



Book review

Music Therapy Groupwork with Special Needs Children: The Evolving Process

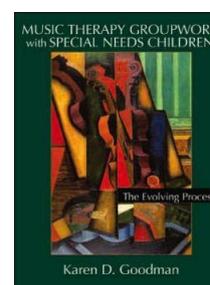
Karen D. Goodman

Reviewed by Esther Thane

Music Therapy Groupwork with Special Needs Children: The Evolving Process

Karen D. Goodman

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Esther Thane works as a music therapist with special needs children, specialising in autism, in North Vancouver, BC, Canada. In addition to being director of ET Music Therapy (www.etmusictherapy.com), Esther is a music therapy voice instructor at Capilano University, teaching in the Bachelor of Music Therapy Program. Esther completed Dr Diane Austin's (Music Psychotherapy Center, NY) first international distance training program in Advanced Vocal Psychotherapy. Her chapter in the book *Voicework in Music Therapy* (published by Jessica Kingsley) focuses on her innovative method of vocal-led relaxation for children with ASD. Esther's online music therapy resources can be found on www.mundopato.com.

E-mail: ethane@telus.net

Karen Goodman's book *Music Therapy Groupwork with Special Needs Children: The Evolving Process*, outlines a clear and well thought out path to tackling the challenges and criteria that are particular to group music therapy work. It appears Goodman has thought of every possible corner to explore in offering the music therapist a wealth of knowledge on the subject matter. Her extensive years of experience have led her to develop a high level of expertise and refined her ability to see the 'big picture'.

Music therapists of all levels of training and experience can benefit from this book's content. For the novice, this book delivers a magnitude of foundational principles, methods, assessment considerations, session planning, evaluation and

resources; enough to explore and try out for many years to come. Newly certified music therapists would find the study questions at the end of each chapter useful for critical thought development. As an experienced/expert level music therapist working with special needs children, I appreciate this book for reflection on my own work, my curriculum, assessing progress and for fresh inspiration. Goodman's book is of particular interest to me as I have been contracted for many years by a local school district, to run group music therapy sessions for elementary level special needs children. In reading Goodman's work, I found many parallels in our work issues and program development. This format, that incorporates beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of

instruction, allows each reader to target chapters relating to his/her current needs as a music therapist.

The book is divided into eight chapters, starting with assessment, goal planning, adaptations for group music therapy, and continuing on with methods and evaluation chapters. Chapter 2 outlines assessment, including a detailed summary of assessment literature with Goodman sharing her own assessment tool for emotionally disturbed children. Chapter 3 deals with important decision making topics such as coping with school schedules, individual vs. group placement, sensory profiling and limitations of school settings. Goodman also discusses developmental age and musical developmental ages, referencing the models of Greenspan and Wieder (1998) and Briggs (1991). Chapter 4 discusses evaluation of group priorities and goal planning based upon a child's IEP (individual education plan), with some reference to US regulations and protocols. In general, this book is a particularly useful reference for music therapists practising in the US, as it includes references to US state/federal laws and regulations pertaining to the special needs school-aged child.

Chapter 5 targets objectives in group music therapy, specifically tracking observable behaviour and reviewing long term goal setting. Chapter 6 covers musical materials including the extensive analysis and use of song (i.e. vocal, instrumental, for dramatic play). Goodman also offers her CMR (Continuum of Music Response) system which "allows the therapist to conduct group music therapy experiences while anticipating different responses from different children in the group" (p. 175). Goodman stresses the role of creativity and flexibility in music therapy group work.

The book concludes with Chapters 7 and 8 which focuses on methods and evaluation of treatment plans. These chapters include valuable considerations specific to individual conditions (e.g. visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically delayed, as well as children with autism and communication disorders). In addition, Goodman shares advice on adaptability and flexibility in sessions, repetition of materials, modelling, prompting, physical arrangement of groups, and the roles of support staff in sessions.

Throughout the book, Goodman offers a myriad of case examples (many from her own work) in the form of clinical vignettes to illustrate concepts. For the novice music therapist, these clinical examples bring the theory to life, aiding in the conceptualisation of uncharted territory. As Goodman believes doing music therapy in a group "can feel like a balancing act" (p. viii) between structure and freedom, she offers a variety of

approaches that can be woven into music therapy group work practice. The book is peppered throughout with resource lists of recorded music, materials, music therapy interventions, songs and tables, thus creating an extremely systemised approach for group work implementation.

Taking into consideration that this book was published seven years ago (2007), some will find the labelling language and terminology for conditions somewhat out-dated, but Goodman writes respectfully of all developmental levels and conditions throughout. Goodman refers to numerous foundational music therapy approaches and is highly influenced by the writings, work and compositions of Nordoff and Robbins which are referenced throughout the book. *Music Therapy Groupwork with Special Needs Children: The Evolving Process* is an easy to use guide and extensive tool for group work in paediatric music therapy. For the music therapist facilitating group sessions for children with special needs, this book is a must read and an invaluable resource.

References

- Briggs, C. (1991). A model for understanding musical development. *Music Therapy, 10*(1), 1-21.
- Greenspan, S., & Wieder, S. (1998). *The Child with Special Needs: Encouraging Intellectual and Emotional Growth*. Reading, MA: Perseus.

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