



Resources for Music Therapists and Students

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COVID-19

Cultivating Deliberate Resilience

AMTA COVID-19 Task Force

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Considerations for music therapists practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic drawn from Rosenberg, 2020

As music therapists moving through this incredibly difficult time, supporting ourselves and each other is of great concern. Recent questions asked by music therapists are: How can we hope to emerge from this global pandemic intact? How is it that some live through dire adverse experiences and emerge stronger? Resilience researcher Dr. Abby Rosenberg provides a perspective on what can be helpful, offering actionable strategies for how we can cultivate resilience in ourselves and our communities through a conscious and deliberate approach (Rosenberg, 2020).

Early models categorized resilience as either a trait, process or outcome, but current research suggests that certain behaviors and attitudes can be adaptive to stress which can lead to increased resilience (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). Rosenberg suggests that our greatest potential is to approach resilience as a process that draws on resources from three categories: individual, community, and existential. Rosenberg offers questions representing each category that will be helpful for music therapists to consider in order to draw strength and perspective from these different sources.

What do I do when times get hard?

Individual resources that lead to resilience include self-care strategies which include getting good sleep and nutrition as well as stress management techniques such as gratitude, exercise and engaging in music making for selfcare (see Figure 1). Additionally, Individual goal setting will help motivate by setting a measurable timeline of progression when tapping into one's internal resources. Consider setting a daily goal for a stress management approach and realistic work outcomes. Building in even modest performance outcomes will enable you to recognize and celebrate your daily successes and positive experiences that reinforce your resilience.

Who helps me when times get hard?

Relationships with friends, family and peers represent community resources that help us feel connected to others. Take time to acknowledge the importance of that by initiating

dialogue with those in our current networks to explore how others are doing and share successes of your own experience. Consider cultivating relationships with new individuals and groups that share your interests.

Who do I want to be when this is over and what will it have meant for me?

Existential resources represent those approaches that effectively help us to positively reframe the adversities that we face in order to create a vision for ourselves and our communities after the pandemic is over. We may do this by identifying our values and finding the underlying meaning and purpose we all feel to use music to help others. These values can also connect us clinicians with the source that brought us to the field while fueling our work and increasing our awareness. This process of existential growth prepares us for “what” or “who” we want to be when this is all over.

Resilience research continues to grow, and while our focus here has been on what individuals can do to cultivate resilience, new group based frameworks have developed. Team resilience is one such area, exploring what makes the difference between work teams that survive and those that fail when facing adverse conditions (Stoverink, Kirkman, Mistry, & Rosen 2020). Furthermore, these themes of team based resilience have begun to emerge and complement individual considerations, which appear to be constructed from similar underpinnings and paradigms.

While the pandemic we are all facing has dramatically altered our lives, we each have the capacity to act in positive ways that can help us stay healthy and find new perspectives. Through these new lenses and reframed points of view, we may develop, grow and continue to serve our community and selves despite these profound challenges.

(Figure 1, next page)

Figure 1

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

AMTA COVID-19 TASK FORCE



Sleep: Implement a consistent routine to develop healthy sleeping habits. Sleep impacts both physical and mental health as well as the body's ability to repair itself.



Nutrition: Healthy eating habits will additionally impact both your physical and mental wellness. Properly balanced meals, hydration and meal times can provide numerous health benefits when consistently applied.



Exercise: Engaging in exercise provides benefits not only for your physical self, but your mood as well. Exercising triggers the release of endorphins, the "feel good" neurotransmitters, that supports a positive mindset.



Gratitude: Appreciation and feelings of gratitude are crucial steps in building resiliency. Taking a moment each day to draw your attention to people, places or things in your life that you appreciate can help create a positive and healthy outlook.



Play: Play music just for yourself. Taking the time to reconnect with music can offer yourself a powerful means of support using the skills you have already developed throughout your training. Take the time to play freely and without judgement.

References

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