

DEMENTIA CARE CONFERENCE 2014

My background

Music Therapist for 24 years. Practiced in Vancouver, Halifax and here. Currently private practice Accessible Music Therapy . my practice includes seniors, adults with developmental delay, adults with Physical challenges and school kids with delays and Autism. Some of you may have seen me present at the Alzheimers conference .

I hope you have gained some knowledge and support today, and hope to leave you with an understanding of how something as common as Music can be so effective in helping with those with Dementia.

In Canada, approximately 65% of music therapist work in long term care and with those with Dementia. Music Therapy provides a way to communicate for those who are losing their ability to do so. Music therapy makes contact and initiates social interactions when they can no longer be initiated.

WHY IS MUSIC SO EFFECTIVE??

Music is a social and creative activity that is a part of society. We all respond to it in some way. It may trigger a memory for us when we hear a song being played, it may elicit certain emotions, it gets us moving, it calms us down, and we may have learned or played an instrument growing up. It is something that we can all participate in, and has personal meaning to all of us.

Our responses to Music come primarily from the right side of the brain, in an area called the Limbic system. This is also where our emotions are. Also it is very deep in the core of the brain, so our

responses to it are on the very instinctual level. For this reason alone, it can reach someone and go beyond their disability to what I call the healthy inner resources.

Researchers studying Alzheimer's patients have observed that those who have difficulty forming sentence, can still sing songs from their past clearly.

COMPONENTS OF MUSIC.

Rhythm – Is the strongest component of music. It is organizer, motivator (dancing exercise). Slow steady repetitive rhythm can relax us, (Chants). Rhythm taps into our heart beat, and metabolic rate. 60 BPM taps in to our heart rate and

Melody – Certain melodies elicit different moods, and triggers responses in different parts of the brain. Example on flute

Pitch- of the instruments being played also has a direct effect on our bodies. High pitched instruments can cause tension, where as Low pitched instruments tend to be more relaxing. Also, those with hearing impairments can hear lower pitch better than High pitches

Harmony different cultures have different for different music. It is identity of that culture. IE East Indian, Chinese.

Musical training- those that have an educated musical ear also respond differently to those that don't as they hear and understand the Music in different way.

BUT you don't have to be a musician to take part in a Music Therapy session. The focus is in the response and creative expression the Music elicits. The Music Therapist job is to draw

out and use that response to develop the treatment plan and personal goals of the client they are working with.

Definition of Music Therapy

Music Therapy is the skilful use of Music and Musical elements, by an Accredited Music therapist, to promote, maintain, and restore mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Music has non-verbal creative, structural and emotional qualities. These are used in the therapeutic relationship to facilitate contact, interaction, self-awareness, learning self expression, communication, and personal development.

Music Therapy sessions

A music therapy session can be either a group or 1 to 1. Within a session many different techniques can be used. The most common one is something we have already done today in a very large group.

Singing

To sing we automatically take deeper breathes. Which, in turn, aids in relaxation? The rhythm and pattern of the song assists in speech and language impairments as it similar to the patterns of speech. As well, the words when spoken come from the left side of the brain, when sung, they come from the right, and therefore the response to the words in the song is automatic. Singing familiar songs trigger memories and stimulate ideas. Singing is a social activity and something you can do together.

Playing

Play an instruments provides a physical outlet (we saw in the video) sometimes they are the connection between you and the client. As a Music Therapist, instruments help as an assessment tool. (Show perseverative playing). Or whether the client in

oriented to how to hold the instrument or whether they even are aware that it's there. On a one to one level an instrument can be shared and played together. Sessions are more personal. This could be sitting at a piano and playing one hand while the client plays the other, or playing chords on the guitar while they strum. Vibration from the sounds can also be felt. For those in advance stages of dementia, feeling the instruments provides sensory stimulation.

Moving

We all naturally move to music. It could be a subtle as tapping out toes, or rocking to music or more active like dancing. As a Music Therapist I look for any physical responses to the music being played and acknowledge them by matching the pace, and type of movement, as a way to accept, acknowledge and draw the client in. If someone is pacing and walking quickly and aggressively, I will match the pace of their step with quick rhythmic music and then try to slow them down, as rhythm in the organizer and draws people in. Dancing to a slow steady familiar song can be very calming, and the dancing provides both a physical connection and a physical outlet for the client. For those that get restless at supertime for example, dancing may be another alternative for the need to pace or walk.

Improvising

Improvising is used as a way to support the clients responses and ideas. It's kind of like just going with the flow. In the video you saw me improvising with Marjorie on the tone bars. It is a creative, non-verbal way of interacting, and supporting the client. Improvising could be done instrumentally, vocally, or physically. Music Therapists use improvisation as an assessment tool to observe and support the spontaneous responses of clients in session.

Composing

This sometimes comes out of improvisation. Songs can be created based on the client's ideas, expression. Songs can be made up to help with day to day activities. IE. Here we go round the Mulberry bush. Oh what a beautiful Morning etc. composing songs also helps with reality orientation. Or writing songs as a life review of the person that we are working with. I.e my favourite things.

Listening

Active focused listening requires concentration, and stimulates ideas and triggers memories, that can then be discussed or expressed using the other techniques. Listening can also elicit images and ideas that can be used for relaxation techniques.(GIM)

Music Therapists use all of these techniques and observe the responses, to create a personalized treatment plan for each client. The treatment plan establishes personal goals for each client.

Numerous studies around the world have shown that taking part in a Music Activity elevates melatonin, epinephrine and the natural opiates in our bodies. This, in turn reduces anxiety, and restlessness.

Studies in Long Term facilities have shown that patients are more calm and cooperative after taking part in a music Therapy session.

In the USA all long term care facilities have Music Therapy programs. In Canada we are getting there but Music therapy is not recognized, yet, as a mainstream therapy, like physio or OT for example. BUT!! WRHA and the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba are implementing a program called P.I.E.C.E.S.: PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, CAPABILITIES, ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL. This program stresses the

importance of finding creative solutions to managing dementia behaviours.

Currently health care providers are being trained to assess residents in each of these areas in order to manage dementia behaviours without the use of drugs. One of the recommendations is Music Therapy programming.

An article outlining this study is available in the Jan/Feb 2012 edition of WAVE magazine.

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