

Music therapy groupwork with special needs children: The evolving process

GOODMAN, K. D. (2007). *Music therapy groupwork with special needs children: The evolving process*. Charles C Thomas Pub Limited.

(book review)

Reviewed by Yue Lu

Professor Goodman, when the book was published, was an associate Professor of Music therapy at Montclair State University. Now, she is a professor focusing on music therapy education and training. She has much clinic experience as a music therapist and a special education teacher. Based on her previous research, she wrote this book to meet the realistic demands from people who need to conduct group music therapy with children with special needs.

The first chapter of this book presents a full view about one of the author's music therapy groupwork cases. It makes readers keep thinking of "Unanswered questions" and maintain those questions to other chapters. The second chapter reviews literature on assessment. It provides alternative ways for therapists to consider what appropriate assessment for each child is. With reference to assessment results, clinicians can determine the intervention plan. The third chapter is about how therapists determine the placement of children in music therapy sessions, individual or group ones. The author presents the nature of music therapy groups and describes four factors to be considered while recommending a child either an individual or a group music therapy. The fourth and the fifth chapters offer explicit steps for therapists to develop music therapy goals and objectives in group settings. There are 4 case studies to illustrate the process of formulating long-term goals and objectives. The author offers a very practical perspective of using appropriate language to establish group music therapy goals in different clinical settings. The sixth chapter introduces all the considerations in selecting and adapting materials for music therapy: vocal, instrumental, movement, listening and musical drama. Sample materials for children with different functional levels are listed in this chapter. Music therapy materials are introduced in the appendix after the eighth chapter as well. An important concept, Continuum of Music Response (CMR), has been presented for therapists to conduct

group music therapy sessions while anticipating different responses from different children in the group. The seventh chapter discusses all the variables of music therapy methods, especially practical strategies related to different population groups and suggestions linked to goals and objectives for all group members. The last chapter discusses the purposes of evaluation and provides three types of evaluation for group music therapy. The lack of music research in special education is emphasized again.

Although clinicians such as Nodrdoff and Robbins have done a great deal of groupwork since the 1970s, the literature regarding the theories and practices of group music therapy for children with special needs is still limited. This book can be very useful thanks to its logical structure and practical description for beginning therapists or educators who train students for group work with special children. In every part of the whole groupwork, based on a sequence of definition of concepts and theories, the author offers abundant case examples to illustrate the process of thinking and working step by step. As this book described, the key steps scheduled for the group music therapy could be concluded as follows:

1. Decide individual or group music therapy with 3 factors: development age, sensory profile and musicality.
2. Set goals according to the following 4 steps:
 - Step 1: A) Review of team information.
B) Organization of ideas with the developmental grid.
 - Step 2: Evaluating group priorities.
 - Step 3: Evaluation priorities for group music therapy goals.
 - Step 4: Considering stumbling blocks.
3. Formulate objectives with quantitative criteria.
4. Choose appropriate materials to accommodate the developmental needs of the child in the group.
5. Consider methods linked to goals and objectives.
6. Complete a session plan.
7. Implement the session.
8. Measure the progress with 3 types of evaluation: weekly objective, weekly subjective and progress report.
9. Modify the treatment approach or revise the treatment plan as necessary.

The author always discusses possible questions in the practical settings and offers methods, perspectives and case examples of solution. This book can be used as a practice manual. Nevertheless, since this book was published in 2007, readers should realize that there are some changes of definition or classification of children with special needs and research progress as well.

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