

Music as a Therapeutic Intervention Within an Irish Addiction Service Setting



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Overview



∞ Addiction treatment: contentious aspect of health and social care systems

∞ Recovery: self-change

spontaneous remission


self-help/mutual help

medically based treatments

talking therapies

Complementary and alternative (CAM) treatments.

Can music therapy act as a suitable and effective adjunct to other approaches?



- ❧ emotive power
 - ❧ cultural importance
- ❧ Ethnomusicology, music therapy, musical philosophy, psychotherapy and psychiatry
- ❧ *“early interventions are directed at exploring ambivalence and to bolster motivation for change”* (Emmelkamp and Vedel 2006)

Methodological Approach



- ❧ Mixed methodological approach
 - ❧ analysis of relevant literature
 - ❧ semi-structured interviews
 - ❧ weekly music-based sessions

Primary Field Research



- ❧ Weekly music-based sessions (X 5)
- ❧ Recruitment on informed, optional and voluntary basis
- ❧ Music Therapy ‘tools’:
 - ❧ Lyric analysis
 - ❧ Therapeutic songwriting
- ❧ Emphasis on experiential responses, reflexive practice and regular discussion

Lyric Analysis: methodology



- ❧ Lyric analysis can be of benefit to those who have difficulty in verbal articulation, while also providing an opportunity for the client to empathize with the content.
- ❧ Preselected pieces:
 - ❧ “Dock of the Bay” (Otis Redding)
 - ❧ “I Shall be Released” (The Band)
 - ❧ “Hurt” (Johnny Cash).

Songwriting: methodology



- ❧ Expression; using symbolism; imagery; storytelling.
- ❧ Forming verse using appropriate meter and melodic properties
- ❧ Common themes/subjects, chosen by the group, were used for song content
- ❧ Last session: open discussion

Findings



- ❧ The Role of Music
 - ❧ *“It makes you feel good!”*

- ❧ Regulate
 - ❧ Motivate
 - ❧ Relate
 - ❧ Communicate

- ❧ Recall: *“A Westlife song, ‘Home Again’, it makes me think of the kids and it makes me want to stay [in treatment]”.*

Songwriting: findings (male)



- ❧ Considerable knowledge
- ❧ No specifics – no pressure
- ❧ Addiction – subject matter
- ❧ Enthusiasm & honesty: *“you’d say it like you meant it”*
- ❧ Contributing in a different way than they usually did
- ❧ Representation of lyrics – addiction as an object/loved one

Songwriting: findings (male)



- ❧ *“past, present and future”*.
- ❧ Lyrics: serious, heavy content – Atmosphere: positive, sense of satisfaction
- ❧ Enthusiasm for lyrical content & song form (tempo, rhythm, use of major and minor chords and phrasing of lines) – all contributed
- ❧ Ongoing explanation of musical features

Songwriting: findings (male)



- ❧ *“dealing with the pain and leaving go. Thinking about choices in life and how you’re going to make it right.”*
- ❧ *“A Song for James”*
- ❧ Nature of discussion: open, comfortable, welcome
- ❧ *“He was free from his addiction when he passed away so he got what he came for. His struggles were over”.*

Song For James



(CH) For the man who walked many a road

Determination set you free.

For the man who is free

(V. I) Free from your demons, free from you past

Wanting change and for it to last

Confidence came you were never the same

Like diamonds they shone in your eyes

A sparkle that never dies

(V. II) Free from the shackles that held you down

Some battles were lost but you won the war

You ended a winner, left with a smile

You looked in the mirror and saw peace of mind

We look at your journey, a country mile

Songwriting: findings (female)



- ❧ Time issues and unavoidable distractions
- ❧ Eager to write about addiction with emphasis on hope
 - ❧ *“Hope, something happy, bringing new life”*
- ❧ Using music to feel better
- ❧ *“We all want to be free”*
 - ❧ a request to be taken from hardship to a better place in life
- ❧ Satisfaction and surprise



Lyric analysis: findings



- ❧ No significant differences between male and female groups
- ❧ **Dock of the Bay**: quiet room, relaxed atmosphere
- ❧ “*melancholy*”, “*reminiscent*”, “*pleasant*”, and “*reflecting*”
- ❧ Literal terms – “*about somebody who is...*”
- ❧ Relevant to personal situations - “*the Dublin docks: walking on a sunny day: that made me feel good*”
- ❧ Comfortable yet revealing conversation
- ❧ Quiet members of the group contributing

Lyric analysis: findings



- ❧ **Hurt:** intense both musically and lyrically
- ❧ Relevance: *“There’s a bit of everyone in this room in that song: it’s exactly how it is. The familiar friend, it becomes your only friend”*
- ❧ *“If I could do it all again – we’re getting that chance in here to change our lives around”.*
- ❧ Difficulty in honest disclosure: *“I think it’s really hard to talk about yourself: a fear around talking about yourself, what people think of you...[however] “Identifying with the song gives you the feelings, the thinking”.*

Discussion with clients



- ☞ Ability to relate to music: *“it can mean one thing to this person and a different thing to another person; that’s the beauty of a song [the way] it can catch people in different ways”*
- ☞ Comfortable forum: *“the way everyone was relating to stuff, talking about what it was for them [lyric analysis], it still is a group session, you just don’t think it’s a group”*
- ☞ Contributions encouraged: *“It’s easier to talk after listening to a song than it is in group. It feels like everyone has something to say rather than everyone sitting there quiet, waiting for someone else to say something”.*
- ☞ Confidence: *“It’s all about confidence when you come in. Anybody who comes into recovery, their self-confidence is always low so something like music, that you can identify with and you can feel comfortable around, that was the main thing for me. I’m comfortable here and I don’t feel like I’m saying something wrong”*

Discussion with clients



- ❧ Interest in process – full attendance
- ❧ Validity and place in current structure
- ❧ *“there should be go-cart therapy!”*

Conclusion



- ❧ Music can be used in a therapeutic setting for the benefit of the clients.
- ❧ Effectiveness of talk therapies and group sessions in practice
- ❧ Structuring of treatment programmes
- ❧ Potential of complementary and alternative therapies within the addiction treatment matrix. (however the results/efficacy are under-researched)
- ❧ Treatment success - individual's motivation - retaining clients in treatment

Conclusion



- ❧ Music has proven to be an adaptable intervention. It is suitable for the many different stages and modalities of addiction treatment. This intervention can offer benefits such as reducing anxiety, improving cognition, engaging and retaining clients in treatment and generally providing a safe and non-threatening environment for client participation.

Conclusion



- ❧ Recommendations:
 - ❧ Revised treatment programmes
 - ❧ Improved scheduling
 - ❧ Openness to diverse treatment options

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