. What meaningful philanthropic goals would you like to achieve? For a conversation on how to achieve those goals, contact

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# THE ORACLE IS ALL OF US

An immersive arts experience that blends art and science to build community and explore reciprocity with the planet.

BY HEIDI WACHTER

“In times of hardship, distress, and pain, we need oracles,” says healing-centered composer and musical researcher Molly Sturges, who is also faculty at the Bakken Center. “They are guides who help us navigate challenges and traumas of all kinds by revealing insights and wisdom.”

Humans have turned to oracular knowledge for guidance for thousands of years. The Oracle of Delphi, for example, was the most important shrine in ancient Greece. People visited the site from all over to have their questions about the future answered by the Pythia, the priestess of Apollo.

Other forms of oracular wisdom include the I Ching, Norse runes, and the reading of coca leaves in Peruvian shamanism.

“Oracles may be people but could also be trees, animals, and anything depending upon how we perceive and relate to it,” Sturges says. “We all have access to deep wisdom within, between, and around us.”

Sturges’ project, *Waking the Oracle*, is an immersive arts-based experience blending music, creative expression, storytelling, and science. “*Waking the Oracle* experiences are designed to raise awareness, mutual understanding, and ultimately enhance personal and community well-being,” explains Mary Jo Kreitzer, PhD, RN, FAAN, Founder and Director of the Bakken Center.

While Sturges conceived and created *Waking the Oracle* at George Washington University in 2019, “it’s a culmination of lessons I’ve learned working at the crossroads of music, participatory arts, healing and health,

community organizing, spirituality, and science for nearly 30 years,” she says.

“Over time, whether working in hospice, detention centers, with intergenerational community groups, or in research settings, I have learned quite a bit about how we can personally and collectively work with the pain within ourselves and in the world around us to grow, learn, heal, and evolve,” Sturges says.

## EXPLORING THE SOUND OF RECIPROCITY

*Autumn Tree Whispers: An Immersive Sound & Poetry Meditation for Resting and De-Stressing* was an hour-long *Waking the Oracle* pop-up experience held at the University of Minnesota in October 2023.

“The oracle is an ancient recipe – consisting of listening to ourselves, each other, and the Earth – while coming into spaces of creativity and reflection,” Sturges says, “There’s immense power in it.”

The unique artistic “soup” allowed participants to explore live and recorded sound compositions inspired by trees. “We’re able to live because of trees. Inhaling and exhaling — we breathe with them in a constant cycle of give and take,” Sturges says. “Many of us have forgotten this fundamental relationship.”

The tree sounds blended with poems to create a unique meditation designed to engage participants in a special reflection for resting

and de-stressing.

“I expected to have a guided meditation and then time for performers to share their poetry,” says attendee Ricki Williams, Public Engagement and Learning Coordinator at the Weisman Art Museum. “I didn’t know the poetry would be a part of the soundscape of the sound bath.” “I also did not expect the sound bath to have live instrumentation and vocalization,” Williams says. “I was surprised by how beautiful the room was and how many people were collectively finding their own versions of calm,” Williams adds.

In addition to relieving stress, research shows that arts-based, immersive environments are a powerful antidote to loneliness.

“Art can open space so people can feel expressivity and agency,” Sturges explains. “When there are participatory elements that bring art to life, the discovery of self and one another, and empathy occurs.”

That’s important because social connection is an essential social determinant of health. Insufficient social connection increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and dementia.

Social isolation significantly impacts community wellbeing, affecting resilience and safety, economic prosperity, and representative government.

“What we seem to lack now more than ever before is the connection to community and each other,” Sue Nankivell, Director of Business Development and Community Relations at the Bakken Center. Nankivell’s team, including Molly Buss and Amy Jensen,





produced the event.

Public health experts are also sounding the alarm about a growing epidemic of loneliness and isolation in the United States. Approximately half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness, with some of the highest rates among young adults.

“This event was open to the University community, and we invited students, faculty, and staff through various channels,” explains Nankivell. “For example, we invited the University’s Diversity Community of Practice members to join us.” “We would have loved to have the entire campus join us, but the space only comfortably holds thirty participants, and we couldn’t accommodate all who were interested in participating,” she says.

While the Center regularly connects people through virtual programming, the Waking the Oracle pop-up created a uniquely immersive, intimate experience that wasn’t conducive to a virtual format. “For this same reason, it was not recorded, and we did not take pictures of participants,” Nankivell says.

## THE POWER OF ART AND SCIENCE

It was an opportunity to collaborate with University of Minnesota professor Hubert Lim, PhD, in his lab focusing on sound, music, neuromodulation, and healing that brought Sturges to Minnesota, where she is currently an artist in residence at the University of Minnesota School of Music.

“After I arrived, I met Mary Jo Kreitzer and the team, who have been doing amazing work for decades,” Sturges explains. “We decided to start working together, and Waking the Oracle ended up being one of the initiatives that has seemed to really fit.”

The relationship between the science and the arts has always been really important (at the University of Minnesota),” Sturges says.

“For decades, the Bakken Center has offered academic courses that focus on music, the creative arts, and healing,” Kreitzer adds.

“Courses have drawn students from many academic disciplines interested in ways to support health, healing, and well-being beyond conventional care,” she says. “Waking the Oracle events are a fantastic way to engage the broader community — beyond academic courses.”

The unique partnership also includes Immergent, a community-based organization with a rich history of creating interactive, intergenerational music and artistic experiences that help people connect and heal.

“Immergent is a group of artists and change agents who share the Bakken Center’s concern around planetary health and our vision of advancing health and well-being within people, organizations, and communities,” Kreitzer notes.

“Our goal in collaborating with Immergent is to leverage our strengths to learn from each other and to advance the emerging field of the neuro arts collectively,” she says.

Neuroarts is a transdisciplinary study of how

the arts and aesthetic experiences measurably change the human body, brain, and behavior. It seeks to understand how this knowledge can be translated into practices that advance wellbeing.

“Through research, we now know empirically what we have known intuitively — that the arts contribute to preventing, managing, and recovering from health challenges, enhancing wellbeing, and building community,” Kreitzer says.

“It was wonderful to take time in the middle of my work day to reconnect with the earth around me, connect with my breath, and be affirmed in my light,” Williams says. “This event encouraged me to take more intentional breaths and find other ways to connect with people on campus who are looking for the same space in their lives.

“Oracle shows us that we can meet what’s present in our world, including all the pain and trauma, and process and integrate it,” Sturges says. “It shows us that we are whole; we have this wisdom,” she says. “Instead of saying we need to do this work, it says we’re already doing it together.”

**Waking the Oracle is more than an initiative; it’s a collective journey of healing and growth. Your support amplifies its positive ripple effect. To learn more, contact Virginia Kaczmarek at [virginia@umn.edu](mailto:virginia@umn.edu) or make a contribution to the ‘Arts, Healing, and Wellbeing Fund’ at [z.umn.edu/GiveCSH](https://z.umn.edu/GiveCSH).**

# GOING THE

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Researchers are developing a comprehensive pain management program for rural veterans, who have more severe pain than the average person but less access to care.

**C**hronic pain is a big issue for those who have served in the military. About 77% of veterans report pain control among their top three priorities in primary care, while two-thirds report that pain significantly limits what they can do and drives them to frequently seek health care.

For those veterans living far outside of large cities, the picture gets more complicated. Accessing safe and effective pain care can be difficult. Veterans in rural areas are prescribed more opioid medications than their urban counterparts, and long-term use of these painkillers can lead to addiction or even death through accidental overdose.

“In short, rural veterans are more severely impacted by pain but have fewer options for care,” said Roni Evans, DC, PhD, Director of the Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing’s Integrative Health & Wellbeing Research Program (IHWBP). “There is an opportunity to better connect them to non-drug, complementary and integrative health approaches that address pain in a more cohesive way.”

Evans is collaborating with two Veterans Administration (VA)-affiliated researchers to develop and test a program to better deliver care for chronic pain to rural veterans. The team aims to develop a 12-week program called Reaching Rural Veterans: Applying Mind-Body Skills for Pain (or RAMP for short) that includes one-on-one health coaching,

video lessons, group discussions and exercises to manage pain in both the mind and the body. The project will be supported by over \$4 million in anticipated funding from the National Institute of Nursing Research, part of the National Institutes of Health, as part of the Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) Initiative.

Instead of relying on medication, the program will draw on evidence-based practices to help

**“Rural VA patients receive over 30% more opioids than urban VA patients.”**

veterans understand their pain better, learn cognitive behavioral strategies that change how they view and respond to that pain, and practice exercises that involve movement, mindfulness meditation, and other mind-body skills, like progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery to improve their quality of life.

While portions of the course will be provided in printed workbooks and online videos, veterans will also participate in group discussions. These discussions give veterans space to share their experiences with pain and learn from and support one another, Evans said.

**By Kevin Coss**

“Veterans have had unique experiences that civilian populations do not readily understand—for example, serving in armed conflicts,” she said. “Having some common understandings that don’t need to be re-explained is important since having to re-tell one’s story can be re-traumatizing.”

## ***The complexity of pain***

Part of the challenge in providing treatment is that “pain” includes a wide range of different conditions. Physical problems like joint pain, back pain and osteoarthritis, are among the most prevalent issues veterans encounter. People with pain may also experience other physical, psychological, and social issues, however, such as fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, and problems with social functioning.

VA patients living in rural areas have unique challenges beyond what their urban-dwelling counterparts experience and are more likely to be affected by pain, said Diana Burgess, PhD, the lead principal investigator on the project and director of the VA Advanced Fellowship Program in Health Services Research at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, and professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota.

“Rural VA patients receive over 30% more opioids than urban VA patients, are less likely to receive comprehensive and specialty pain care, in part, due to lack of access, and are less



# ADVANCE



likely to use self-management interventions for pain,” Burgess said. “Our intervention is specifically designed to address barriers that prevent rural-dwelling VA patients from engaging in non-drug, self-management interventions for pain.”

Complementary and integrative health approaches like the ones the RAMP program will use have been shown to improve pain as well as the psychological and physical health conditions that go along with pain (like depression, anxiety, and fatigue) and overall wellbeing. Previously, many programs available to veterans would focus on one non-drug method for treating pain, such as cognitive behavioral therapy. In doing so, some of a patient’s needs would be addressed, but not others. The research team is targeting a more comprehensive approach to better treat patients’ full pain needs.

## ***Learning from participants***

Over the first phase of the project, which started this fall and will last for two years, the research team will seek out and develop community partnerships and pilot test the program. They will also connect with several dozen patients, along with VA health care system leaders and staff. Their first goal will be to learn what factors might help or hinder the long-term adoption of a pain management program.

Katherine Hadlandsmyth, PhD, a co-principal

investigator on the study as well as a clinical psychologist and associate professor in the Department of Anesthesia at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, said the input of partners within the VA as well as community groups outside of it will help the team design the program to both fulfill national pain care priorities and also fit within the day-to-day operations of a busy medical center.

“Working closely with VA partners at both the national leadership level and the local clinician level will ensure that we are building the RAMP intervention in a way that it can subsequently be delivered clinically, should we find it to be efficacious,” said Hadlandsmyth, who is also affiliated with the Veterans Rural Health Resource Center at the Iowa City VA. “Meanwhile, including community group representatives offers critical insights into how to engage with varied rural veteran populations and also how to then meet the specific needs of these subsets of veterans.”

The team will also conduct a pilot study involving 40 rural VA patients with chronic pain to gain a sense of the best ways to reach and recruit participants, and the extent to which they are able and willing to engage in the 12-week program, as well as other key considerations that will help them develop the program to be successful over the long term.

The second phase of the research will last for three years. During that time, the team will

conduct a larger study involving 500 patients in the VA health care system, recruited from the Upper Midwest and Southeast regions of the US. The study will measure how effective the new program is compared to standard care patients have typically been receiving. They will also work with partners to determine how to grow the program within the VA’s national Whole Health System initiative so that it can be expanded to serve rural veterans across the country, including those in underserved and marginalized groups. If the study shows the program to be successful, the VA will be well equipped to implement it on a larger scale. “We want to ensure that our intervention is serving the needs of a wide range of rural veterans with chronic pain,” Hadlandsmyth said.



# Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: A Pillar of the Bakken Center

Thanks to more than a decade of mindfulness-based stress reduction programs (MBSR), thousands of people use its techniques to manage stress and improve wellbeing

By Suzy Frisch



Jeanne Voigt

Jeanne Voigt came to mindfulness as a skeptic. But during the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, she craved connection and stress relief. A friend pointed her to Mindful Mondays, an online offering from the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing, where people from around the world come together weekly for meditation and gentle movement.

**“By the end of the session, I always felt good. It helped me feel settled and calm,” Voigt says. “And then I was hooked.”**

Voigt discovered that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) classes would help her dive deeper, and she enrolled in the Bakken Center’s eight-week program in 2023. It engaged her further in mindfulness practices, body scans, and mind-body movement like yoga and qigong.

Before long, she noticed that doing these practices made a major difference in her daily life, actions, and outlook.

Voigt mastered strategies for handling things that trigger her frustration, such as driving. “I learned that I didn’t need to react to everything immediately. If there’s something that you don’t like about what you do, you can change it,” she says. “I got to be a nicer person. It’s not like moving mountains, but it’s small changes in behavior that really make a difference.”

Sue Nankivell, Director of Business Development and Community Relations for the Bakken Center, knows that Voigt’s positive experience is common. She regularly gets feedback from people after they complete an MBSR course through the Center. “More than any other community program, I hear all the time from people who say that this program changed their life,” Nankivell says. “It tends to be something that stays with them forever.”

## Core Curriculum

Mindfulness practices have long been a foundational component of the Center since its founding in 1995. Its offerings and participation have grown steadily as evidence continues to mount, showing its positive effects on anxiety, depression, stress, chronic diseases, and pain reduction.

“There are many doorways to mindfulness,” says Center Director Mary Jo Kreitzer, PhD, RN, FAAN, FNAP. “We spend a lot of time remembering the past and anticipating the future and not noticing what is going on around us. **Cultivating a sense of mindfulness means trying to be in the present moment. It’s a way of life.**”

In the Bakken Center’s early days, it hosted Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed MBSR and the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Kreitzer recalls the advice he shared: “Live the work. Don’t just do the work.”

To Kreitzer, that meant making mindfulness part of everything the Center does, including building a strong cadre of teachers who are MBSR-certified, engaging in scientific research, and offering numerous mindfulness courses to the community and University of Minnesota students, faculty, and staff.

Participation in mindfulness programs including MBSR has been consistently strong throughout the years, and the Center meets the moment as needs change. Putting Mindful Mondays online was one pivot, and it prompted participation to expand from in-person groups of 25-30 to more than 1,000 online. The Center now offers virtual, in-person, and hybrid courses, a four-week introduction to mindfulness, plus sessions on mindful eating and mindfulness at work.

Some people get introduced to MBSR at the Bakken based on their clinician’s



recommendation. That has become more common as additional studies highlight

that mindfulness practices often improve mental and physical health. Others find validation that the Center's offerings are rooted in an academic institution. "That really sets us apart," Nankivell says, building trust that courses are evidence-informed with quality instructors.

Susan Flannigan, CNP, MPH, started teaching MBSR in 2013 at M Health Fairview in Wyoming, Minn. She noticed how effective MBSR was for people with conditions like back pain and high blood pressure, and she regularly heard that students experienced improved sleep, mood, and focus.

The MBSR tools that participants learn are effective, helping people shift their awareness from the busyness of their mind to their body, Flannigan says. Mindful movement, breathwork, and meditation combine to engage people's nervous system and help them relax. The more they practice, the more they can call on that relaxation response, especially during stressful times.

"From a health care perspective, MBSR is good medicine. **It promotes health, prevents disease, and helps manage chronic conditions,**" Flannigan says. "I am grateful to the Center for responding to the needs of the community and making this program more widely accessible."



**Rahel Nardos**

Urogynecologist Rahel Nardos, MD, MS, enrolled in the Center's MBSR course to help her manage stress and anxiety stemming from several hardships, including grief and a chronic medical condition. She finds that daily meditation and self-awareness practices make an enormous difference personally and professionally. To activate these practices, Nardos is collaborating with the Center on a mindfulness app for people with pelvic floor challenges.

"I find this practice to be so helpful in shaping how I choose to show up every morning to my

patients, colleagues, and family," Nardos says. "I believe that there is a strong connection between the mind and the body that is so often ignored in medicine. Stress and anxiety play a big role in how our illnesses manifest themselves and how we cope with them. If we can help people understand the connection through meditation and movement practices, they will do so much better in all aspects of their life."

## Stress Management

Susan Miles can attest to the destructive effects of stress on her own life. A Minnesota District Court senior judge, Miles felt the weight of constant human drama unfolding in her courtroom and noticed her coping skills



**Susan Miles**

waning. She turned to meditation as a means of professional survival, eventually moving toward mindful meditation. While training to become an MBSR-certified instructor, Miles gained self-awareness tools and methods for adapting under stress.

Miles began teaching at the Bakken Center in 2017, initially focusing on teaching MBSR to lawyers and judges. "I decided that my contribution in this life would be helping to change the world one mind at a time," she says. "I love to help people change. In eight weeks, you see it and feel it with your own eyes. Participants learn that they don't have to believe the thoughts in their head. They learn to get off autopilot and coach themselves in coping mechanisms when they are under stress. That results in more clarity in their personal and professional lives."



**Joshlyn Olsen**

Miles appreciates the Center's abiding commitment to MBSR, including providing support and training to facilitators so they stay current. That, in turn, helps them continue to stoke their passion for the practice and share their insights with participants.

Yoga teacher and University alumna Joshlyn Olsen benefitted from that knowledge. She was already familiar with mindfulness, but she wanted to incorporate more practices into her life and her yoga classes. She enrolled in the Center's MBSR course to commit to meeting these goals.

"When I practice mindfulness, I really ground myself in the moment and in my experience. **I have found that I am less reactive to anything external in my life and I'm able to respond in a more thoughtful way,**" Olsen says. With her yoga students, she seeks to demystify mindfulness. "I more intentionally bring in clarifying information about what mindfulness is to make it more approachable."

Sara McMullen completed the Center's MBSR course in 2006 and can attest that practicing mindfulness is life-changing and enduring. She still uses many of the techniques to reduce her anxiety, including meditation and body scans.

"I learned that I don't have to be busy all the time and to have more self-compassion," McMullen says. "It helped me realize that I need to allow myself time to relax. I'm really glad that I found some relief and more joy and pleasure in my life with MBSR."

**Broaden the reach of our MBSR program by making a donation to support our 'pay-what-you-can' pricing, providing accessibility for all. Your contribution ensures that everyone can benefit from the healing power of mindfulness.**

**Visit [z.umn.edu/GiveCSH](https://z.umn.edu/GiveCSH)**

# Bakken Center Launches New Fund

## Mindfulness: In Recognition of Mariann Johnson

By Suzy Frisch



Mariann Johnson

Mindfulness programming is one of the fastest-growing areas of the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing, notably since the COVID-19 pandemic brought Mindful Mondays to people across Minnesota and around the world. It opened the door to a constant and expanding audience of people who want to engage with the practice and thirst for more.

Much of this growth is grounded in the work of Mariann Johnson, a mindfulness and wellbeing instructor who has made an impact in many aspects of the Center's mindfulness programming. Aiming to continue supporting and enhancing its offerings, the Center recently launched a new Mindfulness Fund.

Bakken Center Development Officer Virginia Kaczmarek came up with the fund and name idea. "In discussions with donors, Mariann Johnson's significant influence frequently emerges as a catalyst for their contributions," she says. "Observing the surging engagement recently, we felt it apt to launch a campaign dedicated to mindfulness, inaugurating it in recognition of Mariann's profound impact."

Stressing the importance of mindfulness for wellbeing, the Center has been working to ensure that its programs are accessible to all, regardless of people's ability to pay. The Center will use donations to the Johnson Fund to continue expanding opportunities for all, such as offering a pay-what-you-can pricing, Kaczmarek says.

It also will support the hiring, retention, and training of quality teachers and facilitators, Kaczmarek says, which will create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment for every community member.

A mindfulness practitioner for 25 years, Johnson knows how beneficial it has been in her life and finds it gratifying to pass its tools onto others. Johnson was "surprised and delighted" when Kaczmarek came to her with the idea for the fund, excited to know that the resources would be used to remove barriers to participation.

"I was really humbled by it. I'm really grateful that we have this opportunity to build on already extraordinary mindfulness-based programs at the Center," Johnson says. "We can honor the legacy and tradition of our almost 20 years of programming and our teachers. **We are really blessed with some of the most exceptional MBSR and mindfulness teachers. Part of this fund will be used to build to the future and build the next generation of trained mindfulness teachers.**"

As much as the Covid pandemic was a time of stress, it did inspire the Center to put mindfulness programming online. This led to a more diverse group of people participating, an effort Bakken leaders want to continue. "That reach extended all over the country and the world—what a gift!" Johnson says. "Just as significantly was our strong commitment to make sure that our programming is available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay."

The Center also plays the important role of convening mindfulness teachers and providing opportunities for them to continue learning. Johnson appreciates that the fund

will support these efforts, ensuring that the next generation of teachers can meet the moment. "Mindfulness is so powerful. It helps us cultivate this innate capacity to be in the present moment and chose to be responsive rather than reactive," she says. "What can be more powerful during challenging times and times that aren't so challenging?"

Now more than ever, mindfulness is essential to wellbeing, making it important to expand opportunities for anyone to participate. "Mindfulness nurtures vital qualities like emotional awareness, resilience, and effective communication," Kaczmarek says. "Beyond enhancing professional endeavors, mindfulness invites us into a space of presence and equilibrium, offering tools to navigate stress and anxiety. With the growing challenges we all face, we all need mindfulness."

Mariann, and all our mindfulness instructors, empower many to navigate challenges resiliently. To extend this impact, consider a donation. Your support, whether a one-time gift or a recurring contribution, significantly aids in removing financial barriers, fostering inclusivity in our programs and changing lives.

Visit [z.umn.edu/GiveCSH](https://z.umn.edu/GiveCSH)

# Back to ROCK AND ROLL

Jenzi Silverman, MA, PhD, Teaches How Music Heals

*By Jacques Lerouge*

Listen along with this story

Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or tablet.

Begin with some  
musical relaxation.



## Why are Music, Emotions, and Memory Interconnected?

“Our brains are literally set up to respond to [music]. Because of the brain’s architecture, our emotion and memory centers are very close to the auditory cortex,” explains Jenzi Silverman, PhD, MA, graduate faculty at the Bakken Center and board of directors member at the Medical Musician Initiative.

Airwave signals travel a short distance from the ear to the emotion and memory centers in our brain. These centers pick up the signals and start to respond before we’re consciously aware of what’s going on. In 2009, Petr Janata published *The Neural Architecture of Music-Evoked Autobiographical Memories*, which investigates how the medial prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain right behind the forehead) plays a significant role in our sense of identity or life story. He found that it’s also very active in responding to music; thus helping us figure out what music is meaningful and important to us, and how we make that part of our personal autobiography. Additionally, the medial prefrontal cortex is also a very robust part of the brain that’s one of the last to remain in people who have Alzheimer’s disease.

In 2006, Silverman experienced this effect firsthand when she started playing the recorder for her mom at a memory care facility. When the other residents happened to overhear the music, they loved it, and the staff asked if she would play for everybody.

“The effect that live music can have on people with memory loss was something that had not even been on my radar,” she says. “I was just amazed that when I would play songs that were hits in the 30s or 40s or 50s – people who could remember very little else because they had advanced Alzheimer’s could remember the melodies and/or all the words to popular songs from their youth. They’d sing along with me or at least hum, and that just blew me away.”

Around this time, she was finishing her PhD in Educational Psychology. While she had been an avid fan of playing and enjoying music since she was a child, Silverman wasn’t sure how it might play into her professional career. This experience at the memory care facility as well as two other events would cement her purpose in music and healing.

**Have you ever experienced ‘collective effervescence,’ that feeling of togetherness when we gather for social rituals? For example, when we sing together, we can hear the lyrics resonating through all our voices.**

Music is an accessible, time-honored social ritual. For generations around the world, music continues to be a multifaceted part of healing and a pillar of support for community wellbeing. Even when we don’t create music, we can appreciate it as the audience. Whether we hear clearly or at all, it’s possible to feel part of the synchronized vibrations and experience an increased connection to community.

“There is growing evidence that listening to or making music affects the brain in ways that may help manage disease symptoms and promote health and wellbeing,” says Mary Jo Kreitzer, PhD, RN, FAAN, Director of the Bakken Center. “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 a music therapy program. In addition to music therapy, music-based interventions may be provided by nurses, physicians, social workers, chaplains, and other members of the health care team. People may also incorporate music within their own plan of self-care.”

# Becoming a Medical Musician

“You need to know that Led Zeppelin is my favorite band of all time. Ultimately, they’re probably the main reason I am involved in this field,” Silverman says. One of her core memories was seeing Jimmy Page on the Outrider tour for his one solo album. Her eyes are alight when describing the final encore, as Page played an instrumental ‘Stairway to Heaven’ on a double neck guitar while the audience sings. Back in 2007, she watched Led Zeppelin’s reunion tour online. “It just made me so happy to know that my favorite band of all time was getting back together somewhere on this planet.”

## Listen along with this story

Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or tablet.

Jimmy Page on his Outrider tour, Stairway to Heaven instrumental



“A couple months after that, I was reading two books on how music affects us that had just come out: Oliver Sacks’ Musicophilia and Daniel Levitin’s This is Your Brain on Music. I was thinking about how Led Zeppelin’s music has always been good for my mental health. In fact, it helped me pull myself out of some pretty extreme bouts of depression and anxiety.” But it wasn’t just Led Zeppelin - the Beatles and early music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods - music was integral to her identity.

“What is it about my favorite music that makes me beyond happy, and actually changes my mental health for the better?” Silverman was curious. After reading these books, she learned that music really does change our brain chemistry. It clicked, and she thought,

“I need to find a way to teach other people that your favorite music is really good for you and why that is.”



Jenzi Silverman

In 2008, she finished her PhD at the University of Minnesota and an Associate Diploma in Recorder from Trinity College, London’s international exam program. Since 2009, she has created and taught courses on music, the brain, and wellbeing for the University of Minnesota Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and community education programs.

In the mid-2010s, Silverman became connected with Andrew Schulman, professional guitarist and Director of the Medical Musician Initiative, through her husband and social media. When Schulman posted on Facebook about the upcoming documentary about his experience having his life saved by music, Silverman’s husband commented, “Oh, you’ve got to talk to my wife.”

Throughout the next few years, the two had a number of phone conversations about Schulman’s work and about his wish to set up a training program for other musicians in providing appropriate music to help patients in intensive care settings. In 2018 and 2019, Silverman remembers the first of two medical musician training workshops that Schulman was co-leading. The training was transformative for Silverman, “when I got back, I just wanted to evangelize about medical musicianship.”

Around the same time, Silverman began the Certificate in Integrative Therapies and Healing Practices program at the Bakken Center. When she received her certificate from the Medicine for Musicians course, Silverman took a selfie with it and emailed that to Bakken Center Student Services and Academic Programs Coordinator, Erin Fider.

After an interview with Fider and consultation with Center leadership, Silverman began to teach CSPH 5601 Music, Health,

and Healing, which had not been offered since 2012. At the

## Listen along with this story

Scan the QR codes with your mobile device or tablet.



Listen to a piece from the Center's Wellbeing Series 2023 Lecture led by accomplished professional guitar player and medical musician Andrew Schulman. He explores the healing power of music in critical care units and shares his inspiring personal story, including how music saved his life while in a medically-induced coma.

beginning of 2020, only six students registered for the class' reopening. Even before the pandemic kept students from returning after that spring break, Silverman was preparing to better meet the needs of her students and adapt the course delivery to an online format.

"We had to quickly pivot everything. Jenzi was just able to jump in." says Fider, "You would think 'oh how do you do a music class online' - we said that about a lot of classes at that time - only to find out, that you really can, and she was able to do that well."

That spring, the Office of Undergraduate Education put out a call for faculty systemwide to come up with new classes that spoke to students' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic and could help them figure out ways to cope with the stress involved with that. Silverman thought, "Ah, music can be our best friend there." Thus began CSPH 1202 Music for Healing in times of Stress and Anxiety.

Finally, Silverman also undertook leading CSPH 5561: Overview of the Creative Arts in Health and Healing where she brings community guest speakers on poetry, hip hop, spoken word, healing, and more.

"She's a model faculty," remarks Fider. "She contributes a lot of wisdom and experience [to the Center], encourages other faculty, and has a lot of great ideas. And she's just a lot of fun to work with."

"It has been a joy to work with Jenzi Silverman over the past 3 years," says Kreitzer. "Jenzi brings passion and a depth of knowledge about music and healing to the classroom in a way that students find inspiring and life-changing. We hear directly from students how she has changed their lives - the ultimate accomplishment for any faculty member!"

"In all my classes, I really work to teach through the diversity, equity, and inclusion lens, pointing out that, unfortunately, the arts and healing have been almost as guilty as other health care specialties, as far as being exclusionary and harmful," says Silverman. "That has to change for good. There are ways that all of the creative arts and healing can be far more equitable and

inclusive."

## What would you say to someone who wanted to become a medical musician?

"Absolutely go for it!" Silverman encourages, "because the more skilled, sensitive, caring musicians there are providing music for people in the healthcare system, the better. I would say learn all you can about how music supports health and wellbeing. Also get as much experience as you can volunteering, or if you can, working for money in those settings.

She notes that it's important to know how to make sure the music you make only benefits, and doesn't harm people. "Get to know what repertoire is appropriate for patients in different settings. Be aware of what your scope of practice is, what are you really trained to do? What do you feel comfortable doing? What feels right to you?"

## What Students are Saying?

"I really have to attribute my success [in the course] to [Jenzi]. Not only did your course provide me with so many new therapeutic experiences and ways to incorporate music into my life and healing journey, but also your presence, kindness, patience, and communication has helped me in a way words cannot describe. You are an amazing professor, and what you teach is so extremely valuable! Thank you so much for being a huge part of my healing journey! I hope to have class with you again :) Thank you again <3"  
**From Bissy in CSPH 5601: Music, Health and Healing**

"Jenzi was clearly so excited about the content of her course, and despite it being an online course, she seemed to connect with individual students. In weekly videos, she talked about individual responses or comments we made, and her feedback on my assignments was always detailed and personal. I could tell she had read what I wrote and sometimes even went and listened to pieces I referenced. She let the course be personalized to students so that you really gained knowledge from the course while being able to apply skills to your life. I appreciated Jenzi's openness, expertise, flexibility, and kindness. It's impressive she was able to connect with me even through an online course. The U is lucky to have her!" **From Jenna, CSPH 1202: Music for Wellbeing in Times of Stress and Anxiety.**

## Stay Engaged

Take an academic course about the Music and Wellbeing

- **CSPH 1202: Music for Wellbeing in Times of Stress and Anxiety**  
[z.umn.edu/CSPH1202](https://z.umn.edu/CSPH1202)
- **CSPH 5000-004: Music, Connection & Community Healing**  
[z.umn.edu/CSPH5000-004](https://z.umn.edu/CSPH5000-004)
- **CSPH 5561: Overview of the Creative Arts in Health and Healing**  
[z.umn.edu/CSPH5526](https://z.umn.edu/CSPH5526)
- **CSPH 5601: Music, Health and Healing**  
[z.umn.edu/CSPH5601](https://z.umn.edu/CSPH5601)

Watch the full 2023 Wellbeing Series with Andrew Schulman.  
[https://youtu.be/iM3lhI\\_4R6s](https://youtu.be/iM3lhI_4R6s)

Coming up, the Wellbeing Series 2024 - Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us featuring Susan Magsamen.  
[Z.umn.edu/wellbeingseries](https://z.umn.edu/wellbeingseries)

THE

# HEALING

LENS

By

**Craig Blacklock**



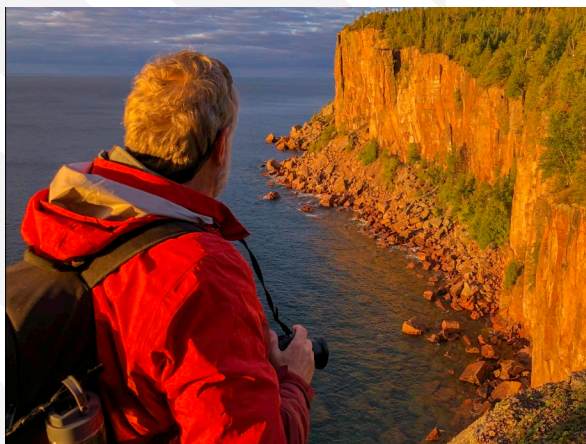
I know of no better way to teach mindfulness than to give a person a camera and take them into the natural world; whether they use a cell phone or a top-of-the-line professional camera makes little difference because the results will be just as impressive.

The healing lens of nature photography focuses their attention. Everything else that may have been troubling or distracting that day is replaced by what is before them at that very moment. All that exists right now is natural beauty and fully experiencing it with an eager sense of wonder.

I recently led a photo shoot on Minnesota's North Shore, taking the participants to Palisade Head for sunrise. Golden light illuminated the cliff face rising out of Lake Superior, which reflected the dark blue clouds in the distance. From the moment the sun broke over the horizon until the light turned the harsh white of day, each participant was absorbed in the moment-by-moment changes.

Photography is a subtractive art. We have the entire chaotic world before us and must block out everything but a minuscule bit, organize it within the confines of a rectangular frame, then select a fraction of a second in time to share with others.

Our understanding of the environment we are in starts with basic geometric shapes—the flat line of the horizon, round rocks, the fractal



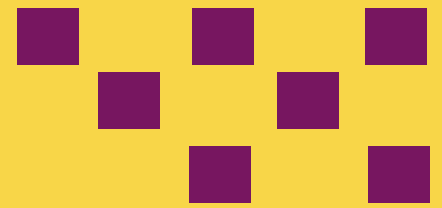
patterns of trees, waves, or clouds.

Our comprehension quickly goes from the large to the small until we finally take in the tiniest details. Along the way, we delight in discovering a repetition of shapes, which makes it easier for our brains to read a scene. Once one round object is discerned to be a rock, it is safe to quickly assume that other similar round objects are also rocks. Artists, whether making representational art or creating geometric abstractions, have long utilized fractal patterns and repeating shapes as primary design elements. Once we understand a pattern,



anything breaking that pattern will stand out. Anyone looking at this photograph of Jumbo Rocks at Joshua Tree National Monument will immediately see the repetition of the two round rocks standing out within a pattern of predominantly straight lines. A second later, the triangle of negative space beneath each rock may appear, and finally, the shadow repeating the shape of the pinnacle at the top of the frame. This is the order I noticed the elements of the scene when I made the photograph in 1984, only when I first saw it the shadow was shorter. It took me several minutes to set up my 5x7-inch view camera, but just before I was ready a cloud covered the sun. There was an excruciating period of waiting for the sun's return, hoping it would come out again before the shadow lengthened over the edge of the rock it was cast upon. Talk about being **IN THE MOMENT!** Then, only long enough for me to make one exposure, it brightened, casting a shadow as a perfect duplication of the pinnacle.

# THE MAGIC OF MUSIC



**Science supports it: Collective art can heal. Here's one way in which the Minnesota Orchestra and the Bakken Center are bringing it to the Twin Cities.**

By Katie Dohman

## MUSIC AND MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATION

“Music is a universal healer, a balm,” says Mariann Johnson, Mindfulness and Wellbeing Instructor at the Bakken Center. “Likewise, mindfulness is an innate capacity. Given the challenges and complexity of the world these days, it’s helpful to remember that we have this capacity to slow things down a bit and to come home to who we are; to our being, nature, and to the universality of that as well. When you combine this innate capacity—to be fully present and connected to the unfolding of our daily lives — with our shared humanity and listening to music, it can be really powerful.”

Sue Nankivell, Director of Business Development and Community Relations at the Bakken Center, was first approached by the Orchestra to kick off the partnership in 2018. The Center and the Orchestra have collaborated on an intimate Mindfulness and Music series each year since. This year, the collaboration expanded further, culminating in a full Orchestra concert collaboration this summer and an upcoming series of digital programming. Grant Meachum, Director of Live at Orchestra Hall, says it was a “natural fit for their programmatic and personal interests.” It started with Ashleigh Rowe, Director of Broadcasts and Digital Initiatives, who led a discussion of how the Orchestra can best use its digital resources to create interesting and mission-driven projects. “The idea of mental health and music’s role in healing rose to the top of these discussions,” Meachum says. Rowe adds the Minnesota Orchestra prioritizes music’s role in mental health, going so far as to write it into the strategic plan to “Reach and Resonate,” which explicitly lays out providing opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing through music by partnering with experts for in-person and digital experiences.

With this year’s collaboration, Nankivell says, “We’re really talking about a unique level of vulnerability here. We know we’re talking about anxiety and music and mental health, and

that’s really powerful coming out of the pandemic. If we didn’t want to talk about mental health before - and we knew it was important and big issue then - we really don’t have much of a choice but to start looking at it more directly societally now.” And she says she too believes in the power of music to heal. “We are gently introducing people to the mind-body connection, an important aspect of whole-person wellbeing, and we’re doing this in a shared experience. Ultimately we are all connected with each other, our bodies and minds and hearts as one whole. I think that’s something some people maybe struggle with conceptually, but it can really come to life during a powerful shared experience.

## MUSIC AND MINDFULNESS SERIES

At the beginning of the Orchestra collaboration, in 2018, Johnson took charge designing and leading the ongoing Music and Mindfulness series programming when she arrived at the Bakken Center and was given the seed of this idea: It was up to her to help it fully bloom. Since then, the program has set deep roots of partnership and collaboration with the Minnesota Orchestra, among others, and has widened not only the audiences for both entities, but also broadened

the minds and hearts of its own participants, too.

Research shows people connect over sharing music communally; it’s likely why it’s been a cultural connector for thousands of years, through joy, pain, sorrow, rituals, milestones, and more. Often, Johnson says, music has an ability to connect us to emotions that words can’t quite touch. One of those is awe, which was among the featured concepts this past year.

For the program on Awe, Johnson used the teachings of Dacher Keltner from The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, who wrote *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform your Life*. In his book, he illuminates expressions of awe, including an experience he’s coined as “collective effervescence.”

“When we come together to experience music in a shared way, there’s almost a palpable energy in the room,” she explains. “When musicians have performed a particularly emotive piece have you ever noticed the stillness or sacredness of the audience? Then you know exactly what it means when he calls it collective effervescence.”





Even though Johnson—as host, prepared to walk through the instruction and performance, and Minnesota Orchestra Violinist Cathy Schaefer as performer—say they, too, experienced collective connection putting together and then performing the night themed on awe. Schaefer called it a “happy synchronicity” when Johnson shared the beneficial effects of the experience of awe, she and pianist Mary Jo Gothmann had already planned to play Lauridsen’s “O Magnum Mysterium (Oh Great Mystery).”

“We could sense the shared experience of awe in that moment,” she says. Johnson felt it too: As the final notes rang out, she could not immediately bring herself to kick into host mode. “I just sat there because I was in the same field of experience of collective effervescence as everybody in that room. I stood and looked at all of them and I didn’t say a word. After about a minute I said, ‘I think what we have all experienced is mindfully experiencing collective effervescence,’ and the whole audience let out a sigh. It was exquisite, and they felt it. We didn’t have to explain what it meant. Many people stayed after, even late at night, to share their experiences because it was meaningful to them.” Schaefer says she felt it, too. “It’s great to see studies showing synchronized brain activity between audience members and performers and hear similar research results on mindfulness from the Bakken Center,” she says. “It confirms what we’ve experienced...that shared live music can help us be more empathetic human beings.”

“How fortunate we are to have the MN Orchestra in our community. They’re not afraid to take on really important issues and see that as their role in the community,” Johnson says. “To use their platform to promote discussion about mental health issues and do what they can to promote community healing is exemplary.

The experience—all these experiences—have been meaningful, and continue to be. Johnson says, “Every single time I am on stage at the MN Orchestra I go into a reverie, watching the [musicians] and their skill and the excellence with which they play. Knowing their training and skill, but also how alive and vital and in the moment they are while they’re playing. They embody mindfulness, and I get to be with them in real time, right there.”

The events follow a basic formula: Attendees get a bit of background on mindfulness and the evening’s theme, followed by a guided meditation from Johnson. Then they get to practice listening to music mindfully with the live orchestra musicians. Afterward, they often get up close and personal with the musicians, and can share their experiences and feedback—a perspective most Orchestra attendees never get.

Attendee Dr. Bernice Folz is an enthusiastic participant. “The music of a people is a reflection of their mind and helps create a more human world,” Folz says. “The beauty of music is that it heals by calming our nerves thereby adopting a loving and compassionate attitude as a feeling of

selflessness and a way of being instead of doing. Music is one of the most important ways to activate almost all brain regions and networks and keep them strong to help us in healing, resulting in improved wellbeing, cognitive functionality, learning, happiness, concentration, and can decrease pain.”

“What a privilege it is to work in this space,” says Nankivell. “We’re helping to heal our community and bring people together through the power of mindfulness and music.”



## Want to listen to music more mindfully on your own?

*Here are some of Johnson’s tips:*

**1. Select a piece of music.** It can be helpful to start with instrumental pieces, as lyrics can make a mindful listening experience a bit more complex.

**2. Select a space and a time free of distractions and interruptions for your listening session.** Turn off your cell phone and any notifications. Get comfortable.

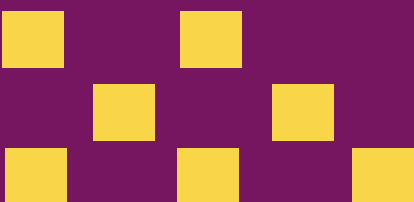
**3. Announce the beginning of your mindful music listening session with a “Fanfare.”** A fanfare is a piece of music often played to announce the arrival of someone or something important. Allow your mindful intention—and two or three deeper and fuller breaths—to serve as your fanfare to help turn your attention toward deeply listening.

**4. Become aware of your body sensations and ground yourself.** Let go of the deeper, fuller breaths and take a few moments to simply notice the natural rhythmic qualities of your body breathing. When you are ready, broaden your awareness to include your entire body. Notice points of contact of the body with any physical surface. Notice any areas of tightness or holding and invite a sense of relaxation throughout the body.

**5. Just listen. Use headphones or earbuds if you would like.** Give yourself permission to be fully present to listening to the music, allowing it to wash over you. You may wish to close your eyes.

**6. Observe and notice. Let yourself be aware of anything you may be drawn to, without judgment or editorializing.** For example, you may be drawn to the pace of the music one moment and the sounds of different instruments in the next. You may notice shifts in volume. Notice if you’re more aware of certain parts of your body. Notice thoughts or feelings that may arise. Gently acknowledge any thoughts or emotions, then bring yourself back to listening to the music with a renewed freshness.

**7. At the end, take a moment to reflect.** Notice the overall quality and condition of your body, mind, and heart: Do you feel more alert or aware? Calmer, more grounded, open, or connected? How might you bring what you learned into your next experience of listening to music? You may wish to consider how you could bring what you learned listening mindfully to music to listening to others throughout your day.



# BUILDING TOMORROW'S HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE

## ● Meet a Few of the Bakken Center's New Health Coaching Students ●

By Aegor Ray

Imagine a health care system that was predicated on the inherent wholeness of its patients and clients. What skills and values would be upheld in this system? How would relationships between practitioners and patients be structured? What would it mean for providers to be leaders within the context of a whole-person healthcare system?

The Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing seeks to not only imagine such a transformative vision of healthcare, but to test its premises, reshaping the fabric of care work through imbuing students with progressive evidence-based practices. In this way, the Center's Integrative Health & Wellbeing Coaching Program works to change the relational field of patient care. This Masters program grew out of the nation's first post-baccalaureate Certificate in Integrative Therapies and Healing Practices with an emphasis in health coaching.

Health coaching is premised on the idea that personal health transformation is possible by moving people towards behavioral change without attempting to hold all the answers for them. Dr. Cherie Kroh, the Director of the Center's Integrative Health & Wellbeing Coaching Program, spoke to the specific ways that this program is unique, visionary, and deeply necessary. "Coaching is focused on forward movement, not rewriting the past," she says, "but we can only do that with the whole person in mind." Her recent work for the program has been to completely rewrite the curriculum, centering the following key themes which include diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, cultural humility, and trauma-informed coaching and mental health.

Additionally, Dr. Kroh's retooling of the program coincides with a recent announcement by Medicaid



### ● ● ● Rebecca Sandness ● ● ●

and Medicare to introduce reimbursement codes for health coaching, allowing patient insurance to cover this service. This change is set to be in effect by 2024 and will both expand access to health coaching for patients, and increase potential job opportunities for students. Dr. Kroh is passionate about the capacity for health coaching to be offered as a systemically transformative program, rather than as a discipline siloed within privileged communities.

Health Coaches are changemakers in integrative health and healing, and in this feature, you'll meet a few of the Center's newest students.

Rebecca Sandness was specifically drawn to the program because she believes that a person's health is affected by numerous factors in their life – factors that must be understood together, integratively, rather than singularly.

"This program teaches students not only about coaching, but also valuable life skills by utilizing empathy, asking powerful questions and walking with someone through their struggles," she says.



● ● ● **Kerry Apple** ● ● ●

The focus on developing strong relational skills is balanced by a high level of academic rigor. A goal of Sandness's is to become a National Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach (NBC-HWC), and she reflects that she was drawn to the program because its curriculum is structured for students to be able to take the boards at the end. For students in the Health Coaching Program, professional success is not seen as at odds with developing holistic interpersonal skills; rather, these aspects are necessarily intertwined and can strengthen each other. Sandness also shared that a unique aspect of the program is that students have the opportunity to coach one another and thereby learn through developing a network of practice and trust. The experience allowed Sandness to gain confidence in her coaching skills in a safe environment, with other students who were equally committed to the values that drew her to the program: empathy, care, and evidence-based practice.

Kerry Apple, a nurse, was able to gain skills in health coaching through the accelerated certificate program. Apple remarked that she was drawn to the flexibility of the program and the high quality of education and care that she's come to associate with the Bakken Center. In Apple's own nursing practice, she provides care for other workers in the healthcare field. Once certified in health coaching, she seeks to support other healthcare workers with the skills and training that she's gained.

"Nurses are good at telling people what to do," began Apple, "but in health coaching, we ask open-ended questions and get to the focus that's actually of interest to the client." Apple named that, structurally, a coaching session looks very different than a nursing session. In a coaching session, the client is the driver, and the role of the coach is to offer guidance, not answers.

Yanessa Zelaya felt supported by the interactive and



● ● ● **Yanessa Zelaya** ● ● ●

flexible framework of the health coaching program. Zelaya noted that the remote aspects of the program were balanced by a warm and interactive in-person environment: "We would sit in a circle in a meditation room for our in-person classes. We would also record our coaching sessions and get to watch ourselves. I'm a visual learner, so I really appreciated that." Zelaya also felt encouraged by the Bakken Center's mindfulness towards diversity, equity, and inclusion. She saw the emphasis on these values in her own application and interview process. Because the University of Minnesota is the first institution to offer a graduate program in health coaching, it is setting a precedent for the field as a whole by centering the health equity of historically underserved populations.

Dr. Kroh's vision of a field of patient care that holds a whole person perspective is bolstered by her emphasis on leadership for students in the health coaching program. She has integrated management and leadership courses into the health coaching curriculum to support and inspire students to be assertive forces of change in their future careers. The healthcare system is in need of an overhaul, and students at the Bakken Center's Integrative Health and Wellbeing Coaching Program are committed to rebuilding the system brick by brick.

Envisioning a healthcare system rooted in the wholeness of individuals, the Bakken Center actively transforms this vision into reality. We invite you to join us in shaping the future of care by considering a donation to support financial scholarships for aspiring health coaches. To learn more, contact Virginia Kaczmarek at [virginia@umn.edu](mailto:virginia@umn.edu) or make a contribution to the 'A Marilyn Sime Scholarship Fund' at [z.umn.edu/GiveCSH](https://z.umn.edu/GiveCSH).



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During the holiday season, many social gatherings revolve around shared meals.

University of Minnesota Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing Director Dr. Mary Jo Kreitzer shares tips for maintaining mindful eating habits during this busy time period.



### ***How can mindful eating impact our overall health?***

Dr. Kreitzer: Mindfulness is focusing on the present moment – our thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. Mindful eating means that you are using all of your senses to experience and enjoy the food choices you make. This helps us increase gratitude for food, which can improve our overall eating experience. Mindful eating also helps us make healthy choices that will be satisfying and nourishing to the body.

### ***How does holiday season stress impact our food choices?***

Dr. Kreitzer: People eat for many reasons other than being hungry. Emotional triggers to eat include feeling stressed, sleepy, angry, lonely and bored. Mindfulness helps us pay attention to physical sensations of hunger and our emotions. Are we eating to address a physical need versus emotional comfort?

### ***How can we keep mindful eating top of mind during a busy holiday gathering?***

Dr. Kreitzer: There can be a lot of social pressure around the holidays to eat and drink in excess. Plan your eating. Offer healthy food options, don't pressure people to eat and create family traditions and rituals that don't include food.

### ***Is mindful eating healthier for the whole family?***

Dr. Kreitzer: We all have a food story associated with growing up. Who prepared the food, was food used as a reward or punishment, what did our family eat, and did people actually prepare food or did we eat more processed or fast food? How is our food story influencing how we eat today? Mindful eating is healthier for the whole family and is focused on what to eat, why we eat, how much to eat and how to eat.

### ***What are a few tips to help eat more mindfully during the holidays?***

Dr. Kreitzer:

- Pay attention to why you are eating. Learn to recognize the physical sensations of hunger as well as the emotional cues that trigger eating so that you can make conscious choices. Lots of eating is unconscious or mindless!
- Eat slowly and mindfully. Chew your food well and savor it. Notice the taste and texture. You will enjoy your food more and notice when you are full or satisfied.
- Don't eat while you are driving in a car, watching TV or surfing the internet. Studies show that we are likely to consume 25% more calories when we are distracted and not paying attention to what we are eating. Focus on what you are putting in your body.
- Honor the food – where it was grown, who prepared it and express gratitude.