Art, Music and Recreational Therapy: Helping Students with Autism Apply and Generalize Social Skills

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Introductions

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Overview

• Art Therapy
• Music Therapy
• Recreational Therapy
• Art, Music, and Recreational Therapy and Social Skills
• Case Studies
• Questions
Art Therapy

Art therapy is a mental health profession in which clients, facilitated by the art therapist, use art media, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behaviors and addictions, develop social skills, improve reality orientation, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem (American Art Therapy Association)
Art Therapy

Art therapists work with many populations including:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Mental health
- Rehabilitation
- Medical
- Educational
- Forensic
- Wellness
- Veterans
- Hospice
- Older Adults
- Developmental Disabilities
Music Therapy

-Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. (American Music Therapy Association, 2005)

-In the treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders, music therapy is identified as an emerging intervention by the National Autism Center. (2015)
Music Therapy

Music therapists work with many populations including:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Alzheimer’s
- Veterans
- Premature Infants
- Mental Health
- Wellness
- Medical
- Developmental Disabilities
- Hospice
- Older Adults
Recreational Therapy

- Recreational therapy, also known as therapeutic recreation, is a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions, as a means to psychological and physical health, recovery and well-being (American Therapeutic Recreation Association, 2017).
Recreational Therapy

Recreational Therapists may work with a wide range of individuals requiring health services including geriatric, mental health, addictions, general medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, developmental disabilities and pediatric clients (ATRA, 2017).
Social Skills

• Social skills are those skills that enable individuals to function competently at social tasks (Cook, Gresham, Barreras, Thornton, & Crews, 2008)

• Social skills can be defined as “a complex set of skills that include communication, problem-solving and decision making, assertion, peer and group interaction and self-management” (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003)

• A hallmark characteristic of autism is a deficit in social and communication skills (America Psychiatric Association, 2013)
In a school setting, art therapy provides opportunities for positive experiences that can translate into enhanced classroom performance and increased ability to gain from educational services. Art therapy can also be adapted to support academic, social, speech and language, or emotional goals and objectives.

Art Therapy at Monarch

Treatment Goals for Autism
Imagination/abstract thinking
Sensory integration and regulation
Emotion/self-expression
Developmental growth
Visual-spatial skills
Recreation/leisure skills
Art Therapy and Social Skills

- Enjoyable group activities can be useful to facilitate social interactions and friendships. (D’Amico & Lalonde, 2017)
- Elkis- Abuhoff (2008) – case study
  “noted that during the art based activities and role play sessions, the young woman developed new social abilities, communicative skills and coping strategies as she gained confidence in social situations…” (D’Amico & Lalonde, 2017)
- Impairments in social interactions consists of deficits in the usage or comprehension or eye contact, facial expression, and body postures. (Richard, More & Joy, 2015)
Art and Beginning Social Skills

- Greetings
- Emotion identification
  - Zones of Regulation
- Turn taking
  - Passing of supplies
Art and Intermediate Social Skills

- Emotion Identification
  - Emotion paintings
  - Color labeling
- Context
  - Noticing classroom surroundings
Art and Higher Level Social Skills

- Group art projects
  - Bridge building
  - Carousel activity
  - Hand print canvas
  - Line drawing
Music Therapy at Monarch

• Music therapy is provided in both group and individual sessions throughout the school.
• In these sessions students work on nonmusical goals while engaging in music therapy interventions.
• Goals can include: turn taking, impulse control, expressively answering academic questions, social skills, as well as learning musical skills.
Music Therapy and Social Skills

- Music interventions such as music performance, movement to music and improvisation were effective in improving social competence in children and adolescents with social defects (Gooding, 2011).
- The use of rhythmic cues and music structure in music therapy sessions may improve joint attention and eye gaze in children with autism (LaGasse 2014).
- Differences in simple versus complex music can improve joint attention responses of children with autism spectrum disorders (Kalas, 2012).
Music and Beginning Social Skills

Participation in group sessions/activities as a group.
- Parachute
- Stretchy Band
- Playing all similar instruments as a group

Joint Attention: engaging in the same object/experience at the same time
- Ocean Drum
- Djembe
- Gathering Drum
- Kokoriko
Music and Intermediate Social Skills

Turn Taking
• Utilizing instruments for turn taking
• Visuals to promote turn taking

Musical Elements to Promote Turn Taking
• Structure
• Tempo
• Silence
Music and Higher Level Social Skills

Lyric Analysis

• Uses listening techniques to facilitate a dialogue based upon the content of a song (Silverman, 2009).
• Selecting songs that correlate with social themes can help provide examples as well as opportunities to think critically about social skills concepts.

Sample Themes:

• Friendship
• Perspective Taking
• Filtering Speech
• Bullying vs Teasing
• Disguising Disgust
Lyric Analysis Examples

**Mean-Taylor Swift**
- Bullying vs Teasing
- Lyrics alternate between feelings when bullied then positive thoughts for the future
- Video itself provides three concrete examples of bullying and overcoming it

**Umbrella-Rihanna**
- Friendship
- Great use of figurative language
- Can use the “umbrella” metaphor to discuss how we help our friends
Recreational Therapy at Monarch

At Monarch, recreational therapy is used to promote motor function and leisure skills. Students move through activity stations following video models both to provide an opportunity for independence and assist classroom staff in understanding each station. Sessions are focused to target vestibular and proprioceptive sensory input, strengthening, static and dynamic balance, range of motion, body awareness, and coordination as well as introducing sport, fitness, and leisure skills.
Recreational Therapy and Social Skills

- Turn taking
- Gaining attention
- Reading nonverbal cues
- Appropriate commenting and sportsmanship
- Participating in non-preferred activities
- Group goals
Recreational Therapy and Social Skills

Our younger classes complete themed activity stations that work on overall motor skills and included at least one activity to complete with a partner each week.
Recreational Therapy and Social Skills
Recreational Therapy and Social Skills

• Partner and group teambuilding games and sports
  – Competitive versus cooperative activities
• Soccer and hockey human foosball
• Volleyball
• Tchoukball
• Towerbuilding
• Slingshot
• Human Hungry
  Hungry Hippos
Questions?
Monarch Center for Autism
Programs & Services

- Preschool
- Day School
- High School
- Transition Education Program
- Extended School Year and Summer Social Language Leadership Programs
- Therapeutic Residential Treatment
- Adult Day Habilitation & Supported Living Programs
- Community Outreach
- Autism Resources

- Web: [www.monarchcenterforautism.org](http://www.monarchcenterforautism.org)
- Telephone: 216.320.8945 or 1-800-879-2522
- Address: 22001 Fairmount Boulevard, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44118
- Join our e-newsletter mailing list: [http://www.monarchcenterforautism.org/contact-us/join-our-email-list](http://www.monarchcenterforautism.org/contact-us/join-our-email-list)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/monarchcenterforautism](http://www.facebook.com/monarchcenterforautism)
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References


