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Transforming Familiar Games into Music Therapy Experiences

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Games

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Why Games?

idea of using games in music therapy treatment may not be familiar to many music therapists, but games are a part of every known human culture. Often, reluctant music therapy clients will participate in a game when they will not participate in other experiences.

Some basic rules of thumb when thinking about games:

- Any game that you know can incorporate music—write a song, include body percussion, play an instrument
- You may need to change competition into cooperation—watch your clients and their relationships with other group members
- Have fun. If you are having fun, clients will also have fun.
- Don't worry about the level of active music during the game. There are times when quiet games are better than loud games.
- Every game you can do small, you can also do large.

Some Resources and References to Start You Off

<http://www.kmea.org/conference/handouts/SingingGames.pdf>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singing_game

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_games

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_board_games

Pressnall, D. O., & Malecha, L. (1999). *The Big Book of Music Games, Grades K-5*. Instructional Fair.

Harbin, E. O. (1940). *The Fun Encyclopedia*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.

Lots of other resources are available on the internet.

Music-Themed Games

Music-themed games do not require music in the environment. You can change familiar games into music games by changing the symbols from colors, numbers, or pictures into musical symbols.

Candyland-Type Games

See general rules of the Candyland game for detailed instructions of how to play this children's board game. Movement around the game board is determined by drawing cards.

Possible Adaptations:

- Use music symbol cards to indicate where the game player moves next. Can also use pictures of notes, instruments, and/or composers.
- Use traditional board game with original game cards—incorporate a task with each color on the board. For example, when a client draws a yellow card, he/she has to complete a lyric.

Goals:

- social interaction—taking turns, following the rules, tracking own progress in relation to other game members
- impulse control—waiting turn, completing game rules, no cheating
- symbol matching—looking at each symbol, picture, or note and finding a match
- music knowledge—music education and knowledge

Other Music-Themed Games

Jeopardy—ask questions about music topics.

Pictionary—draw musical instruments, song titles or lyrics, musical symbols

Hangman—spell out instrument names, music symbols, song titles, song lyrics, composers' names

Charades—act out how to play instruments, act out song titles, composers' names

Go Fish— use music instrument cards, rhythm notation cards, notes on the staff, composer cards in place of typical 52-card deck

Memory/Concentration—Set out cards of any type face down. Each group member turns over two cards. If they match, the player gets to keep the pair. If the cards do not match, the first player turns them over. The next person takes a turn.

Passive Music Games

Passive music games are those where there is music present in the environment, but the client is not actively engaged in making the music.

Recorded Music Games

Name That Tune—client listens to brief excerpts of songs and verbally identifies the title. This game can be based on a theme (Disney songs, movie titles, holidays).

GOALS: audio discrimination, social interaction, long-term memory, reminiscence, impulse control, social interaction.

TIP: I often play this game with my VERY competitive clients where they earn points for knowing the information, and I earn points when they demonstrate poor social interaction or impulse control, and when they are unable to figure out the song. They compete as a unified front against me.

Name That Tune Bingo—client listens to brief excerpts of songs and finds the corresponding song title or picture on a bingo board. The game continues until one group member has five in a row. This game can also be based on a theme (see above).

GOALS: Receptive language, long-term memory, symbol recognition, impulse control, reading, social interaction.

Start/Stop Games—Freeze dancing, Move and Stop games

Live Music Games—Therapist Makes Music

Name That Tune—Same as above, but the therapist plays music on an instrument—with or without sung lyrics. The change in timbre often confuses clients and requires that they listen to the melodies more closely.

Rhythm Bingo—Use the regular BINGO cards. Therapist plays two instruments, one to cue clients to count by tens, the other to cue clients to count by ones. Therapist does not say the numbers, but plays the appropriate number of times on the two instruments. For example, the therapist pulls the BINGO number 8-10. The therapist plays the "Tens" instrument one time to indicate the number 10. If the therapist pulls the number 6-45, the therapist plays four times on the "Tens" instrument and five times on the "Ones" instrument.

GOALS: Skip counting, short-term memory, impulse control, sustained attention, audio discrimination, number recognition

I Spy—compose a song to incorporate game rules. Group members take turns "spying" something and choosing others to guess the object. Only allow Yes/No questions during the game.

GOALS: figure-ground discrimination, impulse control, reality orientation, social interaction, leadership opportunities, object recognition

More Ideas

Hot Potato—group members toss or pass an object around the circle while the music plays. When the music stops, the group member with the object is either out of the game, or completes a task (more cooperative option). Game continues when the music starts again.

GOALS: audio discrimination, impulse control, social interaction, gross/fine motor coordination

ADAPTATION: Question/Answer Ball—use two balls (or other small objects). When the music stops, one person asks a question and the other person answers. You can use live or recorded music.

Active Music Games

Active music games require that the group members engage in making music during the game.

Adding Music To Familiar Games

UNO Card Game—play the game as originally developed, but require that group members play an instrument to indicate the number on their cards. For example, a person sets down a red 9 and then plays the egg shaker 9 times.

GOALS: number recognition, impulse control, social interaction, gross/fine motor development

Singing Games—Wiggalo, London Bridge, Ring Around the Rosy, Little Sally Walker, Obwisana, Step Back Sally, Boomerang, Down By the Banks, Jumprope chants, One Potato, Eenie Meenie, In and Out the Window

Hot and Cold—One client leaves the room or covers his/her eyes. Another client hides a small object someplace in the music therapy area. The first client enters the area again. All of the other group members provide auditory cues to the first client. When the “seeker” is far away from the object, group members play or clap quietly. When the “seeker” is close to the object, group members play or clap loudly. The game continues until the “seeker” finds the object.

GOALS: graded instrument response/play, attention to task, short to long-term memory transfer, receptive and expressive language, impulse control, social interaction, gross/fine motor development

ADAPTATION: Use several small instruments. Assign several “seekers” a specific instrument each and then group members play corresponding instruments to provide cues. Additional goals include auditory discrimination and divided attention to task.

Doggie, Doggie – One person sits with back to group, hiding eyes. Another group member is chosen by leader using nonverbal cues. Second group member quietly moves to behind first person and retrieves an item (jingle bells, egg shaker, other). Once second group member returns to place in circle, group members chant, “Doggie, doggie, where’s your bone. Somebody stole it from your home. Guess who?” First group member has to guess who stole the item.

GOALS: audio discrimination, attention to task, figure-ground discrimination, graded movements, impulse control, social interaction, directed listening

Sneaker – Similar to Doggie, Doggie, but involves moving quietly to touch person with back to the group. One person sitting with back to group, holding instrument. Leader silently chooses another group member to “sneak” up on first member. If first group member hears the second one moving, first member plays instrument. Continue to choose “sneakers” until someone is able to sneak up and touch the first person on the shoulder without being detected.

GOALS: graded movements, gross/fine motor development, impulse control, audio discrimination, sustained attention to task, social awareness

Red Light, Green Light – Use two different instruments to indicate “go” and “stop.” Leader plays specific sound to indicate what he wants other group members to do. Game ends when someone moves next to game leader

GOALS: audio discrimination, gross/fine motor development, impulse control, social awareness, receptive and expressive language

www.musictherapyworks.com



www.musictherapyworks.com

2111 Kasold Drive, #E-103
Lawrence, KS 66047-2118

Phone: 785-840-9678
E-mail:
contactus@musictherapyworks.com