The Effect of a Mood Sequence Formula™ on PTSD
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Abstract
The debilitating effects of PTSD on veterans undermines desire for positive life connections. One female army veteran participated in a Music 4 Life® Music Medicine Protocol called a Mood Sequence Formula™ with the desire to be motivated, happy and balanced, experience less stress, worry and depression, and feel “complete” after four years of medical disability and experiencing social phobias. After two weeks of daily listening, she had achieved those goals. After about six weeks she reported continuing anti-anxiety, depression and pain modifications with doctor’s approval. Posttests reported significant shifts in emotional states with reduced unsettledness, and increased soothed and energized moods.

Client Background and Goals
L is a 36 year old Army veteran presenting with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, trauma/PTSD, and issues associated with Graves Disease, Fibromyalgia, holes in her left ear drum, hearing sensitivity, and cervical disc deterioration. She also identified past episodes of abuse, the loss of several friends to tragedy, and being stationed as an operating room/trauma tech at Fort Hood during the shootings in November 2009. In her initial assessment, L stated that she felt frustrated, depressed, anxious, anger stress, tired, ill, sad, and extreme imbalance. She identified difficulty relaxing and social phobias as well. At the time of initial assessment, L was taking synthroid, propalanol, and Vitamin D.

During the assessment L shared that she had disturbing dreams where bodies would rise up to kill her. Music utilizing cellos, Cyndy Lauper, or similar to 80’s “hair bands” were identified as triggering anger during the assessment L shared that she had disturbing dreams where they were herself as a song. These forms were reviewed by the therapists and an interview was completed for further information and details.

L completed an intensive listening session with the therapists the following day to determine songs which trigger specific emotions. For L, these included those to work through anger, anxiety, frustration, and depression. Her final listening session included fourteen songs from these genres, as follows:

Unsettled: Alternative, Native American, Classical genres
Energized: Jazz, Country, World genres

From these genres a custom CD was formed and burned for L.

Protocol
The Music 4 Life® Music Medicine Mood Sequence Formulas™ was utilized with the client in this research. The modified approach of multiple formulas was designed to intentionally target a broad emotional range with a profound liberation of moods during a creative, controlled process. Mood Sequence Formulas™ for L included working through anger, anxiety, frustration, and to instill the feelings of peace and energy which she felt was needed. The Music 4 Life® Music Medicine Mood Sequence Formulas™ follows a specific pattern of unsettled musical emotions for each 15 minute selections and completed by those which are deemed energized.

L started by completing a client inventory which included demographic information, current issues, desired goals, current medications, side effects of current medications, diagnoses, trauma history, and other vital information; an emotional inventory; and a music inventory. The emotional inventory asked questions to determine hidden anger symptoms; current feelings of unsettledness, being soothed, and energized; negative current state scores, and positive current states. The music inventory explored current preferences for creative arts, instruments, musical styles, songs identified with different emotions or preferences, musical background, and how the client would label themselves if they were a song. These forms were reviewed by the therapists and an interview was completed for further information and details.

L’s music inventory assessment changed from initial music on affect, anxiety, and depression. She would continue updating the therapists on a song from each section as she determined appropriate given her current mood state. She was not causing pain to help her work through her frustration. L stated that her relationship with her husband was better, she noticed less pressure in her chest and that she was more relaxed and was not as quick to anger. She talked about her relationship with her family and that it was different now in her mind. While desiring to reestablish a relationship with them, she felt she was more clear regarding boundaries. Due to the progress identified, L was moved to maintenance where she could choose a song from each section or from her own library which matched her current emotional state and listen within the same sequence.

L returned the following day for her initial therapeutic listening session. A booklet containing the protocol, a listening guide, song lyrics, a copy of the music on the CD, and an interview was completed for further information and details.

L’s audition included working through anger, anxiety, and depression to the clinic for a follow up visit. Every day for the next week L would return to the clinic for a follow up visit. At the end of the first week of progress, the therapists met with her to discuss her reactions and identify any issues with the CD. Protocol dictated that should a sequence not elicit the desired emotional response an additional listening session would be completed to correct the problem and a new CD would be developed.

L’s CD was determined appropriate given her response and post listening feedback. It was also determined that she needed an additional outlet for her anger so she was loaned a large buffalo drum and was taught to utilize it during her unsettled listening sessions. The holes in her left ear proved to cause problems with her ability to listen without pain. She was prompted to consider cutting or a tissue in the ear piece of her headphones corrected the issue.

L was instructed to listen to the CD in its entirety as recorded once per day, every day for the next two weeks. At the end of the week L would return to the clinic for a follow up session. At the end of the first week L’s progress would be reviewed. L expressed that her depression had not been eradicated and was determined to be recorded to the messaging. It would be done at that time. L was prompted to continue listening for an additional week with her original CD as it was determined appropriate and to return in another week for further follow-up. At the second follow-up it was determined that L could move to a “maintenance” protocol where she could choose one song from each section as she determined appropriate given her current mood state. She would continue updating the therapists on a routine basis.

Results
First Follow-Up at Week One
L rated all the songs on affect, anxiety, and depression. Her scores were as follows:

HAS: 2; Untested: 20; Soothed: 35; Energized: 42; NCS: 9; PCS: 26
L shared with the therapists that she was able to listen every day without issue. She stated that she was dealing with her pain better, was not noticing as much anger, frustration, or flashbacks. She told them about how she was able to attend a job fair for veterans, speak with potential employers without fear or hesitation, and was interviewed for a segment on a local television station. “It was fun. I wasn’t getting sweary or hot. I didn’t want to run out the door. I wasn’t afraid of people touching me. I was in a better light.” She also said that she was more motivated to get out and exercise and that the listening “helped me put things into perspective.”

Second Follow-Up at Week Two
L’s second follow-up session her scores were as follows:

HAS: 0; Untested: 17; Soothed: 36; Energized: 52; NCS: 9; PCS: 31
L stated that her relationship with her husband was better, she noticed less pressure in her chest and that she was more relaxed and was not as quick to anger. She talked about her relationship with her family and that it was different now in her mind. While desiring to reestablish a relationship with them, she felt she was more clear regarding boundaries. Due to the progress identified, L was moved to maintenance where she could choose a song from each section or from her own library which matched her current emotional state and listen within the same sequence.

Third Follow-Up at Week Six
L’s third follow-up session her scores were as follows:

HAS: 0; Untested: 17; Soothed: 36; Energized: 52; NCS: 9; PCS: 33
L shared that she coped with a potentially dangerous emotional situation while visiting her family. She utilized her CD to help remain calm and find a positive solution to the situation. “I was able to handle it so much better than I ever thought I would. I found some that made me angrier than what we had. I found it helpful and let it go when dealing with my family.”

L stated that her relationship with her husband was better, she noticed less pressure in her chest and that she was more relaxed and was not as quick to anger. She talked about her relationship with her family and that it was different now in her mind. While desiring to reestablish a relationship with them, she felt she was more clear regarding boundaries. Due to the progress identified, L was moved to maintenance where she could choose a song from each section or from her own library which matched her current emotional state and listen within the same sequence.

Conclusion/Recommendations
Conclusions derived from statements from L and scores on her emotional inventories reflect that her Mood Sequence Formulas™ were effective in helping her meet her goals. L was originally referred to Music 4 Life® by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Office of Veteran Services which links veterans to community services that further their education and life goals, including work, housing and post traumatic stress support. This case study reflects the progress of one veteran. Further investigation of the Mood Sequence Formulas™ is warranted to offer a more comprehensive emotional health for larger populations of veterans to help them work through anger, anxiety, and depression to be able to embrace and engage with family and their community. A longitudinal research study is suggested to examine the long term effects of Mood Sequence Formulas™ with veterans.

References

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