

Creativity and Blocks – They happen. There will be times when you, as a music therapist, may not be able to create something very quickly. There are techniques that you can use to help yourself break out of creative ruts. Here are some of the things that work for me.

Dice Game – Assign values to each number on a die. Use different dice for different musical elements. I use colored dice to assist me in keeping track of what die decides each aspect of the music. For example, the yellow die is for note durations, the red die is for scale degrees. The white die is for any other decisions that have to be made – keys, music theories, dynamics, etc.

Die #1 –

1. Eighth note
2. Quarter note
3. Dotted quarter
4. Half note
5. Dotted half note
6. Whole note

Die #2 –

1. First scale degree
2. Second scale degree
3. Third scale degree
4. Fourth scale degree
5. Fifth scale degree/seventh scale degree
6. Sixth scale degree

Roll the dice and write the specific notes indicated on staff paper. Feel free to adapt the musical product to either match music theory requirements or continue until you get to a logical completion.

Picture-Based Songwriting – Collect pictures that have a story. Write a song based on the information in the picture. If composing a melody is not appropriate, piggy-back your lyrics about the picture onto a familiar song. Examples from the webinar on 5/24/2012 can be found on the recording of the webinar available at www.musictherapyworks.com.

Ways to Structure Songwriting –

- Limit one aspect of the song; e.g., only use specific scale degrees – 3, 4, and 5, to write the melody
- Use precomposed melodies – piggy-backing songs
- Use chance to compose the melody – dice, pick from a hat, etc.
- Write a song that does not have to do with the ultimate goal. If you need to write about keeping your temper, write a song about a different topic first.
- Use pictures, words, phrases, or objects in the environment

Theory

!2 Bar Blues

I///I///I///I7///IV///IV///I///I///V7///IV7///I///V/// repeat

Rock Progressions

I, vi, IV, V7

I, vi, ii, V7

Secondary Dominants

V/V, V/ii, V/vii

Modes: Ionian, Dorian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, Phrygian, Locrian

Whole-Tone Scale – whole tones between each note in the scale. In key of C: C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C

Pentatonic Scale – Remove all scale degrees that are only a half step from the one below. In key of C: remove F and B for C, D, E, G, A, C.

Other Techniques

Use ostinati – repetitive rhythmic patterns, either melodic or simply rhythmic – example: C, C, G, rest, C, C, G rest.

Body percussion can change the format of a song

Use sounds – vowel or consonant sounds without words