

Using the Kindermusik Village Curriculum with Seniors as a Music Therapy Tool in a Geriatric Setting

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What is *Kindermusik Village*?

Kindermusik Village is a developmental music & movement curriculum for infants from birth to 18 months, accompanied by a parent/caregiver. *Kindermusik Village* incorporates multi-age activities appropriate for the different stages of development in this age range, creating an optimal learning setting for both parent and children.

How does this program fit in with Geriatrics?

The Kindermusik Educator arranges to bring a group of Village babies and parents into a Geriatric facility for an 8-16 week unit of Village, incorporating “grandfriends” from the facility into the sessions. Sessions are held once a week for 45 minutes.

Session content includes:

- Gross and fine motor movement activities
- Age appropriate instruments & props
- Familiar children’s songs, nursery rhymes & chants
- Folk music from many cultures
- “Old favourites”, such as *You are My Sunshine*, *Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra*, *By the Shade of the Old Apple Tree*, etc.
- Soothing music, rocking & swaying to music

What are the benefits of having *Village* sessions at a Geriatric facility?

- Brings an awareness of the music therapy profession to the families involved.
- Gives babies an opportunity to create relationships with seniors.
- Gives babies & parents a way to honour & respect elders in their community.
- Provides elder-younger connection in a society in which grandparents often live in one place and children/grandchildren live in another. This benefits seniors & Kindermusik families alike.
- Brings joy and motivation to the seniors, who benefit from contact with the babies and their families.
- Provides a new circle of adults who take a caring & loving interest in the children.
- All involved benefit from the music and movement activities.
- The facility benefits by receiving Music Therapy at no cost because parents are paying for the sessions, which are held at the Geriatric Facility.

Art Therapy 1, 2, 3...

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Introduction

“Art” is a fluid concept that is difficult to define precisely. Very broadly art is an aspect of human creative activity that attempts to organize experience and to communicate that experience to others (Goodman, 1968; Schwartz, 1996). Art can be described as a symbol system that organizes and communicates experience (Schwartz, 1996).

Art involves communication by one person to another through the use of a symbolic object that the first person has created, and the second is able to understand, respond to, or appreciate (Gardner, 1973). Conceptually on a theoretical level the structure of art can be distinguished by:

- 1) The creative **process** through which the artwork comes into existence.
- 2) The creative **product** that is the artwork itself.
- 3) The **viewer** who responds to or appreciates the artwork (Schwartz, 1996).

“Therapy” in this context is the treatment of psychological and/or behavioral disorders. Very broadly, therapy involves change. Therapy enables a distressed individual, family or group to change maladaptive behaviors, attitudes and thoughts that may be contributing and exacerbating the distress. Art therapy is the use of art, its structure and function, as a tool in the treatment of psychological and/or behavioral disorder facilitating change.

The workshop

This workshop provided participants with an opportunity to organize the abstract experience of the Music Therapy Conference in concrete form using paper, pencils, markers, scissors and glue. Once organized and made concrete the experience was communicated pictorially and elaborated verbally. The creative **process** (1) was enacted and resulted in a final concrete **product** (2). Participants responded to their own and each other’s artwork by acting as **viewers** (3). As **viewers** sharing responses to the **products**, discussion included involvement in the **process** of organizing and communicating an experience of the Music Therapy Conference.

Participants in this workshop organized their experience in a concrete form. They then communicated with others by sharing and responding to the final creative products. This educational art activity highlights aspects of art therapy and the outlined theoretical

framework. A synopsis of the theoretical paradigm underpinning the use of art in therapy follows.

Process: Actions Speak Louder than Words.

In art therapy clients are encouraged to create personal images formulated out of their unique circumstances and abilities. The creative process requires simultaneous physical, emotional, and intellectual involvement in order to balance internal and external forces that affect the individual. “Process” in art therapy refers to the client’s way of working with art media.

Some writers view the creative process as the urge to solve problems (Arnheim, 1974; Dewey, 1934) while others view it as the urge to find problems (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). The client confronts problem solving, problem finding, success and failure while involved in the creative activity. The therapist can see the client’s behavior, their typical way of being, and witnesses the individual’s strengths and weaknesses in action.

“Process” also refers to the interaction between the client and therapist in the therapeutic relationship. Called the therapeutic process it involves the therapist’s responses, suggestions and interventions with regard to the client’s behavior, communication, and art work in therapy. The creative products produced over the course of therapy serve as a documentation of both the creative and therapeutic processes.

Product: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.

The product embodies a separate, independent and unique existence from the process of production and its creator. The symbolic object captures purposeful activity at a moment in time in a specific place within a particular client-therapist relationship. The product also refers to the work of change accomplished over the course of therapy and the accumulated art works produced over time.

The creative product contains information and knowledge. It embodies meaning in its own right. As a symbolic object designed to communicate it can only function when it is seen and appreciated by another. The product’s meaning is conveyed by the intended message, by the materials used, by the coordinated abilities of the producer at a specific time and place and also by the response of the viewer. Yet, still, all these words would not describe the artwork adequately. The work of art speaks for and of itself in its own unique way.

Viewer: It is all in the Eye of the Beholder.

People have unique responses and experiences when viewing creative products. The sensory effect of viewing artwork is supplemented by the viewer's past experience, accumulated knowledge, expectation based on context cues, projection and current state of mind (Arnheim, 1974; Winner, 1982). In art therapy, the therapist's response to the client's product is therapeutically motivated. It involves knowledge of the client, reasons for referral, understanding visual perception and therapeutic techniques, all used to relate to the needs of the client and the work of therapy. Both therapist and client responses to the artwork, foster the therapeutic relationship and forms the basis on which the therapeutic interaction is built.

Conclusion

As a viewer the therapist responds to the client, the client's creative process and artwork thereby developing the therapeutic process. The therapeutic and creative processes are documented by the client's art and in the transformations of form, content and subject matter that comprises the symbolic object. The product of art therapy, generally considered the client's art, is broadened in this theoretical framework to include the accumulated work from all the sessions, both the works of art and the work of change that go hand in hand in art therapy.

Process, product and viewer are interconnected and interrelated dimensions of the total art experience. Language allows us to distinguish and delineate structures that are in actuality whole and continuous. Art therapy allows us to use the structure and tools of art to foster change and promote well-being.

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