

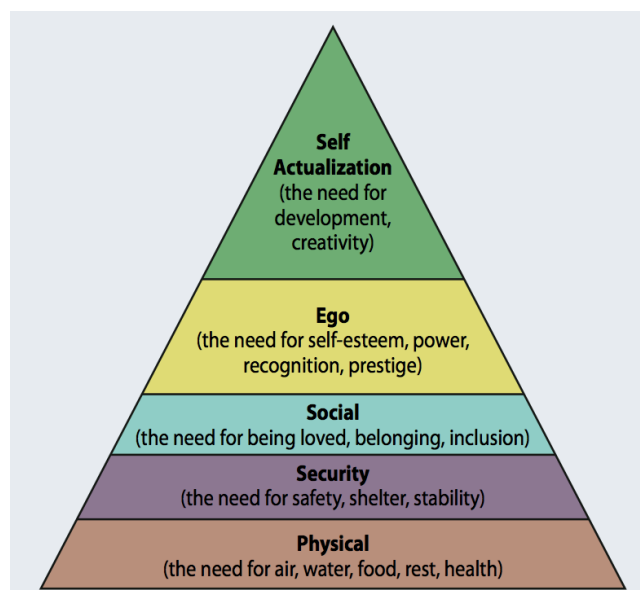
The Humanistic Approach

I approach my work from a Humanistic point of view, coupled with the goal of meeting the needs of each individual as defined by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Focusing on the joy of being in and making music, presenting a program of preferred music and songs motivates each client to spontaneously and purposefully engage in music in their own unique way. Thus, engagement and positive responses stem from the individual's inherent desire to participate in music. Put simply, my clients engage in the music (and with me) because they want to. They are motivated, inspired, and moved to do so. I invite each person to join me in music. I "open the door"; the individual chooses whether he or she wishes to "enter."

I believe music therapy, particularly in a dementia-care setting, can address and meet each of the levels of need listed by Maslow (1943). For example, a client who is confused, disoriented, and distressed might verbally express that they are, "lost." We might consider this individual to be "one-dimensional," as they do not know who they are, where they are, or why they are where they are (e.g., "why am I here, how did I get here, where should I go?"). In response, a music therapy intervention (i.e., being together in music), can help the individual become less distressed, more relaxed, and more oriented. This, in turn, can impart a feeling of safety, security, and belonging. Put another way, because of the music therapy intervention, the client becomes more grounded, more relaxed, more stable, and "more found." In this, the individual also becomes "more dimensional."

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Levels 1-5

Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from the bottom up, with the bottom level being number one (1), and the top level being number five (5), my approach addresses all five levels.



Source: https://cdn.psychologytoday.com/sites/default/files/field_blog_entry_images/2017-09/maslowhh_0.png

Level 1

Based upon my work with cognitively impaired individuals (i.e., memory, dementia, and Alzheimer's), I have seen how music therapy can address Level 1 of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). While music might be thought of as intangible, it stands out as a form of communication and expression unique unto itself. The following statements speak to this:

“Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.”
– *Victor Hugo*

“Rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret places of the soul.”
– *Plato*

“Music can name the unnamable and communicate the unknowable.”
– *Leonard Bernstein*

“Do you know that our soul is composed of harmony”
– *Leonardo DaVinci*

Level 2

Within each music therapy intervention, I provide a strong, definite sense of safety, stability, and continuity. My clients feel safe, secure, comfortable, and grounded.

Level 3

I create a strong sense of community and belonging for clients, family, caregivers, and staff. All are welcome in music. When we are in music together, the day is that much better and brighter.

Level 4

In music, the individual is recognized, celebrated, and honored. For instance, when an individual sings a particular song, they are congratulated via applause, cheering, and verbal encouragement. This applies to family caregivers, professional caregivers, and staff. It is our musical community; we celebrate and support each other.

Level 5

Each person is provided opportunities to be creative, spontaneous, to make choices and to have their choices honored in an immediate manner. This provides a stark contrast to, e.g., asking for help and waiting for others to help one carry out their ADLs and personal needs.

Conclusion

In the field of dementia care, our clients and their families are living in the present moment. They (and we) have today, and possibly, hopefully, tomorrow. Music, presented by a skilled music therapist, provides an environment where we celebrate these precious moments. Together, we are joyful, playful, creative, spontaneous, honest, and present. In music, we live in the moment as fully as we can. We communicate, laugh, clap, sing, and when we can, we dance. Together, in music, we are whole, vital, and alive. In music, we are no longer alone and lost; we are grounded, purposeful, and part of community. In music we are together; we have each other. Together, in music, we witness the re-emergence of the individual, an individual who is present, purposeful, creative, contributing, multi-dimensional, and alive.