

Music therapy in building relationship with children with severe multiple disabilities



Szabolcs Herman CSEI "CRISTAL", Oradea 26.02.2020



Agenda of the morning

- 9.00 9.30 Introduction
- 9.30 10.15 Open activity assisted by the group
- 10.15 10.30 Coffee break
- 10.30 11.45 Workshop



Short history of my working experience

- 1998-2006 abandoned children with mental and associated disabilities, but without serious motorical problems
- 2006- children from families and placement centers with severe and profound multiple disabilities
- A part of my the therapeutic "tools" used till that moment were proper for the new target group (Basic stimulation, Sherborne method, Ayres therapy), but a holistic, integrative, multi - modal approach was missing.

This is what I found in music therapy.



General characteristics of the target group

- Serious medical problems: epilepsy, cerebral palsy, hydrocephalia, microcephalia, spina bifida, severe heart problems, tetraparesys, paraparesys, agenesis of corpus calosum.
- Severe intellectual disabilities.
- Serious physical impairments; low developed gross and fine motor skills; very severe limitations; low body awareness.
- Prelinguistic communication; rarely they arrive at the level of conventional communication (preintentional or intentional); most of them are not conscious about the communicational content of their sounds, gestures.



General characteristics of the target group

- Grave impairments of the sensory integration: perception, processing, organizing of the stimuli and the translation to an appropriate answer; in general very low sensory thresholds.
- Sensorimotor stage of cognitive development (Piaget), sub-stage
 of reflexes or primary circular reactions. The step to the substage of secondary circular reactions it is almost impossible
 without therapeutic support.
- Severe limitations of their personal autonomy.
- Some of them are institutionalized, with all the traumatic consequences of being abandoned by their mother/family.



General characteristics of the target group

But first of all they are wonderful, lovely kids ©



Choose an instrument

- Instruments with strings: follow the *communication of* the children!
 - How do they communicate?
 - eye contact
 - contact with: the teacher, the instruments, the environment
 - movements
 - sounds
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Choose an instrument

- Percussion instruments: follow their *motivation*, openness, their emotions!
 - Are they interested for the activity?
 - Are they expressing their emotions?
 - How? In which form?
 - Can we feel/understand their state of being? How?
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Choose an instrument

- Blowing instruments: follow the teacher!
 - How is the communication with the children?
 - How is he using the distances, the volume, the rhythm, speed, etc.?
 - What about the approach?
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Exercise





Building relationship

Key conditions for both teacher and pupil:

- Basic security
- The feeling of being understood by the other one
- Mutual trust, empathy, authenticity
- Communicational skills
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Why music?

- Ancient attraction to rhythm, to songs, to music.
- Music and rhythm are experienced already by the foetus during the intrauterine life.
- Part of our every day life.
- Basic way of stimulation (vibratoric stimulation, Andreas Fröhlich)
- Multi modal stimulation (auditory, tactile, visual, vestibular).
- A form of communication easy to understand

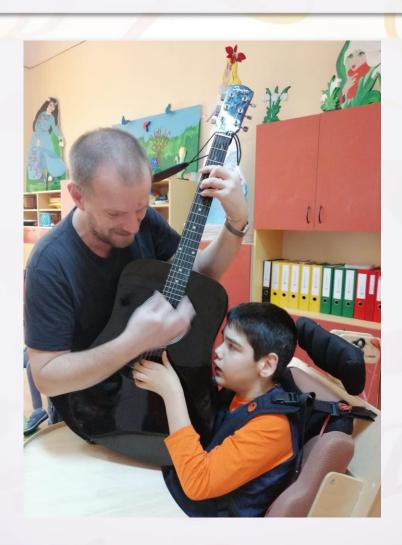


Why music?

- A golden way to facilitate the long process till the level of primary circular reactions (when they learn to repeat a movement with a pleasant effect for them) and afterwards to the secondary circular reactions (they start to realize the relation between their own actions and the environment).
- It is helping them to react, to learn they can influence the world around them.
- Improving the quality of their life.
- It is a "together" quality time.



Exercise - instruments





Goals

- Creating a warm, safe, stimulating surrounding
- Building contact, stimulating the communication (eye contact, touching, smiling/crying, accepting/refusing, etc.)
- Using the musical instruments as communicational tools/bridges
- Rising the pupil's interest for the stimuli
- Helping them to explore the stimuli
- Having fun together



Objectives for the children

- to became interested for the proposed activity
- to establish and keep the eye contact with the teacher
- to understand the cause-effect relation between a gesture/look/ sound from their side and the continuation of the activity
- to follow the sound/musical instrument/teacher
- to touch and explore the instruments, eventually to produce sounds
- to extend their sensorial area (new stimuli, higher thresholds)



Working principles

- Structure and flexibility, routine and adaptation
- Stimuli, rhythm, intensity, volume, number of repetitions adapted to the rhythm and opening of the child
- Permanent attention to the needs of the child, to any form of communication from their side, to their expressed emotions. We have the music sheet, but the child is the "conductor".
- Patience
- Empathy, authenticity
- Humor.