

Students are required to discuss the skills, tools and approaches needed to build meaningful relationships with young people and others. Your seminar should focus upon a method of your choice, illustrating how this approach can be used to build meaningful relationships with young people, both in groups and on a one-to-one basis. Your seminar should be supported by wider reading, and linked to the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019).

Expressive Arts with a focus on music

Slide 1: Good Morning, my name is Bethany Sexton and I am going to be talking about skills, tools, methods and approaches that can be used in facilitating youth work and the effectiveness of it. My chosen method to focus on is the expressive arts, and more specifically music, and how it can be used to facilitate the development of meaningful relationships.

Slide 2: Firstly, there are many approaches that we can use in youth work to interact with and build relationships with young people such as; arts and crafts, expressive arts such as drama and music, sports, entertainment (for example, movies, tv and watching sports), and gaming (consoles such as XBOX, PlayStation, Wii and Nintendo tend to be popular). We can also use and build our skills, such as; Communication, Patience, Active listening and Active participation. Using the ideas of informal learning and experiential learning as a tool is one of the things that makes youth work stand out from other forms of education. In Beard and Wilson's handbook on "Experiential Learning" (2006 2nd Edition, pg.2), they explain how experiential learning looks at any individual as a whole person, while working to actively engage with the other person. In Batsleer's book, "Informal Learning" (2008, pg.91), it characterises youth work with the "freedom of association" for the young people which sets youth work apart from other settings in young people's lives.

My chosen approach to focus on today is the expressive arts, zoning in on music, specifically through the medium of music therapy. Experts in the field of youth work have actually compared youth workers to creative artists and to musicians. In his book, "Local Education" (1994), Mark Smith suggested that every youth worker should have a repertoire that they can always go back to and adapt to different situations like musicians. In his article, "The youth worker as jazz improviser: foregrounding education 'in the moment' within the professional development of youth workers" (2014), Pete Harris expressed how the work of a youth worker could be compared to the adaptability and capabilities of a "jazz improviser". Therefore, it could be assumed that youth work and music are already connected.

Slide 3: Music therapy has been proven to be one of the most successful therapies there currently is. It can help to build meaningful and empowering relationships and it can also be used as a tool for individuals to get to know each other, for example; young person to youth worker and vice versa. In these statistics, 86% of music therapy clients said that their social and interaction skills had improved since engaging in music therapy (Soocial, 2024). There were 1.6 million music therapists in service worldwide; 26,000 in service just in the United States (ibid). As of the 31st of March 2023, there were 1,013 in service in England (NHS England, 2022). This is a graph showing the results of a study on the usefulness of music therapy to patients in Great Ormond Street Hospital (2020). As you can see, the green shows the success rates in each of these areas.

Slide 4: The expressive arts, especially music, are educational and beneficial, and it is the perfect example of enabling one to use one's head, heart and hands. My diagram shows the connection between the head, heart and hands and captions each one of them. The head is

mindset, the heart is vision, and the hands are the system (Do Good Jobs, 2023). The expressive arts promote a positive mindset and an effective outlet for negative influences and thoughts. Use of the expressive arts can encourage vision into developing passions and goals. The system of expressive arts can be very active and can use either the whole body or not much at all, but it has a system in whichever way they are used.

According to the Massachusetts Center for Adolescent Wellness (2023), the most used types of music therapy are singing, playing instruments, discussing lyrics, songwriting, composition, listening to music, dancing, and movement. These can help with issues in young people such as trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioural disorders, ADHD, mood disorders, substance abuse, anxiety disorders and eating disorders (MCAW, 2023)

The expressive arts can be very effective in eliciting one's feelings which could be useful in getting to know a young person on a youth worker to young person basis; it facilitates open and honest expression from people. Music and the expressive arts promote empowerment, enthusiasm, self-discovery, self-awareness, achievement, therefore helping to reveal their potential and build their confidence. With the expressive arts, especially music, it is completely creative and therefore there is no right or wrong in music therapy and without judgement, there is more space to facilitate the building of healthy relationships. It is easy using music therapy as a tool, to keep yourself safe and accountable and it also meets self-care and wellbeing needs.

Slide 5: There are many ways we could use expressive arts for building and maintaining relationships in a group or one-to-one setting. Playing music in the background of a conversation can help to lessen awkwardness and/or anxiousness and it can be used one-to-one or in a group. Teaching how to play instruments to facilitate the use of music can be one-to-one or in a group and uses teamwork, compromise, negotiation and patience. Drama and theatre practices can be used one-to-one or in a group, although usually better in a group and

can be effective as icebreaker activities. Music/drama practices can be calming and an effective way to settle disagreements and “storming” in Tuckman’s theory of group development in a group setting (JAGA Workspaces, 2023).

Slide 6: The next consideration is how can the expressive arts help you as a youth worker to meet the 5 Ways to Wellbeing (Health in Mind, 2024)? I created 5 questions to answer, one for each of the Ways to Wellbeing.

So how can we connect through the expressive arts; they are a brilliant way to connect with others. The arts can be used to create a safe space to express yourself and it can be effective in being used as an escape from chaos or stress.

How can the expressive arts be active; the arts are effective in the fact that you can adapt them to be as active or as relaxing as they need to be for any setting, individual or group. Many drama and theatre games or warm-ups are extremely active. However, musical activities can be active through dance and movement, or they can be quiet and stationary. They can really be used in whatever setting you are in.

How can the expressive arts help you to take notice; how people react to the arts can give you an idea of what they like, what they don’t like and what they react well to. Taking notice of these verbal and non-verbal communications will help you to be a better worker for them. All of the expressive arts have nuances and small details that you ideally need to pay attention to and once these skills are in place, they could easily be transferrable to other situations as well.

How can the expressive arts facilitate for you to keep learning; you can never learn everything about the arts as it is ever-changing and sometimes it is easier to connect and interact with the young people if you are all learning together. Through these activities, you will learn about the young people and the expressive arts.

How can the expressive arts enable you to give: you give your time and your presence as a youth worker. Being committed and reliable is important when working with young people and you give your preparation for activities and you are able to give your knowledge on certain abilities and/or passions you may have and want to share.

Slide 7: ACTIVITY

I am going to give out 3 small cards to everyone and then I am going to play 3 separate 30 second excerpts of instrumental music. I will leave one minute inbetween each piece for you to write down three words or phrases that the music made you feel or something you became aware of while the music playing. For example, one piece may make you feel calm or happy, or a piece may make you feel stronger than the previous one. This activity enables you to concentrate on your mindfulness, self-awareness, emotional and mental health. Also linking back to Catherine Slade's lecture on therapeutic practice (2024), this activity can open one up to the idea of the self and self-concept and it may enable one to gain an intrinsic understanding to their needed "self-healing and growth".

(Play "It's OK")

Slide 8: This song is called "It's OK" and it was written by an artist called Nightbirde. Her name was Jane Marczewski, she became a sensation when she auditioned for America's Got Talent in Season 16 2021, receiving Simon Cowell's Golden buzzer. She had been fighting breast cancer and before the live shows, she had to drop out of the show for health reasons. On the 19th of February 2022, she passed away, aged 31, after a long and hard fight with cancer. Her story reached people all around the world and moved millions. According to the production company NBC, by the 30th of May 2023, her audition video had over 45 million views on

YouTube (Jean-Phillipe, 2023). Although Nightbirde passed away, she lives on through the power of her music. In Season 18 in 2023, Mzansi Youth Choir from South Africa auditioned for America's Got Talent with a tribute to Nightbirde, a cover of "It's OK" and a moving story of how Nightbirde's music helped them through their darkest moments, bringing them closer as a group. Music shares important stories and makes sure that they are heard. It shares and encompasses love and joy in the hardest moments of people's lives; this is something I can testify to and so can many others. Music can overcome barriers, no matter the distance or how tough it gets, and this is essential in youth work to persevere through barriers, in order to help every individual in the workplace.

Slide 9: Bono, lead singer of U2, said that "Music can change the world because it can change people" (Nabi, 2012) and I agree. I believe that Music can change the world for the better one person at a time because music can transform the world for people.

Slide 10: To conclude, while preparing, I linked these ideas and theories to four main principles from the National Occupational Standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019). The four I picked are YW01 – Initiate, build and maintain relationships with young people, YW07 – Apply youth values and beliefs with young people, YW18 – Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health, and YW19 – Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity.

YW01 – Initiate, build and maintain relationships with young people. Throughout this PowerPoint, I have mentioned some different ways that approaches such as expressive arts and music can initiate, build and assist in maintaining relationships with young people.

YW07 – Apply youth values and beliefs with young people. The approach of music therapy that I have focused on today is effective in encouraging self-care in the physical, mental and

emotional. This approach also meets the Five Pillars of Youth Work (Youth Work Wales Review Group, 2022) which are “Educative”, “Expressive”, “Participative”, “Inclusive” and “Empowering”.

YW18 – Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health. The main aim of the music therapy approach is to promote the expression and ability to be self-aware in terms of one’s wellbeing and mental health.

YW19 – Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity. Expressive arts has the space to be completely inclusive and diversity is a vital part of the arts. Music, especially, is an integral part of many cultures worldwide.

Altogether this is why I chose the expressive arts generally and specifically music and music therapy as I believe that there is so much potential for them to be used in Youth Work.

Slide 11-12: Thank you so much for listening and taking part.

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