

Use of Songs in Music Therapy

why use songs in music psychotherapy

1. people have relationships with songs
2. they connect people to times in their lives, people, situations, and emotions
3. clients have personal associations and meanings with songs
4. provides a resource for music therapy by accessing certain materials and emotions
5. need to connect song to the client by providing an appropriate context or atmosphere such as closing their eyes, focusing on a topic, or presenting an image

types of music psychotherapy based on songs

1. song performance
 - a. therapy lies in client or group singing the song as a form of expression
 - b. music therapist supports through singing or accompaniment
 - c. music therapist listens closely to the performance and notes not only the lyric content but the musical elements, voice quality, dynamics, breath support as indicators of client emotions, issues, mental state
 - d. process may or may not involve verbal processing
2. song reception
 - a. have the client choose and share a song with the group – live performance or a recording
 - b. usually reflects an important time in client's life or important issue for them
 - c. sharing songs provides therapeutic communication between therapist and client
 - d. serves as a means of communication
3. song discussion/lyric analysis
 - a. discussing the lyrics of a song becomes a springboard to discuss and work through therapeutic issues
 - b. procedure
 1. have the lyrics written out on handouts for clients to follow during listening
 2. give clients cues or questions to focus their listening
EXAMPLE: "Listen to the song and follow along with the lyrics. What line really jumps out at you?" or "Which line of this song do you relate to most?" or "What do you think the songwriter was feeling?" or "What does this songwriter think about _____?"
 3. play the recording of the song

4. have clients focus on the words and the musical presentation.
What in the music or performance communicates to the client?
5. lead the discussion after the listening
 - a. remember that there are no right or wrong answers.
Everyone's interpretation of a song is correct because it reflects their experience, mood, emotions, memories, etc.
 - b. keep the discussion focused on the third person (the artist, songwriter) at first rather than on their personal experience or reaction
EXAMPLE: "What does the artist believe about friendship?" not "What do you believe about friendship?"
6. use good reflective listening techniques to further the discussion
7. don't impose your interpretation of the song on the clients

4. Song reminiscence

- a. use of songs to elicit memories
- b. used for life review, reminiscing with older adults
- c. use songs from various stages of client's life especially those from their teens and early 20's

5. song collage

- a. assembling a tape recording of songs to describe a client's emotional or personal issue
- b. used to represent the essential nature of character of a client
- c. frequently used with client's facing terminal illness

6. song improvisation

- a. spontaneous creation of song lyrics, often to a familiar melody that relates to a therapeutic issue or their therapeutic process

7. song parody

- a. rewriting the lyrics of songs based on therapeutic themes

8. song writing

- a. creating new songs to express a client's concerns, personal issues, emotional states, etc.

Music and Creative Problem Solving

A Music Therapy Technique for Deep, Personal Knowing
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This technique is designed to offer clients an opportunity to access, express, and integrate the holistic, non-verbal problem solving of the right hemisphere and limbic system of the brain with our linear, verbal processing characteristic of left hemispheric functioning. This is accomplished through listening to selected music while in a deeply relaxed state. Participants are provided with paper, pencils, and drawing materials and are asked to write or draw anything that comes into their minds during the listening experience. The imagery stimulated by the music can be visual, auditory, visceral, or an intuitive knowing. The entire procedure is as follows:

- Clients should be in a room conducive to relaxation (quiet, darkened) and situated in a comfortable position (sitting in a comfortable chair, lying on a mat or couch);
- The session requires a variety of art supplies and paper, a good quality stereo system with detachable speakers, appropriate music on tape or CD
- To begin the session, the client is asked to determine a question or problem to which they desire input. The question or problem needs to be written down on a piece of paper provided. The more specific the question, the more meaningful the responses will be. Clients should be informed that anything they experience during the listening is a form of answer to their question. Client should avoid editing or rejecting responses. Nothing should be dismissed as silly, irrelevant, or "made up." They may experience colors, shapes, visual images, words and phrases, emotions, physical sensations, the urge to move, and/or an intuitive awareness of "knowing" something. All reactions should be expressed or recorded on the paper provided.
- Once the question or intention for the experience has been recorded, the client should get in a comfortable position so that the process of deep relaxation can begin. The facilitator can talk them through a progressive relaxation exercise, or the client can institute a relaxation/meditative experience on their own.
- Once in the relaxed state with their eyes closed, 30-45 minutes of selected music is played. Participants are told to record their experiences at any point they wish during the session. The facilitator usually does not interact with the client unless they are in distress.
- The music used for this experience is very important. First, the general type of music should be familiar to the client. Familiar music gives people perceptual familiarity and allows a full relaxation experience. The first 2-3 selections should foster relaxation - quiet dynamic, slow tempo, simple, step-wise melodic movement. The next several selections should be chosen to be evocative - to evoke images and emotions. This music should have more variety in the musical elements (melody line, rhythms, used, instrumentation, etc.). The final selection should be up-tempo, positive, and somewhat invigorating to help clients return to waking consciousness.
- After the listening experience, the client and facilitator can verbally process what information has emerged and how it relates to the question or problem posed by the client.

Specific music to use may include Western classical music, especially slow movements of concerto and symphonies, instrumental jazz, New Age music, and World music that the client may be familiar with. Songs with lyrics in a language the client understands should be avoided.