

Music Therapy in the Treatment of Substance Abuse Disorder

Philadelphia Music Therapy provides trauma informed, person centered, culturally reflexive music therapy by a Board Certified, Masters Level music therapist with over 20 years of experience. We engage in singing, playing instruments, songwriting, and listening to explore and support strengths, needs, and goals. Clients direct their treatment and do not need any prior music experience. Most sessions are structured with a verbal or musical check-in/assessment to determine what to focus on followed by the therapist offering 2-3 music experiences for clients to choose from. Virtual and In-person sessions (with COVID-19 protocols) are available.

Examples of Music Experiences

Focus: **Reducing stress**

1. Breath work, Imagery or Progressive Muscle Relaxation: The music therapist offers verbal cues while playing live music designed to support the cues. The music is reflexive to the clients breathing, affect, and observable responses. Verbal processing may explore the experience in the moment and how to incorporate it into self care routines.

2. Improvisation moving from feelings of stress to relaxation: The clients and music therapist play instruments together focused on expressing and releasing stress and then shift to creating music that reflects and supports feelings of relaxation and peace. Verbal processing may reflect how clients experiences the music in their bodies, what emotions were felt, how they connected to others (if in a group) and parallels in the music to their lived experiences.

3. Iso principle Playlist: Songs are chosen to listen to or play live that start by matching feelings of stress and gradually shift to reflecting relaxation. Art making or movement may be incorporated. Songbooks are provided with a large variety of genres for clients to use or they may choose any other songs.

Focus: **Celebrating Strengths/resisting harmful self talk and stigma**

1. Songwriting: Lyrics may express strengths or they may start by reflecting harmful self talk or stigmatized statements followed by a verse of affirming statements for cognitive restructuring. The music could be played with live instruments (guitars, drums, xylophones, drum pads, tambourines, etc.) or could be created digitally with loops on a computer program. Clients may choose to record the song. Verbal processing may include the experience of the songwriting and how to actualize the messages in the music.

2. Theme songs: In a group, clients may break into dyads, identify strengths they have and then choose a song to reflect their strengths. They may imagine what song would play at the start of a movie about themselves. Everyone is invited to share their songs for the group to listen to and discuss. Songs can be recording, played live, or original songs written in the session.

3. Exchanging support: In a group, clients write down strengths they've observed in each other while listening to a playlist they create focused on celebrating strengths. ("Just Fine"- Mary J Blige, "We are the Champions"- Queen, "One More Mile to Go"-Jadakiss, "Survivor"- Destiny's Child, "Just the Way Your Are"- Bruno Mars or Billy Joel, etc.) Group members exchange the notes and verbally process their experience. They explore practices to engage in as part of their self care to support self worth.

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