

Holistic Harp Healing

by Sissi Makropoulou



What is it ?

Holistic Harp Healing is a series of goal-oriented sessions that promote well-being through the aesthetic domain.

These active, multi-sensory sessions evolve around the universal and timeless pursuit of **mindfulness** and are conceptualized out of various established and **evidence-based music therapy methods**.

Epicenter of the experience is an ancient musical instrument, the symbol of Apollo, god of Wisdom and Healing: the **harp**.

The wandering mind is an unhappy mind

People spend 47% of their time thinking about what is **not** going on around them, contemplating events that happened in the past, or might happen in the future (Killingsworth & Gilbert 2010).

Although this ability is a **revolutionary achievement** that allows people to learn, reason and plan, it may have an **emotional cost**. Recent research suggest that our brain's default mode is a risk factor for poor mental health.

Mindfulness training interventions can reduce mind wandering and contribute to improvements in focus, memory and emotional regulation.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from **paying attention in a particular way**, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Jon Kabat-Zinn). However, not everyone is trained in this valuable practice, especially westerners.

By combining **guided breathing, imagery, and music** as a shared anchor, present-moment awareness is more easily sustained—an approach first used in psychiatric settings to support trauma and stress treatment (Körlin, 2002).

Holistic Harp Healing brings together Eastern practices and Western science in a shared pursuit of “areté” (Ancient Greek: ἀρετή), often understood as excellence or moral virtue.

Who is it for?

Do you often feel overwhelmed by everyday life and stress?

Are you suffering from unmanageable mental noise?

Are you struggling with a sense of loneliness, even when you're not alone?

Are you carrying emotions like sadness, anxiety, or guilt that won't go away?

Do you feel disconnected from purpose or meaning in your life?

Spiritual practices fail to persuade you, but you still want to work on yourself?

You love music and want to explore its deepest properties?'

If these questions seem familiar, then Holistic Harp Healing is the right pathway for you

Explaining the holistic approach

Our understanding of human design in western culture has been historically **dualistic**: mind and body are two separate entities. This translates to our tendency in repairing any dysfunction individually.

However, our body is an energy system that works as a whole. What you sense affects your chemistry, your chemistry affects your mood, and your mood affects your physical health, all in one **continuous loop**.

3H considers the profound interconnection of the body, mind and soul and stimulates each part in a **synergistic way**.

What are the Goals ?

Supportive:

- Enhance productivity and focus
- Regulate the nervous system (stress, burnout)
- Reduce brain fog
- Expand the repertoire of experiences (behavior, feelings, insights)
- Cultivate positive feelings (awe, resilience, wellbeing, personal growth)

Re-educative:

- Re-establish a sense of purpose in life
- Restore emotional equilibrium
- Enter possible unconscious territory
- Strengthen your sense of belonging
- Find healthier ways of relating to self and others
- Work towards an awareness and development of a social consciousness

What's the structure and format of the sessions?

Individual Sessions: 50 min

Group sessions: 60 min, 6-9 participants

- A. **Stretching + Breathwork:** static muscle stretching while focusing on breathwork
- B. **Music + Imagery:** harp music is played by facilitator to ground participants and encourage rhythmic and abdominal breathing. Arousal is evoked and modulated, allowing listeners to experience their vitality not just as sound but also as lived affective contours
- C. **Write or paint, in silence:** participants write freely or draw their experience, allowing for symbolic expression to arise

Why Stretching and Breathing?

Stretching serves as a bridge between physical recovery and mental relaxation. Research suggests that multiple forms of **relaxation training** (e.g., progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, breathing exercises, visualization, and autogenics) can help individuals reduce stress, enhance relaxation states, and improve overall well-being.

The Autonomic Nervous System can be influenced by **breathing**. By achieving minimal breathing volume, the diaphragm and muscles of the chest and stomach are moving minimally. This type of breathing, while the body is still, activates the Vagus nerve with a dominance of the ANS's Parasympathetic system.

The major role that breathing and imagery plays in regulating emotions is demonstrated both in **eastern religious practices** and **western science**.

Why Music + Imagery?

Music changes the neuroplasticity of the mind. Default networks start to quiet down and the vagal tone- a key component of the parasympathetic nervous system- is activated.

While listening to music, participants are invited to let their imagery free.. The mindful breathing techniques learned in the stretching stage are also incorporated, while emphasizing on emotional stability and maintaining a consistent breathing.

Imagery is a sensory experience that includes visual, body sensations, kinaesthetic emotions, thoughts and memories. Imagery can:

- promote changes in physical, emotional, or spiritual levels
- modify behaviour through increasing awareness of feelings, thoughts, and reactions, by generating new thinking schemas or by revising perceptions and changing actions

Why Writing or Drawing ?

In the last part of the session, participants are encouraged to write **freely on a piece of paper** about their experience, or **draw a mandala**.

This procedure allows for externalization of the experience, embodiment and meaning-making. It also serves as a memoir, a tangible souvenir for them to keep for the future.

Within this evocative artistic space, participants are provided with lifelong supportive mechanisms, which they can bring into everyday life.

What inspired it ?

3H is a **holistic initiative** that combines music therapy approaches with somatic interventions and therapeutic protocols such as:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **Music Breathing**
- **Music and Imagery**
- **J.Pennebaker's method of Expressive Writing**

...and a lifelong existential relationship with music, both as a professional harpist and a music aficionado.

What's the setting like ?

Sessions take place in a large room with **privacy** and **neutral decor**.

Outdoor settings (beach, hills, garden etc) are also welcome, as long as they provide the right **technical support** and privacy.

What kind of equipment will be used?

- 1. Sound system:** 2 or 4 speakers (between 15-100 Watts according to the size of the room) placed symmetrically along the walls, angled inward and pointed towards the group, forming an equilateral triangle between the speakers and the listening position
- 2. A pedal harp** placed in the middle - group forms a circle
- 3. Instrumentarium:** various portable instruments, easy to use by participants regardless of their musical background
- 4. Yoga mats**
- 5. Gouache/ Aquarelle paper**
- 6. Aroma sticks, laptop, various cables**

*Pedal harp, Instrumentarium, gouache material, aroma sticks, laptop and cables are brought by facilitator..
Participants are welcome to bring their own yoga mat or instrument, if they happen to play one. The sound system is provided by the space.*

Any preparations I need to do before?

Participants will be given a **questionnaire** to fill out before the sessions.

The questionnaire will inform the facilitator on important matters in order to adjust the various specifics of the program accordingly.

Find it here

Privacy and Phone Policy

Participants are kindly asked to refrain from using their phones during the sessions. The program consciously chooses **not to share content in any social media platform**. Reasons are:

- We foster shared experiences and a sense of “we-ness,” countering the self-focused mindset often reinforced by social media.
- Safeguarding personal information about individuals obtained in the course of practice is our obligation.
- Participants are provided with a trusting environment, where they can confide private experiences.
- These sessions require not only everyone’s discretion, but also full concentration.

Bio

Sissi Makropoulou (aka Sissi Rada) is a versatile **harp virtuoso** and **composer** based in Athens and Berlin. She has collaborated with various household names such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsche Oper, Daniel Barenboim, Teodor Currentzis and Brian Eno, and has won various prizes as a harpist and composer.

Currently pursuing a Master of Science in **Mental Health Counseling** she is certified in the music therapy methods of **Music and Imagery** (Level 1) and **Music Breathing**. Her practical experience in mental health includes placements in child psychiatry at Aghia Sofia Children's Hospital, autism support at the Anagennisis Association, and mental health care at Vima Koino center. Her thesis explores the use of **Therapeutic Songwriting** in individuals with sexual paraphilias.

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