

Philadelphia Music Therapy



HUMANISTIC APPROACHES
TO TRAUMA WORK IN
MUSIC THERAPY

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Philadelphia Music Therapy

ABOUT ME: AREAS OF PRACTICE

- Private practice: children and adults recovering from and exploring trauma, grief, life changes, anxiety, depression, Autistic adults and children
- Contracts: Inpatient and outpatient substance use treatment, elementary and high school, nursing home, senior center, women who have experienced human trafficking, group homes for adults and young adults with persistent mental illness
- Continuing education: CMTE's, supervision, presentations in the community, universities, and healthcare agencies

ABOUT ME: SOCIO-CULTURAL LOCATIONS

- White, Cis-het, non disabled, mostly neurotypical Woman.
- College educated with Master's Degree (both from Temple University)
- Born/early childhood in Paris, France, childhood in Easthampton, NY (Shinnecock), Adulthood in Philadelphia, PA (Lennape)



ADDRESSING TRAUMA THROUGH A HUMANISTIC APPROACH: WHAT DOES HUMANISTIC MEAN?

- 1. We approach the **WHOLE** person as a unique individual. (We don't single out behaviors and expect people to respond homogeneously)
- 2. We believe that the clients know what is best for them. The therapists role is to help them uncover the path to wellness that lies within.



IF WE BELIEVE THAT CLIENTS KNOW WHAT IS BEST, THEN WE NEED TO EMPOWER THEM TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ALL ASPECTS OF TREATMENT FROM ASSESSMENT, TO TREATMENT PLANNING (GOALS), TO TREATMENT ITSELF, TO EVALUATION.

- The therapist is not the expert.
- The therapist holds a supportive space to empower the clients to find, express, and actualize their knowledge.
- The clients take the lead.



HUMANISTIC MUSIC THERAPY GROUPS STRUCTURE

1. Introduction and setting the space
2. Check-in to decide what to focus on in the group (This can also be informed by what happened in previous sessions, what is on the treatment plan, or what the clients have expressed they need outside of sessions.)
3. Therapist offers music (or verbal or other creative) experiences, including space for client suggestions.
4. The group chooses and engages in the experience.
5. They verbally process (if helpful, indicated, accessible)
6. They decide on another experience if there's time.
7. They engage in a closing ritual. (identifying what they're taking from group, identifying self care they'll engage in that day, a group stretch or release breath, a dance, etc.)



GETTING STARTED

- The music therapist provides a structure (that the clients agree to) that allows the clients to direct their care.
 - “Hi everybody. My name is Audrey and my pronouns are she/her. This is music therapy and we’re here until 11:00. If it works for everyone, we can do a check-in to see where everybody’s at and what you all want to work on. Once we decide on a topic, I’ll offer you different types of music experiences to explore and support it to choose from. Please participate in which ever way works for you and please let me know if something is not working and we need to adjust what we’re doing. This is your group.

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WAYS TO CHECK IN VERBALLY TO DETERMINE THE GROUP'S FOCUS/TOPIC

YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO SHARE YOUR NAME, PRONOUNS, WHAT KIND OF MUSIC YOU LIKE, HOW YOU'RE FEELING RIGHT NOW AND:

- What is important to you right now.
- What you need from the group today.
- Something good and something challenging that happened this week.
- Something you like about your self or one of your strengths.
- Something good about this group of people as a whole.
- Something you admire about someone else in this group.
- Something you are working on or want to work on in group today.
- A source of support.
- A coping skill.
- Response to a song or reading shared before the check-in (if rapport is already established/safety can be assessed.)
- Something you wish people knew about you.
- Something you wish people understood about [what they are being treated for]. ("People" could be the group, staff, family, friends, the community, etc.)
- Something that inspires you or gives you hope.
- Something you have overcome.
- How you feel about an event happening in the hospital, community, etc. (like a fight on the unit, new rules, a quarantine, civil uprising, etc.)
- Advice you would give someone in your situation.
- A long term or short term goal.
- Something you're looking forward to post discharge.
- A time you felt strong or powerful.
- A change you would like to make.
- Something you believe that is important to you.
- A piece of wisdom.



POWER: WHO HAS IT AND HOW DO WE SHIFT IT?

- Therapists need to examine what power they hold both from being in the therapist role and from their socio-cultural locations.
- Because therapists inherently hold power over the clients, they need to be intentional and active in changing the power differential
 - Offer the clients the guitar or piano.
 - Empower the clients lead the improvisation. (“Does anyone want to set the beat?”)
 - Offer directives that are inclusive of “passive” or active participation and accept the ways in which clients choose to participate. (even though we feel good and feel validated when they play and sing and talk).
 - The clients choose the music and whether to listen to it or play it live.
 - The therapist does not rely on displaying their musical skills to be validated as a music therapist.
 - The clients decide if the session is going deep or staying light. (music bingo can be just as valuable as exploring a traumatic experience)
 - The therapist does not rely on the intensity of the session to be validated as a therapist.
 - If the clients don’t have the energy, safety, or desire to make these choices or lead, the therapist does it.
 - The therapist is authentic and has boundaries that feel safe. (not too strict, not too loose)
 - The therapist is not trying to save the client. The therapist supports the clients to direct their own process.



White Supremacy Culture

Fear of Open Conflict

There are some topics and ways of talking about things that are just impolite to bring up because they make people uncomfortable.

Sacrifice: Talking about important issues

Only One Right Way

There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything.

Sacrifice: Multiple perspectives

Perfectionism

Anything less than perfect is unacceptable, so don't mess up!

Sacrifice: Celebrating growth and progress

Sense of Urgency

The faster and more efficient everything is, the better.

Sacrifice: Thoughtfulness in action

Worship of the Written Word

If it's not in a book or written rules, it doesn't exist!

Sacrifice: Opinions and experiences of individuals

Paternalism

The people with the most power know what's best for everyone else. That's why they're in charge.

Sacrifice: Creative thinking

Either/Or Thinking

Things are either one way or another: good/bad, right/wrong.

Sacrifice: Complexity of problems

Quantity over Quality

If the results can't be measured, it doesn't matter.

Sacrifice: Unmeasurable qualities and process

Power Hoarding

It's best if a few people are in charge because, if everyone had a say, we'd never get anything done.

Sacrifice: Democratic decision making

I'm the Only One

In order for things to be done right, "I have to do it."

Sacrifice: Teamwork and shared responsibility

Individualism

This world is competitive, so you have to focus on yourself.

Sacrifice: Cooperation and collaboration

Progress is Bigger, More

The more we do, the better we're doing.

Sacrifice: Quality of work

Right to Comfort

People with power and privilege have the right to feel emotionally comfortable wherever they are.

Sacrifice: Safety of marginalized groups

Objectivity

If you look at things without emotion, you can be neutral and see the truth.

Sacrifice: Feelings

Defensiveness

Criticizing people in power is rude and disrespectful.

Sacrifice: Self-reflection

Based on "White Supremacy Culture" (Okun, 2001)
@antiracismeveryday

THE THERAPIST LEARNS ABOUT OPPRESSIVE STRUCTURES AND HOW THEY ARE INGRAINED IN THEIR WORK.

OKUN'S CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

@ANTIRACISMEVERYDAY
VIA MAR-AMTA ANTI-OPPRESSION AD-HOC

[HTTPS://WWW.DISMANTLINGRACISM.ORG/UPLOADS/4/3/5/7/43579015/OKUN_-_WHITE_SUP_CULTURE.PDF](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/OKUN_-_WHITE_SUP_CULTURE.PDF)



MY SELF CARE/COMMUNITY CARE AS A THERAPIST

- Creative
- I hold the power, I am centered at times
- Includes community/is collaborative

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QUESTIONS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS?

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