

The Healing Power of Rhythmic Music-Making...Why We Drum

By Giselle Felicia Vivian, BM CHT Founder of ONE HEARTBEAT RHYTHM CIRCLES

Sheryl felt tired after a full week of work and life's ongoing stresses. After agonizing about whether or not to make the effort to attend the monthly drum circle hosted by One Heartbeat that evening, a monthly activity on her calendar, Sheryl decided to push thru her resistance and attended. At the end of the evening, Sheryl felt relaxed and energized at the same time. Like so many others, she stopped by to share about her transformational experience and say thank you, "See you next month". She left happy. Her decision to show up and give herself an evening of creative expression, community connection, emotional stress release, and fun paid off. She shifted her personal rhythm to a healthier and happier one and was ready for the weekend.

On another Friday night, months after the Katrina Hurricane, a newcomer came to the monthly event and joined the group. Her testimonial gave voice to the healing power of the ongoing event:

"After Katrina, I re-settled in Albuquerque, still alive but faced with the monumental task of starting a new life and making new friends...I heard about (ONE HEARTBEAT RHYTHM CIRCLES)...community drum circle taking place at the Senior Center. I arrived there, carrying the world on my shoulders. Everyone was drumming away, the young, the very old...the newcomers like me, all with beaming faces. I was hooked instantly. Beating a drum resurrected me, body, mind and heart started re-connecting again. Now I have my own African drum...The beat of the drum has put me together again and I am looking forward to more drumming circles and new friends." H. A., Albuquerque, NM August 2006

More recently as I was packing up after a drumming with assisted living residents at a new facility, the activity director, who just experienced her first event with One Heartbeat, offered positive feedback. The most powerful statement she made was that it had been a long time since she had seen the residents smiling and how wonderful it was to see that as a result of the session. While this wasn't the first time a session was able to facilitate connection within the group, support positive reminiscence, adult play and laughter, the ability to bring back joy to these residents was priceless!

Every so often people ask me why I do this work. At a first glance, many individuals may discount group rhythmic music-making as trivial or irrelevant to their lives. Maybe it's ok for the youth or "those people"...you know... those hippie granola types.

I can clearly testify to the power of rhythmic music making as a healing, transformative and empowering tool. One that is used by executives and professionals, seniors, average folks, youth, spiritual communities, those seeking wellness and healing...

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Just about anyone you might think. It is a global practice, activity, and experience that continues to expand in its applications.

My colleagues and I who have answered the call to share this work in our communities have seen the impact firsthand. We have heard the stories and received the feedback that we offer something valuable and fun. We have been called to serve others offering something that can move stuck energies, uplift spirits, relax minds and bodies, bring smiles and unleash joy.

Rhythmic music-making and group drumming is a flexible activity. I have worked with preschoolers to our most sage elders. With those moving through their cancer or healing journey, business professionals, students, assisted living residents and those who just want to have fun. Events been offered at a variety of venues – community centers, churches, parks, hotels, classrooms, retreat centers, museums, festivals, and music stores, to name a few.

Besides the obvious fun, social connection, recreational and music leisure activity, group drumming and rhythmic music making has supported a variety of meaningful outcomes for participants and organizations. I have had the pleasure of facilitating events designed to support: teambuilding, celebration, leadership empowerment, stress reduction and wellness enhancement, spiritual practice, conflict resolution, peacemaking, therapeutic goals and personal growth.

Why do we drum? We drum because it connects us to ourselves and each other. Through our participation and willingness to work together, listen, explore, and express ourselves, we co-create an experience that is magical and universal. Each is equal in the circle. Everyone has a voice and something to contribute no matter if they are an old pro or a newbie. Musically, we dialogue, affirm and unite. We leave these events knowing we are not alone.

Many years have passed since I was first called to share this service. While there have been silences and transitions along the way, the heartbeat has been steady and clear. The calling to this work prevails. It has been a journey that continues to bring its own rhythm of life, community and healing.

I hope that you will be blessed to discover the healing power of rhythmic music making, if you haven't already. It is a practice you can cultivate for personal use or as part of a group or community. Once you experience the joy it brings, the connection and co-creation with others, the deeper peace and relaxation, your life will never be the same. It will be more alive and awake. Hopefully, you have come to understand, rhythmic music making offers much more value and meaning to your life and to our world. That's why we drum.