Give Me a Beat: Using Music as a Counseling Tool

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Premise of Using Music in Counseling

- Music has a multifaceted component of helping people become vibrant, confident, and competent individuals.
- Many people share the same values, identity, and mores as certain musicians, performers, writers and other listeners because music is an integral part of their lives. They are very interested in participating in counseling activities that involve music.
- The extent of music’s healing and helping power in counseling is related to how deeply involved with it people are and what disorders or diseases they may be dealing with (Bruscia, Dileo, Shultis & Dennery, 2009).
- When counselors utilize and become aware of the music genres, lyrics, melodies, and other complimentary music that clients have adopted, it can foster increased communication and understanding.
- Music in counseling should focus on the client’s interests and tastes.
• Therapists can select musical approaches that include writing, performing, or listening to certain types of sounds to foster client’s therapeutic expressions, and participate in unfamiliar music related experiences.

• Classical music is still effective especially for those who are not familiar with this genre. When carefully chosen and played softly, classical music “can be a tremendous aid in producing an atmosphere conducive to creative activity” (Nadeau, 1984, p.68).

• Some classical music examples include Compositions by Schubert, Copeland, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, and Pachelbel; they encourage an environment of creativity and production.
Points to Consider when Using Music

1. Select music based on specific counseling goals and student’s personalities.

2. Consider individual student need in music oriented counseling activities, i.e. trauma victims need calmer types of music. Some students may benefit from listening to music; others may benefit from making music.

3. Counselors and students must be open to exploring this method of help. If they agree to share and actively engage in the process, it will produce positive results building an atmosphere of trust.
Practice of Using Music in Counseling

• The degree to which counselors and clients relate to each other when music is part of counseling depends on whether music is used as therapy or in therapy (Bruscia, 1987).

• When counselors use music as therapy, they become active in the therapeutic process, whereas during therapy their roles vary considerably.

• In music therapy, sound, whether played or listened to, often serves as a musical symbol of a symptom (McClary, 2007).

• According to the American Music Therapy Association in 2005, it is defined as “clinical and evidenced-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved therapy program” (AMTA, 2010b).
Five Main Elements of Music Therapy

- Involved using musical or music activities, i.e. “singing, playing musical instruments, listening to music, composing or creating music, moving to music, or discussing lyrics and characteristics of songs or instrumental compositions” (p. 6).

- Directed or supervised by specially trained personnel.
  - Received by clients from newborns to elderly.

- It’s prescribed.
  - Focused on achieving specific therapeutic goals.
According to Hadley, Hadley, Dickens, and Jordan (2001), music therapists do some or all of the following:

Assess emotional well being, physical health, social functioning, communication abilities, and cognitive skills through musical responses.

Design music sessions for individuals and groups based on client needs using music improvisation, receptive music listening, song writing, lyric discussion, music and imagery, music performance, and learning through music.

Participate in interdisciplinary treatment planning, ongoing evaluation, and follow-up.
Music in Counseling

• When one includes music in counseling, students benefit from listening, performing, improvising, and composing activities. There are individuals who will benefit from each activity.
• Listening to music assists clients to alter moods by decreasing anxiety levels or arousing emotions.
• Listening also promotes the process of making music out of life and understanding more fully the rhythm/lyrics of songs. The latter case is sometimes referred to as audio therapy (Lazarus, 2000).
Song selection by clients is a kind of projective technique that reveals the needs of the unconscious for certain types of stimuli (Brodsky & Niedorf, 1986).

Once counselors track music themes and tempo, they can clearly ascertain students’ emotional levels and plan effective therapeutic interventions.

Performing music is an extremely personal and compelling experience involving the musician, instrument, and possibly an audience. It is an agent of communication, socialization, and expression.
Music in Counseling Children

It is usually a primary element in teaching guidance lessons; one can use music to express feelings.

DeLucia-Wack (2001) published a session by session manual for counselors to creatively use music to assist children of divorce learn coping skills.

In addition, music helps children to understand and overcome the plight of divorce and develop in healthy ways.
Counselor can discover and use music to provide students with singing, composing, or playing. All three of these modalities can be combined; one modality, singing, is used more than others. Children often enjoy singing and learn main lesson objectives by incorporating them into songs.
When therapists use songs in guidance lessons, the following procedure is helpful:

- 1. Introduce the lyrics as a poem.
- 2. Chant the words in rhythm.
- 3. Practice chanting words for 3 or 4 minutes per class until children memorize them.
- 4. After children know and understand the words, play the song.
- 5. Keep a double-spaced copy of the words before the children when they sing with the verses separated from the refrain.
Singing

• Singing is definitely beneficial outside of guidance lessons, particularly for those children who suffered trauma.

• In most cultures, singing can be perceived as means to develop and construct feelings of rapport and affirmation.

• Singing songs repetitively, individually or as a group, can be academic and conventional; it can alter breathing patterns and helps students to relax.
Music can be employed with children in other therapeutic ways as well.

- For example, Hodas (1993) devised *Stretch Yourself? Songs for Coping* that contains an array of selections counselors can use with children dealing with several forms of adversity.

These songs encompass a myriad of topics including sexual abuse, gender issues, suicide, effects of war.
When working with special populations, songs must be chosen with care. A well chosen song can be very influential in encouraging children to recognize situations and handle them appropriately and constructively.

Another way of breaking through children’s shells of isolation therapeutically with music is playing sounds familiar to them such as internal body sounds or having them listen to neighboring sounds (Baker, 1982).

When one builds rapport in this aspect, rhythm activities and rhythm instruments, i.e. sticks and tambourines, can be used to engage children and gradually draw them into social relationships with other children and adults.
Music in Counseling with Other Creative Arts

• Music is often combined with poetry, movement and dance, film, play and storytelling, which enhances the total impact.

• In storytelling, music can enhance the presentation background to stories being told to young children or children writing their own stories.

• Some examples include Handel’s *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra in B-flat Major*, Mozart’s *Adagio and Rondo in C Minor*. Other forms of music can work to create a story atmosphere or story character.
Advantages of Creative Arts in Counseling

- Involves a sense of playfulness.
- Promotes relationships; breaks barriers.
- Stimulates communication; produces effective counselors and better student/counselor communication.
- Allows clients to express themselves in multiple ways.
- Perceived as neutral or fun. Encourages non verbal students to participate.
## Limitations

| Counseling and arts activities can be perceived as non-artistic | Students may be less likely to work on problems if the format isn’t highly structured and cognitive.  
Using arts in counseling could be distracting and frustrating. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Actual techniques used may become arts and crafts.             | Arts and crafts typically practiced in counseling have limited goals and seen as busy work.  
Crafts are associated with assembling things together; do not require much thinking. |
| Students can become too introspective, passive or overcritical of themselves. | It is very detrimental in active mental and physical development, and paralyzes students’ growth. |
Activities to Use

• **Lyrics for Discussion**
  Many songs deal with behavior and consequences. These concepts can be found in each musical genre, especially in country western songs. Have the students listen for the song’s message, while it is being played. When the song ends, discuss what the students heard and what they felt the song meant. Then, relate the behavior and consequences to familiar situations.

• **Listening and Concentration**
  Young students will practice listening and concentrating if given a task to perform using music. Select a song with a steady beat. Tell the students to listen to the song you are going to play. Play the song through and tell the students they will be playing a game using the song. Have them practice clapping to the beat of the music. Have the students listen and clap to the entire song. When song is over, relate the students’ ability to listen and pay attention to the music to their power to listen and pay attention to the teacher in class.
Feelings Mural

Tape mural of shelf paper to a wall. Give each student a box of crayons. Assign each student to a portion of the mural paper. Tell the students to listen to the music and on paper draw a picture that shows the emotions they are feeling to the music. When the song ends, have the students stop drawing and describe what they felt as they listened to the music. Compare the pictures’ similarities and differences. You can also use finger paints for this activity.

This is Me

This activity can be used in the small-group or individual counseling for older students. Ask the students to bring in a tape recording of a song with which they identify and play it during the session. After the song is played, have the student who brought it in explain what in the song relates to him/her and how he/she feels about the lyrics. Continue in this manner until every student has had an opportunity to share the song and comments. Conclude the session by having the students relate these same feelings to themselves and their behavior. This is a good way to encourage students to think about themselves and some changes they might like to make in their behavior.
Stage Play

• Drama can be incorporated into guidance by having the students act out either their emotions or the words to a song. If you choose to have the students act out the words to a song, have them first listen to the song. They should look for songs with expressible lyrics. If the song lends itself to different parts, break the lyrics into small sections and assign a different section to each student. Playing songs without words is an effective technique to encourage students to express the emotions that the music brings out in them. This activity works well with nonverbal students because they are not forced to say anything but can express themselves through gestures. If older students are permitted to pick their own music, counselors can learn a great deal from the songs they select and their reactions to them.
References


Bruscia, K., Dileo, C., Shultis, C., & Dennery, K. (2009). Expectations of hospitalized cancer and cardiac patients regarding the medical and psychotherapeutic benefits of music therapy. Arts in Psychotherapy, 36, 239-244


**Man In The Mirror**

by Michael Jackson

I'm Gonna Make A Change,
For Once In My Life
It's Gonna Feel Real Good,
Gonna Make A Difference
Gonna Make It Right . . .

As I, Turn Up The Collar On My
Favourite Winter Coat
This Wind Is Blowin' My Mind
I See The Kids In The Street,
With Not Enough To Eat
Who Am I, To Be Blind?
Pretending Not To See
Their Needs
A Summer's Disregard,
A Broken Bottle Top
And A One Man's Soul
They Follow Each Other On
The Wind Ya' Know
'Cause They Got Nowhere
To Go
That's Why I Want You To
Know

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
And No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
(If You Wanna Make The
World A Better Place)
Take A Look At Yourself, And
Then Make A Change
(Take A Look At Yourself, And
Then Make A Change)
(Na Na Na, Na Na Na, Na Na,
Na Nah)

I've Been A Victim Of A Selfish
Kind Of Love
It's Time That I Realize
That There Are Some With No
Home, Not A Nickel To Loan
Could It Be Really Me,
Pretending That They're Not
Alone?
A Willow Deeply Scarred,
Somebody’s Broken Heart
And A Washed-Out Dream
(Washed-Out Dream)
They Follow The Pattern Of
The Wind, Ya’ See
Cause They Got No Place
To Be
That's Why I'm Starting With
Me
(Starting With Me!)

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror
(Ooh!)
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
(Ooh!)
And No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
(If You Wanna Make The
World A Better Place)
Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make A Change
(Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make A Change)

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror
(Ooh!)
I'm Asking Him To Change His
Ways
(Change His Ways-Ooh!)
And No Message Could’ve
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
(If You Wanna Make The
World A Better Place)
Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make That . . .
(Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make That . . .)
Change!

I'm Starting With The Man In
The Mirror,
(Man In The Mirror-Oh
Yeah!)
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
(Better Change!)
No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
(If You Wanna Make The
World A Better Place)
(Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make The Change)
(You Gotta Get It Right, While
You Got The Time)
(’Cause When You Close Your
Heart)
You Can't Close Your . . .Your
Mind!
(Then You Close Your . . .
Mind!)
That Man, That Man, That
Man, That Man
With That Man In The Mirror
(Man In The Mirror, Oh Yeah!)
That Man, That Man, That Man
I'm Asking Him To Change
His Ways
(Better Change!)
You Know . . .That Man
No Message Could Have
Been Any Clearer
If You Wanna Make The World
A Better Place
(If You Wanna Make The
World A Better Place)
Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make A Change
(Take A Look At Yourself And
Then Make A Change)
Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!
Na Na Na, Na Na Na, Na Na,
Na Nah
(Oh Yeah!)
Gonna Feel Real Good Now!
Yeah Yeah! Yeah Yeah!
Yeah Yeah!
Na Na Na, Na Na Na, Na Na,
Na Nah
(Ooooh . . .)
Oh No, No No . . .
I'm Gonna Make A Change
It's Gonna Feel Real Good!
Come On!
(Change . . .)
Just Lift Yourself
You Know
You've Got To Stop It.
Yourself!  
(=Make That Change!)  
I've Got To Make That Change,  
Today!  
Hoo!  
(Man In The Mirror)  
You Got To  
You Got To Not Let Yourself . . .  
Brother . . .  
Hoo!  
(=Make That Change!)  
You Know-I've Got To Get  
That Man, That Man . . .  
(Man In The Mirror)  
You've Got To  
You've Got To Move! Come  
On! Come On!  
You Got To . . .  
Stand Up! Stand Up!  
Stand Up!  
(=Make That Change)  
Stand Up And Lift  
Yourself, Now!  
(Man In The Mirror)  
Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!  
Aaow!  
(=Make That Change)  
Gonna Make That Change . . .  
Come On!  
(Man In The Mirror)  
You Know It!  
You Know It!  
You Know It!  
You Know . . .  
(Change . . .)  
Make That Change.
Row, Row, Row Your Boat Lyrics

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
And if you see a crocodile,
Don’t forget to scream.
Aghhhh!

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
You throw your teacher overboard (sorry)
And listen to her scream.
She’ll Be Coming Around the Mountain

She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes (Yee-Haw, Giddyup)
She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes (Yee-Haw, Giddyup)
She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes (Yee-Haw, Giddyup)
She'll be coming round the mountain, she'll be coming round the mountain,
She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes (Yee-Haw, Giddyup)

She'll be driving six white horses when she comes (Whoa, back)
She'll be driving six white horses when she comes (Whoa, back)
She'll be driving six white horses, she'll be driving six white horses,
She'll be driving six white horses when she comes (Whoa, back)

Oh, we'll all go out to meet her when she comes (Howdy do)
Oh, we'll all go out to meet her when she comes (Howdy do)
Oh, we'll all go out to meet her, we'll all go out to meet her,
We'll all go out to meet her when she comes (Howdy do)

We will all have chicken and dumplings when she comes. (Yum yum)
We will all have chicken and dumplings when she comes. (Yum yum)
We will all have chicken and dumplings, we'll all have chicken and dumplings.
We will all have chicken and dumplings when she comes. (Yum yum)
The Real Me

Foolish heart looks like we're here again
Same old game of plastic smile
Don't let anybody in
Hiding my heartache, will this glass house break
How much will they take before I'm empty
Do I let it show, does anybody know?

[Chorus:]
But you see the real me
Hiding in my skin, broken from within
Unveil me completely
I'm loosening my grasp
There's no need to mask my frailty
Cause you see the real me
Painted on, life is behind a mask
Self-inflicted circus clown
I'm tired of the song and dance
Living a charade, always on parade
What a mess I've made of my existence
But you love me even now
And still I see somehow
But you see the real me
Hiding in my skin, broken from within
Unveil me completely
I'm loosening my grasp
There's no need to mask my frailty
Cause you see the real me
Wonderful, beautiful is what you see
When you look at me
You're turning the tattered fabric of my life into
A perfect tapestry
I just wanna be me
But you see the real me
Hiding in my skin, broken from within
Unveil me completely
I'm loosening my grasp
There's no need to mask my frailty
Cause you see the real me
And you love me just as I am
Wonderful, beautiful is what you see
When you look at me
Suggested Guidance Activities

**Lyrics for Discussion**

Many songs deal with behavior and consequences. These concepts can be found in each musical genre, especially in country western songs. Have the students listen for the song’s message, while it is being played. When the song ends, discuss what the students heard and what they felt the song meant. Then, relate the behavior and consequences to familiar situations.

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**Counselor Selected Music**

Counselors can choose an appropriate musical selection they think will speak to a student’s situation. Then, ask him/her to listen to the rhythm and lyrics (if any) of the music the counselor selects and visualizes a color that goes with it. Once the song is over, the student can respond by talking and writing about the experience, drawing, or even moving to demonstrate what he or she got out of the exercise.
Music and Groups

Music is a very effective tool to employ in a group at the beginning or end. Select music can help set an upbeat or tranquil tone when students first enter the group room. Beginning a group by clapping, snapping fingers, drumming is a unique way to jump start conversations in group, and their roles in it. In termination, certain music or activities will give students a sense of closure and promote integration.