

Music Therapy and Mental Health: Exploring Research and Practice

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Sing Sing – by Serena Ryder

**You gotta sing sing sing sing out loud
Don't matter if you stay on track.
You gotta sing sing sing sing out loud
Don't you dare holding nothing back.**

**I've been around for long enough to know that everybody needs to sing
No matter if you're all alone or surrounded by a thousand people with a
thousand things.**

Repeat Chorus

**It's not about the way you look or what you do as long as you are having fun
Because you know we're here together in the world,
You'll never be the only one.**

Outline

1. Music
2. Discussion – Music in our everyday lives
3. Defining music therapy
4. Practice and research in mental health: An example

*Consider the role of music
in your life...*



Music's "Extra-Musical" Uses

- Humans have been making music for at least 40,000 years (Prasad, n.d.).
 - Community building
 - Interaction and communication
 - Emotional expression
 - Ritual & rites-of-passage
 - Meditative and spiritual practices
 - Aesthetic beauty
 - Distraction
 - Relaxation

What about music therapy?

(i.e. what makes it distinct?)

What is Music Therapy?

“Music therapy is a discipline in which Certified Music Therapists (MTAs) use music purposefully within therapeutic relationships to support development, health, and well-being. Music therapists use music safely and ethically to address human needs within cognitive, communicative, emotional, musical, physical, social, and spiritual domains.”

Canadian Association of Music Therapists (2020)

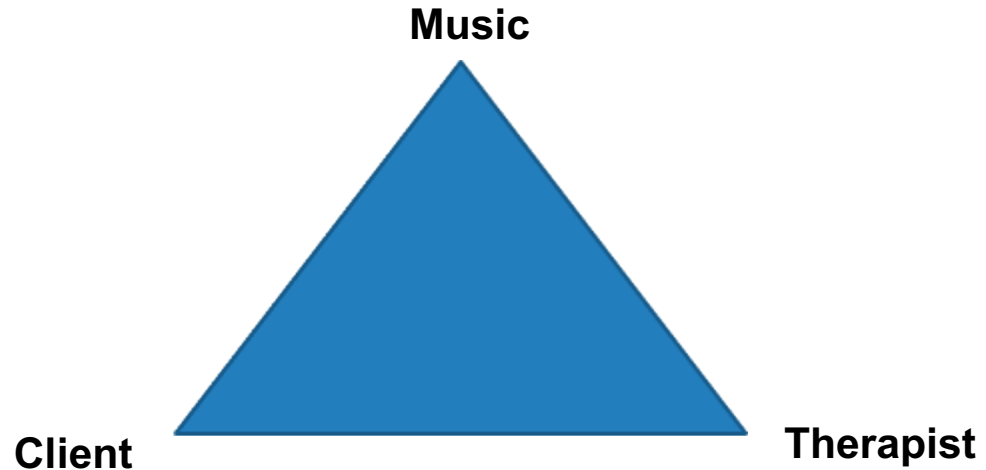
Recognition of music's ("therapeutic") potential to bring about positive change in individuals and communities is a global phenomenon that goes back millennia...



...And "music therapy" as a profession emerged in the first half of the 20th century...

Defining Music Therapy

- There are three essential elements in any music therapy session:
 - Music therapist
 - Client
 - Music



Therapist

- Therapeutic relationship = an agent of change
- Goal-oriented
- Follows ethical and professional standards
- Training in Canada
 - BMT or MMT from Canadian university
 - 1000-hour internship and post-graduate exam leads to “MTA” certification

Client

- Wide variety of clinical settings
- No prior musical training or ability required
- Provides informed consent
- Is working towards goals within cognitive, communicative, emotional, musical, physical, social, and/or spiritual domains (CAMT, 2020)

Music

- Musicality is an *innate* human capacity (Hargreaves, Macdonald & Miell, 2012; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2008; *etc...*)
- Music may be used *as* therapy or *in* therapy
- Clients and music therapists engage together in experiences such as improvisation, songwriting, listening, singing, and instrument playing
- Inherent qualities of musical experiences AND non-musical outcomes are important (Aigen, 2014)

Music therapy always involves the presence of a trained therapist, a client, and music.

The therapeutic use of music does not necessarily involve the presence of a therapist.

Anyone can do this!

Research/Practice Context

- Inpatient adult mental health treatment facility
- “Closed” music therapy group;
 - Cohorts of 6-8 patients attend 4 sessions
- Patients have diagnosed mood and/or anxiety disorders

Music Therapy Goals

- Explore emotion identification, regulation, expression
- Validate and shift challenging emotions
- Develop personalized musical resources
- Develop interpersonal communication
- Enhance community and mutual support
- Connect/re-connect with music and creativity

Music Therapy Group Experiences

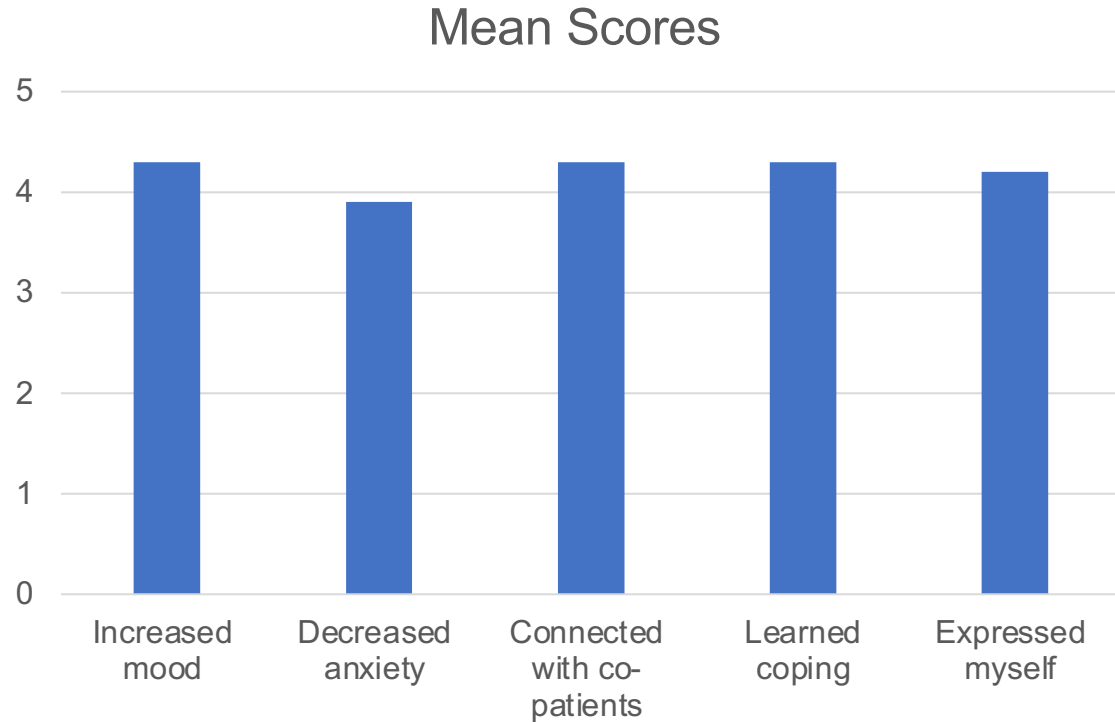
- Discussion of people's relationships to music
- Referential and non-referential improvisations
 - Starting with structure, moving towards greater freedom
- Active listening
- Individualized playlist creation
 - Iso-principle (Heiderscheit & Madson, 2015)
- Singing

Program Evaluation/Research

- Optional for patients to complete form after 4th session
- Approved by facility's REB
- n=154
- Data collected from June 2017 to April 2019
- Quantitative and qualitative elements

Quantitative Results

1 = Not at all
2 = A little bit
3 = Somewhat
4 = Quite a bit
5 = A lot



Qualitative Questions

- Open-ended questions
 - *What did you find useful/helpful about the program?*
 - *What recommendations would you make for the program going forward?*
 - *Is there anything you wish to see changed based on your experiences?*

Qualitative Results: Emotions (Lightness & Depth)

“I learned to express negative emotions in a healthy way through playing music. This helped me ‘lean into’ my negative emotions instead of avoiding them.”

“I like how music can be used to create a mood and help bring you out of a mood.”

Qualitative Results: Connection with Group Members

“I feel this is one of my most helpful classes to help me open up to people.”

“I found it helpful using music to break the ice about stories that have affected my life.”

Qualitative Results: Connection with Therapist(s)

“I felt heard and that my opinions and ideas mattered.”

“I feel the facilitators are passionate with music and that passion is passed on to the patients.”

Qualitative Results: Relationship to Music

“I will definitely keep working on my playlists.”

“It convinced me to sign up for ukulele lessons when I get home.”

“Even though I don’t play any instruments I found it easy to just play and totally unexpected.”

Qualitative Results: Trying Something New

“I gained confidence by doing something new.”

[The best part was] “getting out of my comfort zone – until this group I have only ever sung in my car or shower where no one could hear me.”

Qualitative Results: Critical Feedback

- Offer music-making opportunities outside of MT
- Create specific, tangible resources
- Provide more MT!

Resources

Canadian Association for Music Therapy:

www.musictherapy.ca

Music Therapy Association of Ontario:

www.musictherapyontario.com.

American Music Therapy Association:

www.musictherapy.org

Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy:

www.voices.no

Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy:

<http://approaches.gr>

Thank you!
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