

The ten step protocol of a HealthRHYTHMS session

Each HealthRHYTHMS drum circle lasts for one hour. All ten steps in the protocol are used for each session. The different activities last for approximately five minutes each, with some being a little longer and others taking less time. When the program creators were developing HealthRHYTHMS many years ago they determined this series of activities led to the best health outcomes for participants so all of the steps are included in each drum circle, in the order below.

HealthRHYTHMS facilitators bring their own unique creative approach to each step in the protocol and it is always delivered according to the particular needs and interests of the groups and communities where it is offered.

- 1. Introducing the Program-** Participants are warmly welcomed and they are informed about the many benefits of group drumming. Participants are encouraged to enjoy themselves during the circle and they are reminded that no musical expertise or training is needed to participate in the circle. Group members choose a drum and a rattle or shaker they would like to work with.
- 2. Wellness Exercise-** The purpose of this step is to encourage each person to notice how they are feeling. Group members do some stretching or gentle movements that promote enhanced range of motion, relaxation and heightened attentiveness. Creativity happens best when people are feeling relaxed and safe. Using shaker instruments or drums, participants create a relaxing rhythm soundscape while they focus on breathing.
- 3. Breaking the Ice-** The group participates in fun, rhythm based ice breaker activities which could include clapping hands, using shakers, or using drums. The purpose of this step is to help everyone become comfortable participating in the group in a spirit of fun, exploration and creativity.
- 4. The ABCs of Drumming-** Group members learn and practice the basic drum beats and how to produce them on both frame drums and standing drums. Participants learn the drum extends their own natural rhythm.
- 5. Rhythmic Naming** – Using some of the basic drum beats they just learned, participants play the rhythm of their own name on the drum for the group and the group echoes it back. Participants gain confidence expressing their creativity on the drum and rhythm instruments.
- 6. Entrainment Building** – Participants practice entrainment by learning and playing rhythms with each other and the group. The purpose of this step is to build community naturally by listening, sharing and expressing creativity.
- 7. Inspirational Beats** – This step offers group members the opportunity to learn that the unspoken need not be left unexpressed. The group is asked an open ended question and a volunteer is asked to use their drum to answer without spoken words (with a drum beat of their choice). The group is asked if anyone would like to share what they heard in that person's drumming. This process moves around the circle with the questions either staying the same or changing depending on the responses of the participants.
- 8. Guided Imagery Drumming** – The healing metaphor of this step is the body cannot discern reality from imagination. The group is led in a calming breathing and progressive muscle relaxation exercise.

Participants are encouraged to relax and close their eyes if they wish as they are led on a calming guided imagery meditation while drumming plays lightly in the background.

9. **Wellness Exercise** – The rhythm soundscape from step two is performed again and group members are asked to reflect on any changes in themselves in comparison to the initial wellness exercise.

10. **The Finale** – An ambiance of reflection and expression is created by the group on their drums and rhythm instruments. Group members are asked what the drum circle meant for them today and they can answer verbally or with rhythm.