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# Trauma Informed Practice in Music Therapy

Trauma Informed Practice in Music Therapy

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## Trauma Informed Practice in Music Therapy

### Abstract

The 2019 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* reports that 9.5 million Americans aged 18 and older have been diagnosed with more than one mental disorder. Music therapists working in mental health treatment settings are likely to work with individuals who have a complex diagnosis defined here as two or more of the following: depression, eating disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, substance use disorder, eating disorders, and severe mental illness. Additionally, adverse childhood events or post-traumatic stress disorder often complicate the clinical profile. Given this, a trauma-informed approach to music therapy treatment is necessary to improve outcomes and minimize harm. The risks, contraindications, and ethical considerations necessary to effectively treat and care for these clients in music therapy will be reviewed. Methods of identifying, assessing, and treating these complex clinical issues in music therapy are discussed with the goal of helping clinicians understand: 1) where treatment needs to begin to ensure therapeutic goals addressing primary issues prior to addressing secondary issues, and 2) the appropriate use of music therapy methods. The necessity for music therapists to understand the power of the music in the music therapy process is explored, to ensure that clinicians are meeting client needs, not triggering symptomatology, traumatic memories, or experiences. The importance of a clinician knowing their scope of practice, when they are adequately trained and prepared to work with clients with complex disorders, and how to utilize support such as consultation and supervision to support their effective treatment with client(s) is presented.

### **Music Therapy and Complex Diagnosis: A Trauma Informed Approach to Treatment**

The 2019 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* reports that 9.5 million Americans aged 18 and older have been diagnosed with more than one mental disorder (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA, 2020). Music therapists working in mental health treatment settings are likely to work with individuals who have a complex diagnosis defined here as two or more of the following: depression, eating disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, substance use disorder, eating disorders, and severe mental illness. Individuals who have complex diagnoses have difficulties across many areas of functioning (Watt et al., 2013) Additionally, exposure to traumatic events underlies many of these disorders (e.g., Brown et al. 2008; Johnson et al., 2010; Khoury et al., 2010; Manning & Gagnon, 2017; Racine & Wildes, 2015). The combination of clinical issues associated with each disorder requires an integrated treatment approach that is based on the principles of trauma informed care (e.g., Baird, 2018; Brewerton, 2019; Schäfer & Najavits, 2007). SAMHSA (2014) also recommended a trauma-informed approach and developed guidelines for implementation in behavioral health settings. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to review the principles of trauma informed practices. Ways of working with trauma are beyond the scope of this paper. Music therapists working from a trauma-informed stance understand there is a possibility that their clients may be a survivor of trauma, and that trauma affects a person's whole being. We begin this paper with an overview of the principles underlying trauma informed practice, followed by a discussion of assessment and music therapy goals and methods consistent with trauma informed care.

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### Trauma Informed Care

Trauma informed care or a trauma informed approach is not a form of psychotherapy (Classen & Clark, 2017). Rather it **provides a** conceptual framework that recognizes any person seeking therapy may be a trauma survivor and considers the impact of trauma on physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Herman, 1997; Classen & Clark, 2017; Malchiodi, 2020). A trauma informed approach is based on the assumptions that therapists: 1) have a basic understanding of trauma and its wide-reaching effects, 2) recognize the signs of trauma, 3) apply the principles of a trauma informed approach, and 4) seek to avoid re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2014). Trauma informed therapists **typically** adhere to six key principles: 1) safety, 2) trustworthiness and transparency; 3) peer support; 4) collaboration and mutuality; 5) empowerment, voice and choice; and 6) cultural, historical, and gender issues (Classen and Clark, 2017; Falot & Harris, 2008; SAMHSA, 2014). Adherence to these principles will minimize the risk of re-traumatization, facilitate the development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship, and improve outcomes.

#### **Safety**

Physical and emotional safety, being protected from both internal and external threats, is a key element of trauma informed care. Therefore, music therapists must create a therapeutic environment in which the client feels physically and emotionally safe to minimize triggers. This includes consideration of “images, smells, noise, and even color of a space” (Bent-Goodley, 2018, p, 6). In addition, music selections must be considered carefully so as not to inadvertently cause the client to feel unsafe (Silverman, et al. 2020).

**Trustworthiness and Transparency**

**Trust.** Trust is the basis of healthy and helpful therapeutic relationships.

Individuals who have experienced interpersonal trauma, including adverse childhood events are more likely to have trouble trusting others (Gobin & Freyd, 2014; Pearlman & Courtois, 2005). Trust is established by having reliable, predictable, and clear boundaries (Classen & Clark, 2017, p. 515) which helps the client know what to expect (Bent-Goodley, 2019). Additionally, stability in the provision of services, e.g., day/time of sessions, availability of the therapist outside of sessions, and policies regarding payment and cancellation, help to maintain boundaries and facilitate the development of a trusting relationship.

**Transparency.** Transparency is the second ingredient in the development of a trusting relationship. This includes an explanation of the music therapist's approach to and rationale for treatment (Classen & Clark, 2017) including goals and choice of music therapy methods (Pearlman & Courtois, 2005) Transparency also involves the effect of the client's story on the music therapist (Classen & Clark, 2017). Trauma survivors seemingly know when a therapist is not being transparent about negative reactions or feelings (Dalenberg, 2000). A smile, which may be given as a sign of support, might be misinterpreted as a signal the therapist is not taking the client seriously. There are other challenges that present themselves when working with clients who have a trauma history including difficulties hearing client's stories, and learning of self-destructive or dissociative behaviors (Classen & Clark, 2017). Finally, clients may reenact their trauma history and patterns of relating with the abuser within a music therapy session (West, 2013). Countertransference reactions, **those somatic, emotional, unwarranted, or**

inexplicable reactions to the client (Bruscia, 2015), are normal. However, it is incumbent upon the music therapist to seek supervision or personal therapy to maintain a safe and trustworthy therapeutic space.

### **Peer Support**

SAMHSA (2014) defines peers as “individuals who have lived experiences of trauma” (p. 11). Peers, often referred to as trauma survivors, can offer and receive support to help manage the recovery process. Peer support groups may be facilitated by professionals (e.g., McCormack & Katalinic, 2016) or by non-professional staff or volunteers (e.g., Alaggia et al., 1999), a peer support provider (Mourra et al., 2014) or a self-help, trauma survivor run group (Davidson et al, 2006). Group music therapy may offer some of the same benefits as participation in a peer support group. Qualitative research findings suggest that adolescents admitted to an inpatient mental health unit reported participation in group music therapy facilitated positive peer connections (Rosado, 2019). Adult cancer patients participating in group music therapy noted peer support as a psychological benefit (Pothoulaki et al., 2012). Participation in peer support programs help those who have experienced trauma and have a mental disorder understand that they are not alone in or the cause of their experiences (Sullivan et al., 2018).

### **Collaboration and Mutuality**

Survivors of trauma are controlled by the traumatic situation. In the case of domestic or intimate partner violence harmful acts are done to the survivor (Classen & Clark, 2007), or the survivor is put in a “position of submission and coercion” (Pemberton & Loeb, 2020, p. 122.) This power dynamic may be relived in the therapeutic relationship if the music therapist does not work to flatten the hierarchy (Elliot et al., 2005). For example, therapeutic relationships in which the client feels they must do as the therapist asks may activate a stress response similar to what is/was experienced in the traumatic situation (Perry, 2009). Therapeutic relationships that embrace equality between the therapist and client and allow for shared decision making can be healing and create a model for other relationships (Pemberton & Loeb, 2020; SAMHSA, 2014). Collaboration also enhances empowerment, another hallmark of trauma informed care. Purdon (2006) also discusses the importance of treating clients who have experienced trauma in an egalitarian fashion. She notes this involves, listening, asking about hopes and fears, and providing information regarding options within the music therapy sessions. Therefore, Music therapy orientations and approaches that allow for flexibility and joint decision making are most appropriate when working from a trauma informed approach.

### **Empowerment, Voice and Choice**

Empowerment provides clients with opportunities to take charge of their life by making conscious choices and controlling their actions in interpersonal and social arenas (Bent-Goodley, 2019; Elliott et al. 2005; Gutierrez et al., 1998).

Cattaneo and Chapman (2010) offer this description of empowerment:



An iterative process in which a person who lacks power sets a personally meaningful goal oriented toward increasing power, takes action toward that goal, and observes and reflects on the impact of this action, drawing on his or her evolving self-efficacy, knowledge and competence related to the goal (p. 647).

Empowering clients means providing choices so they can have a voice in their therapeutic process and overall treatment. As noted by Bent-Goodley (2019), it provides opportunities for clients to feel validated and encouraged (p. 6).

Providing clients with choice is a key element of trauma informed care and may offer protection against retraumatization (Najavits, 2019). Choice is taken away from clients who have experienced trauma; they did choose to be traumatized, nor did they have any say in the symptoms they may experience (Classen & Clark, 2017; Elliott et. al 2005; Najavits, 2019). Providing clients with a choice of music experiences, length and format of sessions, and other aspects of the therapeutic process are basic ways to allow clients to say to yes to what they deem will be helpful, and no to what they deem will not (Elliott et. al 2005; Najavits, 2019). It is incumbent upon music therapists to be flexible in their approach to treatment, so that choices can be offered and the clients voice heard.

### **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues**

“Culture has significant implications for music therapy, because culture influences the therapeutic relationship and further affects the whole music therapy

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process – assessment, treatment and evaluation (A-Kim, 2020; p. 11). Music therapists must understand their clients’ cultural context, recognize the impact of historical trauma (emotional and psychological wounding across generations, and offer gender responsive services (Brave Heart, 2003; Elliott et al, 2005; SAMHSA, 2014). The meaning given to violence and trauma varies by culture (Briere & Scott, 2015). Elliott et al. (2005) remind clinicians that several factors influence how violence and trauma are viewed including “sexual orientation, religion, age, economic class, disability status, and race/ethnicity” (p. 469). These factors also contribute to treatment barriers and community resources.

### **Trauma-Informed Assessment**

The process of completing the trauma assessment, allows a clinician to understand the current trauma symptoms, the negatives of trauma exposure (Amirkhan & Marckwordt, 2017; Goodman, 2017 ), determine risk of suicide, assess self-harm (Clark et al., 2015), current level of functioning (Dass-Brailsford, 2007), and the client’s environment and available support system (Afana, et al., 2020). This helps a clinician to understand and determine if a client is utilizing avoidant or maladaptive coping skills, as well as what those skills include (Amirkhan & Marckwordt, 2017; Goodman, 2017). This underscores the ways in which the client generally feels about how they are able to cope with limited and available resources (Anderson et al., 2018).

A trauma informed assessment is an essential first step in the therapeutic process as it serves multiple functions. The assessment is an initial step in creating a sense of safety, identifying if the client is at-risk, and developing a treatment plan that is focused on recovery (Brown et al., 2013; Clark, et al., 2015; Hopper, 2017). Completing a detailed assessment helps a clinician understand a client’s current level of function

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(related to affect dysregulation and coping skills), identify current stressors, self-regulatory behaviors, interpersonal skills (Curran, 2013; Kerig, 2013), and the extent of trauma exposure and its effects (Briere & Scott, 2015). A trauma informed assessment also focuses on identifying the client's strengths and resources to support their resilience and foster a sense of empowerment (Clark, et al., 2015; Curran, 2013; Hopper, 2017). The assessment is vital to understand the client's symptoms and reactions associated with their trauma, comorbid disorders, and their available internal and external resources. Additionally, the therapist needs to understand that any type of trauma work should not begin until the client has sufficient coping skills in place and has a sense of competence implementing these skills (Curran, 2013; van der Kolk, 2014).

### **Music Therapy Treatment: Goals and Methods**

A thorough trauma informed assessment provides the information needed to determine and develop the music therapy treatment plan. Understanding the client's current level of functioning and coping strategies ensures the clinician will begin the therapeutic process addressing the primary therapeutic needs of the client. The initial goals in the therapeutic process need to address any safety concerns or risks that have been identified (Briere & Scott, 2015; Clark, et al., 2015; van der Kolk, 2014). The next section will focus on three areas related to trauma informed care and approach. These areas are key and have been identified as factors and play an important role in the ability of individuals to manage symptoms related to mental illness and trauma. These include coping (e.g., Kuper et al., 2020), resilience (e.g., Ungar & Theron, 2020), and emotion regulation (e.g., Cludius et a., 2020).

## Coping

Coping has been defined as the behavioral and cognitive strategies individuals use to manage or alleviate stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Thompson & Jaque, 2019). Coping strategies may be adaptive (positive) or maladaptive (negative). Clients that have limited adaptive coping strategies will need to develop these skills in order to respond and manage stress and negative effects associated with their trauma (Briere & Scott, 2015; Mattson, et al., 2018; Thompson & Jaque, 2019). In the process of developing coping skills, placing greater emphasis on client's thoughts and feelings may promote more active engagement in developing new coping strategies (Booker, et al., 2020). When clients are able to acknowledge their thoughts and feelings, they recognize the need to use coping oriented strategies, rather than coping avoidant strategies (Mattson, et al., 2018). The development of adaptive coping-oriented skills is predicative of post trauma growth (PTG) and facilitates overall PTG, which improves a client's current level of functioning and long-term adaptation (Mattson, et al., 2018).

The use of music and music therapy methods may be a helpful and effective means of coping (Davis, 2010; Garrido, et al., 2015; XXXX & XXXX, 2015; McFerran & Teggelove, 2011) though there is a paucity of research demonstrating the efficacy among individuals with complex mental disorders. Descriptive data from pilot studies suggest that cognitive behavioral music therapy groups may have a positive impact on the development and use of positive coping skills in patients with complex mental health diagnoses (Hakvoort et al., 2015; Silverman, 2019; Silverman, 2011). There is a substantial body of research which supports the use of music therapy on stress management and anxiety reduction. For example, vocal re-creation and vocal

improvisation were found to significantly decrease salivary cortisol, a bio-marker of stress in chemically dependent individuals (Taets et al., 2019). Music listening was found to significantly reduce stress in hospitalized alcohol-dependent clients (Hwang & Oh, 2013). This suggests that singing, vocal improvisation, and music listening may be useful as coping skills for individuals with complex mental disorders.

### **Resilience**

Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt to life challenges despite significant adversity (Shiner & Masten, 2012) or the ability to bounce back from adversity, is a key factor in the maintenance of mental health. The importance of resilience in successful recovery for individuals who have complex clinical diagnoses has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Las Hayas et al. 2016; Roberts et al. 2002; Zweben et al. 2015). There are several biopsychosocial factors that are associated with resilience (see Southwick et al., 2015) that are positively influenced by participation in music therapy. For example, music listening and active music making has been shown to reduce levels of cortisol, decrease self-reported levels of stress, increase dopamine levels, and foster a sense of connection with others (e.g., Fancourt et al., 2016; Leggae, 2015; Menon & Levitan, 2005; Pearce et al. 2015; Winkleman, 2003). Landis-Shack and colleagues (2017) note that music therapy methods share the same resilience-enhancing mechanisms for recovery as mindfulness and other relaxation techniques. Given this, music therapists working with individuals who have complex clinical diagnoses may want to include music therapy methods such as music relaxation with or without imagery, music guided breathing, vocal and instrumental re-creation, and group drumming. A modified approach to the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) may be indicated for some

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clients to help clients build resources, which will enhance their resilience (Beck et al., 2018).

### **Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation refers to how individuals experience and express emotions (Gross, 1998). According to Frenzel & Stephens, (2013) “emotions are multidimensional constructs comprising affective, psychological, cognitive, expressive, and motivational components” (p. 5). Frijda (1994) and Jenkins & Oatley (1996) further suggest that emotion is an affective response to something of importance that has occurred in an individual’s life. Emotions may be experienced along a continuum from pleasant to unpleasant, and each person’s affective reaction to an emotion is unique. Emotional regulation involves the ability to monitor, evaluate, and modulate emotional reactions as well as the regulation of physiological processes and behaviors related to emotional expression (e.g., Eisenberg, 2004). It also refers to how individuals influence their own and other people’s emotions (Gross, 1998). Emotional regulation deficits, or dysregulation is a common feature in many mental disorders (Aldao et al., 2010; Cludius et al. 2020). Recent studies have linked maladaptive emotional regulation strategies to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance use disorders (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Aldao et al. 2010). While not specifically mentioned in the above cited studies, depression and anxiety are often symptoms associated with chronic mental illness and posttraumatic stress disorder. Therefore, emotional regulation is considered a transdiagnostic process meaning it is present in more than one mental disorder, and contributes to the maintenance of psychopathology (Harvey et al. 2004; Sloan et al., 2017).

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There is a significant body of research that supports the use of music for emotional self-regulation (see Saarikallio, 2010 for a detailed discussion). Based on this, Marik & Stegemann (2016) suggest that music may be an important tool, and music therapy methods are important interventions in addressing emotional dysregulation. Engaging in music either passively (listening) or actively (creating) increases blood flow to the pleasure centers of the brain, increases endorphin production, and reduces cortisol production thereby helping clients to manage negative emotions and mood (Landis-Shack et al. 2017). Clients who participate in music therapy can begin to learn how to name, tolerate, explore, and express various emotions through participation in improvisation, song discussion, and composition methods. A modified approach to the BMGIM may also facilitate emotional exploration and expression. Music therapists can assist clients in developing playlists that can be used outside of the therapy room to modulate mood and emotional reactions (XXXX & XXXX, 2015).

### Trauma Informed **Clinical** Case Study

The following **clinical** case study demonstrates the implementation of a trauma informed assessment and therapeutic process. Based on the **clinical** assessment and evaluation of the safety risks, a music therapy treatment plan was developed with therapeutic goals to address the primary needs, **strengths and preferences** of the client. Music therapy methods were then implemented based on the needs and preferences of the client. This **clinical** case illustration focuses on the trauma informed care approach implemented and not the trauma work. The **music psychotherapeutic work focused on working through this** client's **early childhood trauma** is published elsewhere (XXXX,

2015) and will not be reviewed or explored, since the focus of this article is on the trauma informed care approach.

### *Context of Clinical Case*

The clinical case presented is of a client that presented for evaluation at an eating disorder (ED) specialty clinic and following that evaluation was admitted into outpatient eating disorder treatment. During the evaluation appointment, the client meets with a therapist, dietitian, physician, and psychiatrist. This team assesses the client's level of ED symptom use, medical stability, mental health status, current level of coping, and treatment history. Following the assessment, the treatment team provides diagnoses and treatment recommendations. In this case, the intake team recommended outpatient ED treatment, which consisted of the client attending weekly appointments with a primary therapist, dietitian, and physician, and monthly appointments with the psychiatrist for review and management of pharmacological treatment. The outpatient team communicated regularly regarding challenges and progress in the treatment process.

In this clinical case, the music therapist served as the client's primary therapist and utilized music therapy as the primary therapeutic modality to address the client's needs. This case illustration includes the client's history, complex profile, and the music therapy based trauma informed approach implemented from assessment to treatment is discussed. The music therapy methods utilized in this trauma informed approach were tailored to the preferences and to meet the needs of the client to help her develop coping skills she would be able to integrate and utilize in her daily life. Information provided regarding the use of methods provides an illustration of how they can be utilized within a trauma informed approach and detailed descriptions of what the music therapist is not



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provided, as the methods were adapted in numerous ways to meet the needs of the client in this case.

### *Client History*

Angie was a 27-year-old white female, married with a one-year-old son when this treatment process began. Following her intake assessment at the eating disorder clinic she began outpatient treatment and had her first session with the music therapist. In her initial therapy assessment, she reported she was a registered nurse, worked in the surgical area and that she loves her work, and feels she is very good at her job. She also shared that this is the one part of her life where she feels confident and capable in her skills and abilities.

Angie was first diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa (AN) at age fourteen and at this point in time her eating disorder (ED) symptoms included restricting her food intake, purging, and over exercising. She was also diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) at this same time and this was when she encountered her first episode of outpatient treatment for her eating disorder.

Angie was in and out of outpatient eating disorder treatment throughout high school and college, and reported short periods of time when her ED symptoms subsided. She shared that when her depression and anxiety worsened, or life became stressful, that her ED symptom use would return.

After college, Angie began working and got married, she did continue to restrict her food intake and over exercise. However, when she found out she was pregnant, she was able to use this as motivation to stop her symptom use as she recognized that her ED symptom use could harm the fetus. Throughout her pregnancy she did not use ED

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**symptoms**, but it was at this point she began using self-injurious behavior (SIB) as a means of coping and would cut herself when she felt overwhelmed. **Following the birth of her son, she began restricting her food intake, purging, over exercising again. When the use of these symptoms and SIBs intensified, she decided it was time to seek treatment.** Angie shared she felt a great deal of shame about all of her symptom use and that she had not disclosed this to anyone in her life, her husband was not even aware of her symptom use. Her reduced nutritional intake, purging, and overexercising **placed Angie at risk for medical complications if the severity of these symptoms increased.** She reported **utilizing in SIBs 1-2 times per week and denied any thoughts of suicide, which indicated there was no** threat of imminent danger. Angie also disclosed that between the ages of 4-5 years old she was sexually abused by the spouse of **the woman who was her childcare** provider. The experience of the abuse was complicated by the fact the **childcare** provider was a **close** friend of her mother.

### ***Treatment Process***

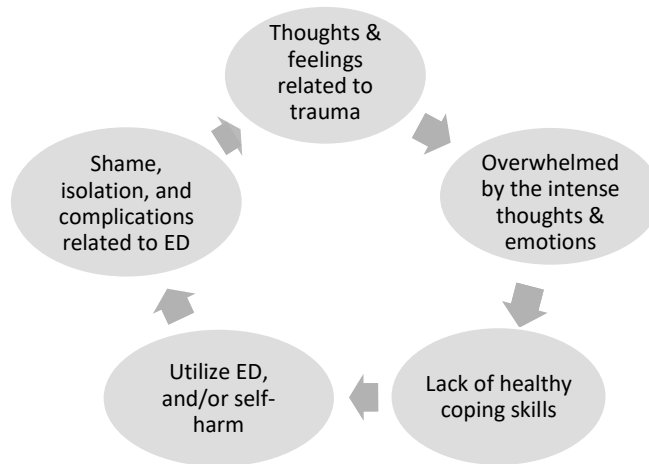
It was evident from Angie's trauma informed assessment that she was struggling to **cope** and her **ED symptoms and SIBs served as her primary coping skills. This necessitated focusing her treatment plan on** helping her develop coping skills that could **replace the current negative skills she was using.** This process began by helping Angie understand when, and why, she turned to using these symptoms and behaviors **and to develop** her awareness of when she was vulnerable and at risk.

Figure 1 illustrates the cycle that Angie experienced when her thoughts and/or feelings were overwhelming. **Depicting** this cycle helped Angie to **understand** and recognize what was triggering her ED symptoms and SIBs, and how the cycle was being

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perpetuated by isolation and feelings of shame. Additionally, as she began to understand this cycle, she was able to see that her current (negative) coping skills were also part of the problem and she needed to develop new skills in order to interrupt this cycle. The process of illustrating this cycle helped to foster transparency, build trust in the therapeutic relationship, and empowered Angie to make a choice to change and focus on developing new coping skills.

Figure 1: Angie's process of coping



The next step in Angie's therapeutic process focused on developing adaptive coping skills, which would allow her to relinquish her negative coping skills. This phase of music therapy focused on exploring and learning various ways of using music as a tool to cope, and then practice implementing these skills in her everyday life. The music therapy methods utilized were selected based on Angie's needs, interests, strengths, and music preferences which are identified in Table 1. These methods were co-created and tailored to actively engage Angie in shaping the experiences, which empowered her in

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making choices, and fostered a sense of safety and trust throughout this therapeutic process.

Table 1

### *Angie's Strengths, Interests, and Music Preferences*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Interests</b>	<b>Music Preferences</b>
Motivated to engage in treatment and to make changes in her life	Learning to use music in new and different ways to foster her health and wellbeing	Listens to and enjoys music from different genres (popular, folk, contemporary/new age, jazz, and some classical)
A desire to learn new and different ways to cope	Discovering how to use her inner resources	Enjoys music integrated nature sounds
Understanding of the body and the stress and relaxation response	Enjoys journaling (writing and drawing)	Prefers acoustic music, but does like some synthesized/electronic music
Some understanding of how music fosters relaxation response (learning in nursing training & practice)	Developing skills that can be implemented at home or at work as needed	Sings to her son to help him fall asleep at night and finds this soothing

Table 2 details provides a brief description of the music therapy methods utilized, description of the method, the therapeutic need or needs address, how they helped Angie, details regarding the music, and the trauma informed principle underlying the use of the method. The methods are listed in Table 2 are in the order in which they were implemented in the therapeutic process. The music experiences utilized were co-created and adapted in multiple ways throughout the therapeutic process. For example, several different direct music imaging experiences were created and recorded based on Angie's preferred images and music. The myriad ways that the methods were adapted and tailored to meet Angie's therapeutic needs are not detailed further in this manuscript

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and it is important to acknowledge that the flexibility inherent in music and the methods provided the opportunity for Angie and the music therapist to work creatively and reflexively in the process.

The process of co-creating the music experiences with Angie allowed the music therapist to teach her about the therapeutic elements and aspects of music that allowed her to better understand how music is a valuable resource and tool to be integrated into her coping skills repertoire. Developing this knowledge not only informed her about why music is helpful, but also empowered her to make informed decisions and choices about when music may be the appropriate means for coping.

**Table 2**

*Music therapy methods in trauma informed care*

<b>Music therapy method utilized with Angie</b>	<b>Description of the method</b>	<b>Need identified by assessment</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>Trauma informed principle(s)</b>
Music relaxation	Music listening to foster a relaxation response to manage stress and anxiety	Need: Coping & emotion regulation  To help Angie select and use music to manage her stress and anxiety, to refocus and distract from her ED thoughts and provide her with a resource she could use at home or on a break at work	Instrumental contemporary/new age and improvised music (60-80 beats per minute) created by music therapist; music and vocal music Angie selected music from preferred artists and groups that allowed her to focus on the music rather than ED or anxious thoughts	Safety, trust

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Entrainment	Listening to music in order to slow down the rhythms of the body (breathing, heart rate, etc.)	Need: Coping & emotion regulation  To support Angie learning how she can use music to help slow down her body's response to stress and anxiety	Therapist created a guided deep breathing experience accompanied by improvised music created music (60-80 beats per minute) created by music therapist utilizing instruments selected by Angie	Safety, trust, choice
Directed music imaging	Client imaging to guiding provided by the therapist	To empower Angie to develop her skills in managing her stress and anxiety	Imagery co-created by Angie and music therapist with contemporary/new age music that supported the imagery and preferred by Angie	Safety, trust, transparency, collaboration, empowerment/choice
Stimulative listening	Listening to music designed to elevate or shift mood (based on the iso principle)	Need: Coping & emotion regulation  To actively engage Angie in creating a tool (playlists) she can use to manage mood states and develop the skills to create playlists that would be helpful in the future and have accessible tool to use in her everyday life	Co-created playlists with Angie to help manage and shift, mood, anxiety, and to empower and inspire her. Music selected based on Angie's preferences and the desired mood state or message	Trust, collaboration, empowerment/choice
Toning	Using the voice to create vibration to resonate with client's body (in this case her heart and stomach/gut)	Need: Coping  To help Angie develop a coping skill that could be implemented when other resources are not available, to discover how her voice is a valuable resource, and empower her to use her voice	Practiced toning along with recordings the music therapist created using improvised music accompanied by ocean waves to give her support until she felt comfortable toning unaccompanied	Safety, Empowerment/choice/voice

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Chanting	Vocalizing on an empowering word(s)	Need: Coping & emotion regulation  To empower Angie in using her voice and integrate words that fostered a sense of calm support strength (Angie chose the following words to chant: breathe, peace, tranquility, and rest)	Practiced chanting with recordings the music therapist created using improvised music with a drone base to give her support until she felt comfortable toning unaccompanied	Empowerment/choice/voice
Drawing (mandala) or journaling to music	Drawing or writing while listening to music	Need: Coping & emotion regulation  To provide Angie a way to release and contain emotions that needed to be expressed	Engaged in drawing and journaling with music to provide structure, containment, and time limited process to be present with and practice tolerating uncomfortable emotions when they arose	Safety, empowerment/choice/voice

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(Bruscia, 2014; XXXX & XXXX, 2015)

This phase of Angie’s therapeutic process included weekly 50 minute sessions over the course of a three month timeframe. In sessions, Angie worked collaboratively to co-create the music experiences, that were then practiced within the sessions with the music therapist facilitating. Angie would then practice using these techniques in her daily life. She would check in during subsequent sessions and report on her process and progress using these new coping skills. When she reported challenges, these would be addressed in the therapy session by practicing, making adjustments or adaptations as needed. Angie demonstrated very good follow through in the process and practiced these skills diligently. She encountered struggles when her urge to use symptoms (ED and SIBs)

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were strong. She expressed feeling shame when she reported that she ‘slipped up’ and used symptoms rather than her new coping skills. It was important to validate her experiences in this process, recognizing that change is not always easy, and that it takes time, patience, and practice. By the end of three months, she had a strong command of these new coping skills and was able to respond more proactively, implementing these new skills when she noticed early signs of stress and anxiety.

Angie’s therapeutic process was designed to meet her needs by drawing upon her strengths, considering her cultural context, utilizing her music preferences, and integrating the principles of trauma informed care. Engaging in the process of change within the context of the therapeutic relationship, fostered the development of trust and her sense of safety for Angie. She cultivated her resilience as she co-created, learned, and practiced these new coping skills (Ford & Russo, 2006; Kain & Terrell, 2018), which allowed her over time to relinquish her maladaptive skills (Badenoch, 2018). Changing her pattern of coping, helped her interrupt her cycle (illustrated in Figure 1), which helped alleviate the shame she experienced when using her ED symptoms and SIBs. This phase of her therapeutic process was critical, as it helped her develop the skills, she would need to manage emotions that would emerge during the course of her trauma work (Heiderscheit, 2015).

### **Training, Consultation & Supervision**

Working from a trauma informed care perspective is not trauma work. Trauma work is complex and requires **significant** training and supervision and is beyond the scope of this article. A clinician must have the necessary training to be able to practice ethically and responsibly to work with clients that have experienced trauma. This



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often entails advanced and specialized training to ensure a client is not re-traumatized in the therapeutic process (Behrens, 2019). Literature related to trauma and its impact on the brain and body have helped to further inform how to effectively approach therapeutic work from a trauma informed approach. As a result, it is critical for clinicians to understand neurobiology and its impact on trauma (Behrens, 2019; Evans & Coccoma, 2014; Porges, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). This may often require clinicians to seek out additional training and workshops that focus on this specialized knowledge or advancing their training (Sokira, 2019) to work safely and appropriately with clients.

Clinicians **must** maintain a strong ethical and professional practice, responding to the client's evolving and changing needs, while also attending to one's own self-care (Briere & Scott, 2015). As professional music therapists, we are obligated to practice within the scope of practice our education and clinical training has prepared us to practice (AMTA, 2015). This requires the music therapist to understand their knowledge, skills, abilities and experience, and to employ these skills in a safe, effective and ethical manner, without risk or causing harm. Music therapists are also bound to their professional code of ethics and to abide by the core values of kindness, social responsibility, dignity & respect, equality, accountability, excellence, integrity, and courage (AMTA 2019).

Due to the complexity and the impact of trauma on clients it is helpful for a clinician to actively engage in consultation with other members of the treatment team or with colleagues when questions, issues, or concerns arise (Sokira, 2019). The complexities inherent in trauma work can also warrant a clinician engaging in professional supervision. Due to a variety of therapeutic issues such as transference and

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countertransference that may surface in the process of trauma work it is vital for a clinician to seek the supervision, or consultation from more experienced professionals to process through these therapeutic issues. This is not only important for the care of the client, but also to receive support and guidance as a clinician to manage vicarious trauma.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, working from a trauma-informed perspective means having an awareness that clients may have experienced many different types of trauma; even if that is not the primary reason they give for seeking treatment. Trauma can be insidious, subtle, or chronic; each person will respond in their own unique way, including developing coping mechanisms that may contribute to other mental health issues. A trauma-informed approach creates a partnership between the therapist and client needs (Bent-Goodley, 2019). It involves incorporating the principles of trauma informed care (SAMHSA, 2014), completing a trauma informed assessment that will inform the treatment plan. Music therapists working within their level of competence can offer clients multiple music therapy methods to address identified clinical needs. It is important to know and recognize the signs of trauma to minimize the risk of re-traumatization (Classen & Clark, 2017). Finally, supervision, consultation or referrals should be made to an advanced practice, trauma-trained music therapist if traumatic memories surface or the client is re-traumatized.

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