Remember Who You Are: Music and Identity for Older Adults

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Music Exploration Experience

- Where and when did you hear this song?
- What feelings come to mind?
- What images come to mind?
- What significance does this song have for you (if any)?
What We’ll Cover:

- Erikson’s final stages of psychosocial development
- How music can be a tool for dealing with the conflict in this stage
- Practical ideas for sharing music intentionally
Integrity vs Despair

- Final stage of Erikson’s original theory of psychosocial development (developed in the 1960s)
- Task: Review your life, asking “What does my life mean, and how do I feel about that? What have I to grieve, to be proud of, to make up for, and what remains to be done about these things?” (Hearn, et al, 2012).
- Satisfaction comes from a sense of knowing yourself and seeing yourself in the greater story of your cultural group.
Integrity vs Despair

  - Nonexploratory – general contentment but have closed down on further growth.
  - Pseudo integrated – created a story for themselves that denies elements that are unacceptable – “brittle surface satisfaction.”
  - Despairing – predominant feelings of depression over disappointments, failures, and missed chances. The final result of life is dissatisfying.
Involvement vs Resignation

- Proposed by Bugajska (2017) as the stage for the “young old” and “middle old” – post-retirement, but not final years yet.

- Confrontation of social, psychological and physical changes that come with aging.

- Involvement - Search for a new place for oneself. Create or recreate one’s own life.

- Resignation – Give up. Life is already over and it’s too late to change.
What happens in the final stages of life?

- The struggle between involvement and resignation = courage
- The struggle between integrity and despair = wisdom
- Where have you seen these dynamics at work?
Neurological Reasons for Using Music

- Music involves many areas of the brain – neural networks can help bridge over damaged areas
- Lights up the limbic system, which involves emotion and memory
- Involves the motor cortex and cerebellum – movement
- Release of feel-good neurotransmitters
Cultural Reasons for Using Music

- Music is part of our lives from infancy – something humans do together
- Significant part of culture – brings people together – defines groups and bridges across groups
- Connects us to our past and our present
Musical Life Review Model (Sato, 2011)

- **Stimuli** – music, art, pictures, literature
- **Theme** – major life events, family, hobbies, work, community, life roles, relationships, heritage
- **Response** – happy memories, contentment, nostalgia, regret, anxiety, despair
- **Evaluation** – verbal processing, creative expression
- **Therapeutic outcomes** – integration, sustained hope, emotional intimacy with family, working through emotions, awareness of what to do with time left
“Lean On Me”
Bill Withers

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
We all have sorrow
But if we are wise - We know that there's always tomorrow

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend - I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long - 'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on
Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill those of your needs
That you won't let show
Using Music Intentionally

- Weave songs and stories together
- Choose music with intention (e.g. for movement)
- Look for personally significant music
- Don’t be afraid of unfamiliar music
- Recognize when someone wants or needs to go deeper musically, and refer to a music therapist


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